

#MAACCE2026

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATION

MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE



2026 MAACCE CONFERENCE

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2026

**ANNE ARUNDEL COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ARNOLD CAMPUS**



MDADULTED.ORG



MAACCE 2026 Annual Conference

As I write this message, I am filled with gratitude—and no small measure of resolve. Serving as President of the Maryland Association for Adult, Community and Continuing Education has been one of the greatest honors of my professional life. This year marks my final year in this role, and I am deeply thankful to the Board, our members, our partners, and—most importantly—the educators and advocates who show up every day for adult learners across Maryland.



If the past year has taught us anything, it is that adult education does not exist on the margins—we exist at the center of our communities' economic, civic, and social well-being. And yet, we are once again navigating turbulent waters. National policy conversations and budget priorities continue to place adult education programs at risk. Our learners feel that uncertainty acutely, as do the programs and professionals who serve them.

This moment demands that more of us step into leadership with MAACCE and with our allied organizations, whether formally or informally. Leadership does not require a title; it requires participation, courage, and persistence. It demands that we strengthen our advocacy, not just in Annapolis and Washington, but in our local communities—helping neighbors, employers, and elected officials understand what adult education truly makes possible. And it demands that we stay engaged, even when the work feels heavy.

As my term as president comes to a close, my hope is that this conference serves not only as a place to learn and connect, but also as a catalyst—for renewed commitment, for collective action, and for new leaders to emerge. MAACCE's strength has always come from its members. The future of adult education depends on your voices, your expertise, and your willingness to lead.

Thank you for trusting me with this role. Thank you for the work you do every day. And thank you for staying engaged—because adult learners need you now more than ever.

With gratitude and confidence in what lies ahead,

Lisa Rawlings

President, MAACCE Board of Directors



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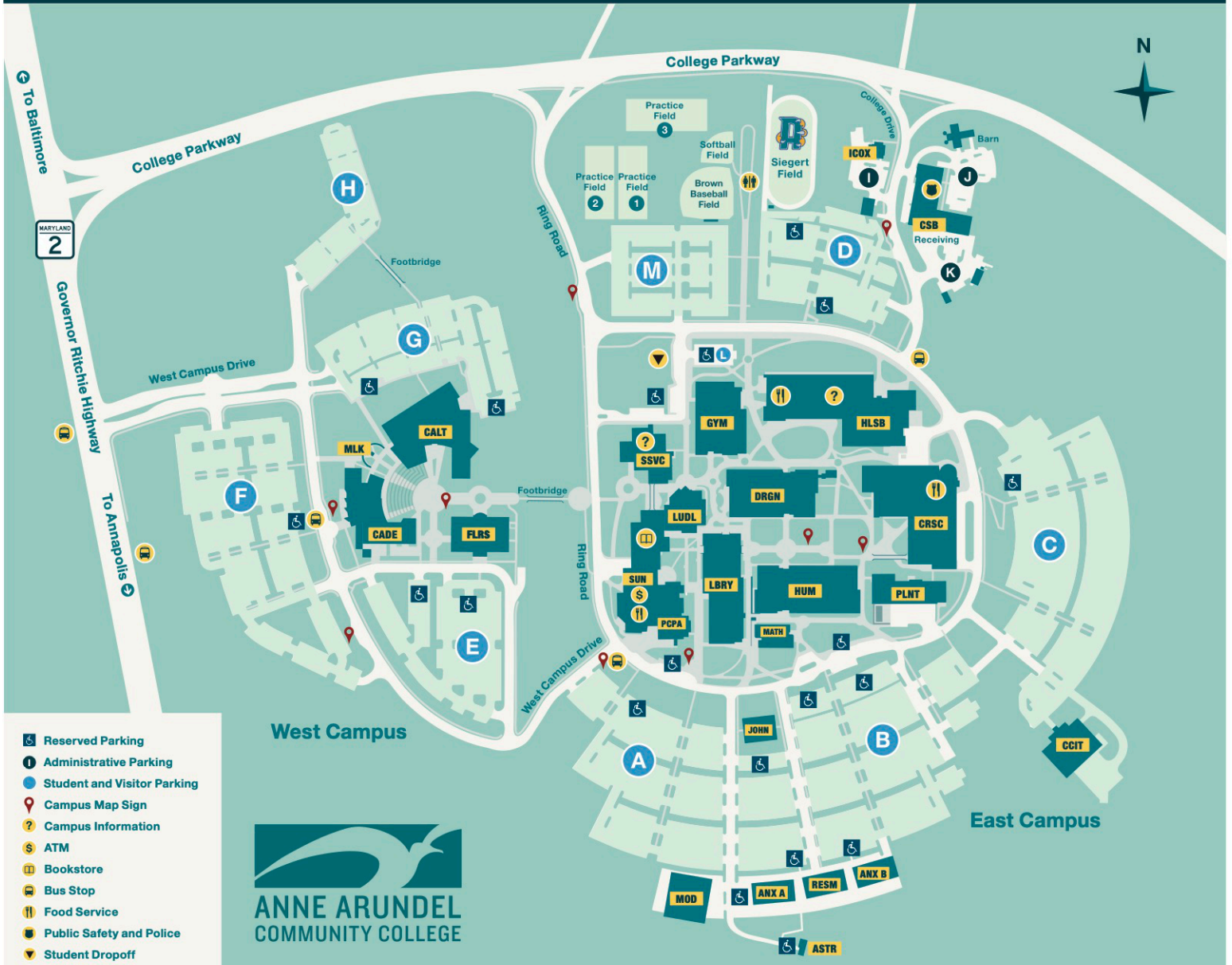


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- Campus Information
- ATM
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- Food Service
- Public Safety and Police
- Student Dropoff



East Campus Buildings

- ANX A** Annex A Classrooms
- ANX B** Annex B Classrooms
- ASTR** Astronomy Lab
- CRSC** Careers Center
Help Desk
- CSB** Central Services Building
Receiving
Police
- CCIT** Clauson Center for Innovation and Skilled Trades (open 2022)
- DRGN** Dragun Science Building
- GYM** Jenkins Gymnasium

- HLSB** Health and Life Sciences Building
- HUM** Humanities Building
- ICOX** Isaac Cox House
AACC Foundation
- JOHN** Johnson Building
- LBRY** Truxal Library
- LUDL** Ludlum Hall
College Administration
- MATH** Math Building
- MOD** Modular Building
- PCPA** Pascal Center for Performing Arts
Robert E. Kauffman Theater

- PLNT** Physical Plant
Sculpture Studios
- RESM** Resource Management Building
- SSVC** Student Services Center
Admissions
Registration
Financial Aid
- SUN** Schwartz Student Union
AACC Bookstore
Hawk's Nest

West Campus Buildings

- CADE** Cade Center for Fine Arts
- CALT** Center for Applied Learning and Technology
- FLRS** Florestano Building (closed for renovation)
- MLK** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial

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WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

MAACCE 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Anne Arundel Community College - Arnold Campus
Thursday, May 21, 2026

7:30 A.M. - 8:50 A.M.
REGISTRATION AND CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST: Schwartz Student Union (SUN)

8:30 A.M. - 8:50 A.M.
WELCOME: Auditorium (PCPA)

9:00 A.M. - 10:00 A.M. | SESSION 1

Big Science, Small Budget	Student Empowerment in Everyday Learning	Belonging by Design: Centering Student Voice through Inclusive Learning	The Comprehension Toolkit: Evidence-Based Strategies for Beginning and Intermediate Readers	Pathways to Success: GED® Test Prep Strategies for Multilingual Learners	High-Impact Teaching: How to Boost Student Learning and Test-Taking Ability
Kim D. Reed & Donna Butler	Kathleen Patton & Julio Maestre	Dr. Antione D. Tomlin, & Kenneth Gilliard, Jr.	Chantal Ross & Grayla Reneau	Laura Ostrowski & Elizabeth (Betsy) Ljubic	Dr. Teddy Edouard
HUM 101	HUM 104	HUM 112	HUM 125	HUM 126	HUM 129

10:15 A.M. - 11:20 A.M. | SESSION 2

Write Like You Mean It!	TABE 13/14 & TABE CLAS-E	People-Centered Leadership: Meeting Leaders Where They Are to Build Sustainable School Cultures	Reading to Learn - Strategies for the Struggling Learner	A Clear Path From Learning to Earning	Beyond Group Work: Task or Project — What Makes Learning Meaningful?
Adora Beard - GED	Mike Johnson & Brian Shedd	Dr. Chelsea Kirk	Chris Miller - Aztec	Lynn Napolitano - Burlington English	Chaw Kalayar
HUM 101	HUM 104	HUM 112	HUM 125	HUM 126	HUM 129

11:30 A.M. - 12:45 P.M.
NETWORKING WITH SPONSORS & LUNCH: Schwartz Student Union (SUN)

1:00 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.
SPONSORS' REMARKS | AWARDS | KEYNOTE | GENERAL MEETING: Auditorium (PCPA)

2:45 P.M. - 3:50 P.M. | SESSION 3

The Thoughtful Educator: Leveraging Cognitive Tools to Guide Academic Behaviors	Invisible Luggage: Leading with Emotional Intelligence, Not Emotional Weight	Elevate Your Practice: Mastery, Credentials, and Co-Creation with The Collective	Frames, Facts, and Stories: Advocating for Results in Adult Education	Building Workforce Minds: From Attention Span to Application	From Prep to Pass: The Power of GED® Bootcamps and Focused Instruction, A Panel Discussion
Tanisha Paegar	VerShaun Terry	Daquanna Harrison	Deborah Kennedy	Chris Miller - Aztec	Laura Ostrowski, Kim Reid, Kelsey Petti & Zachary Smith, Linda Hall & Pam Jones
HUM 101	HUM 104	HUM 112	HUM 125	HUM 126	HUM 129

1:30 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.
AFTERNOON SNACKS: Schwartz Student Union (SUN)

3:55 P.M. - 5:00 P.M. | SESSION 4

Step Into Leadership: Serve on the MAACCE Board!	Preparing Students for Success on the GED® Math Reasoning Test	Holistic Approach to Student Success	Reading to Navigate Uncertainty: Scenario-Based Problem Solving in Adult ESL	Human-Centered AI for Adult Learners: Practical Strategies to Reclaim Time, Increase Persistence, and Accelerate Workforce Pathways	From Legislation to Learner Impact: Policy-Driven Innovation in Maryland Adult Education
Lisa Rawlings & Jose Torres	Jay Willets	Jessie Thompson & Beth Johnson	Dr. Monica Bracho Handyside	Dr. William Blake	Laura Ostrowski, Lauren Gilwee & Jenna Bachman
HUM 101	HUM 104	HUM 112	HUM 125	HUM 126	HUM 129

ADJOURN



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Belonging by Design: Centering Student Voice through Inclusive Learning Dr. Antione D. Tomlin & Kenneth Gilliard, Jr.	HUM112
The Comprehension Toolkit: Evidence-Based Strategies for Beginning and Intermediate Readers for Beginning and Intermediate Readers Chantal Ross & Grayla Reneau	HUM125
Pathways to Success: GED® Test Prep Strategies for Multilingual Learners Laura Ostrowski & Elizabeth (Betsy) Ljubic	HUM126
High-Impact Teaching: How to Boost Student Learning and Test-Taking Ability Dr. Teddy Edouard	HUM 129



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Adora Beard

HUM 101

TABE 13/14 & TABE CLAS-E

Mike Johnson & Brian Shedd

HUM 104

**People-Centered Leadership: Meeting Leaders Where They
Are to Build Sustainable School Cultures**

Dr. Chelsea Kirk

HUM112

Reading to Learn - Strategies for the Struggling Learner

Chris Miller

HUM125

A Clear Path from Learning to Earning

Lynn Napolitano

HUM126

**Beyond Group Work: Task or Project — What Makes
Learning Meaningful?**

Chaw Kalayar

HUM 129

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Tanisha Paegar

Invisible Luggage: Leading with Emotional Intelligence, Not Emotional Weight **HUM 104**

VerShaun Terry

Elevate Your Practice: Mastery, Credentials, and Co-Creation with The Collective **HUM112**

Daquanna Harrison

Frames, Facts, and Stories: Advocating for Results in Adult Education **HUM125**

Deborah Kennedy

Building Workforce Minds: From Attention Span to Application **HUM126**

Chris Miller

From Prep to Pass: The Power of GED® Bootcamps and Focused Instruction, A Panel Discussion **HUM 129**

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From Legislation to Learner Impact: Policy-Driven Innovation in Maryland Adult Education **HUM 129**
Laura Ostrowski, Lauren Gilwee & Jenna Bachman

ADJOURN



DEBORAH KENNEDY

Deborah Kennedy is a nationally recognized leader in adult education. She is the founder of Key Words and brings more than 25 years of experience supporting adult English language learners and the educators and systems that serve them. Her work has focused on workplace English, life skills English, and professional pathways for multilingual adults.

An experienced teacher, program director, curriculum developer, and teacher trainer, Ms. Kennedy has taught and led programs serving adult English learners at all proficiency levels, in both face-to-face and online settings. She previously served as Associate Vice President for Adult English Language Education at the Center for Applied Linguistics, where she helped shape national thinking around adult ESL program design and quality.

Currently, Ms. Kennedy is a Senior Consultant with the National Coalition for Literacy, where she also served as Executive Director from 2020 to 2024. In this role, she led federal advocacy efforts on behalf of adult basic education and ESL programs nationwide, working with policymakers on Capitol Hill to communicate the return on investment of WIOA and related federal funding. She is a frequent presenter on advocacy as a core responsibility of adult education practitioners and has supported organizations across the country in building a consistent, powerful message for adult learners.

Ms. Kennedy is also an active professional development facilitator, currently teaching in TESOL International Association's Core Certificate Program, and develops curriculum and online learning experiences for instructors and adult English learners. Her work includes editorial contributions to applied linguistics publications for national professional organizations.

She holds degrees from Boston University, Harvard University, and American University, and certifications in online instruction from Quality Matters and TESOL International Association.



Big Science, Small Budget

Kim D. Reed & Donna Butler

GED® science instruction in adult education can be challenging when programs have limited budgets, lab space, or equipment. This workshop introduces science activities that use inexpensive materials commonly found at discount stores to support key GED® science concepts. Participants will see examples of how everyday items can be used to illustrate science topics and reinforce the scientific method. The session will focus on practical ways these materials can be incorporated into GED® science instruction to help make concepts more concrete and engaging for adult learners. Designed for adult education classrooms, these activities use low-cost materials that are easy to obtain. Participants will leave with practical ideas and a short list of supplies that can be used to incorporate simple science demonstrations and experiments into GED® instruction.



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Student Empowerment in Everyday Learning

Kathleen Patton & Julio Maestre

In our current climate it's especially important to create spaces where students feel free to express their ideas and make meaningful choices, and our classrooms have become a unique place where we can do just that. Through small moves and strategies we can find ways to facilitate increased student leadership and empowerment in the classroom. Participants in this session will experience and reflect on activities that position students to have ownership over their learning and an impact on their classroom. Real-life examples and teacher insights will be shared with a focus on participant discussion and planning for how we can make these changes in our particular settings. Participants will leave with practical strategies and ideas for strengthening student autonomy.

Belonging by Design: Centering Student Voice through Inclusive Learning

Dr. Antione D. Tomlin & Kenneth Gilliard, Jr.

This session introduces the Belonging, Academic Success, and Community (BAC) cohort model, a student-centered framework for designing inclusive learning experiences in the classroom. Grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy and universal design for learning, the model integrates cohort-based community, embedded academic support, and civic engagement to center student voice and belonging. Cohort outcomes show increased academic success, engagement, belonging, and connection. Participants will reflect on their own courses to identify ways to adapt the model.

The Comprehension Toolkit: Evidence-Based Strategies for Beginning and Intermediate Readers

Chantal Ross & Grayla Reneau

This interactive workshop is designed to provide strategies that will help reading instructors deliver structured, evidenced based reading comprehension instruction to beginning and intermediate-level learners. Participants will practice these techniques, gaining hands-on experience that they can take back to their classrooms and use immediately. The presenter will include the following techniques for beginning readers: explanation, engaging background knowledge, modeling, echo reading and visualization. For intermediate-level readers, the presenter will demonstrate how to use questioning, text structure, 5Ws and H, finding the main idea, author's purpose, the gist (retell) and evaluating the evidence.



Pathways to Success: GED® Test Prep Strategies for Multilingual Learners

Laura Ostrowski & Elizabeth (Betsy) Ljubic

Multilingual learners bring rich linguistic and cultural assets to the classroom—along with unique challenges when preparing for the GED® test. This interactive workshop explores practical, research-informed strategies to strengthen instruction, boost learner confidence, and improve test outcomes across content areas.

Participants will examine common language-related barriers in GED® test preparation, including academic vocabulary, complex text structures, and word problems in math. The session will highlight instructional approaches that integrate language development with content mastery, such as explicit vocabulary routines, scaffolded reading strategies, and targeted writing supports. We will also discuss culturally responsive practices and test-taking strategies that reduce anxiety and increase persistence.

Attendees will leave with adaptable tools, classroom-ready resources, and actionable planning strategies to better support multilingual learners on their pathway to earning a high school equivalency credential. Whether you are an instructor, program leader, or test administrator, this session will provide practical insights to strengthen equity, access, and success in GED® preparation programs.

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High-Impact Teaching: How to Boost Student Learning and Test-Taking Ability

Dr. Teddy Edouard

This interactive session will discuss adult learning theories and explore 12 cognitive science insights and high-impact test-prep strategies to maximize student learning, sharpen test-taking ability, and boost Measurable Skills Gains (MSGs). Participants will reflect on some research findings that influence teaching and learning. Lastly, they will receive guidance and tools to set learners up for exponential success in and outside the classroom.

Objectives:

This interactive session will equip participants with 12 cognitive science insights and high-impact test prep strategies to maximize learning and sharpen learners' test-taking ability. Specifically, the session will:

- 1- Define different types of learning or knowledge.
- 2- Share and discuss 12 high-impact test prep strategies to increase learning and boost Measurable Skills Gains (MSGs).
- 3- Invite attendees to reflect on key insights and develop action steps to apply evidence-based test prep strategies in their teaching context.

Impact on Students:

The session will equip instructors with evidence-based teaching strategies that they can leverage to increase learning and improve test preparation. It will present scientific insights that will enable instructors to enhance their lesson planning and delivery. Lastly, participants will receive templates and tools to improve learners' study skills.

Write Like You Mean It!

Adora Beard

This session is designed to address the common challenges students face in writing effective paragraphs and covering techniques for developing well-supported claims and explaining evidence. Participants will learn how to guide students in crafting meaningful written responses on the GED Reasoning Through Language Arts, Extended Response test.



TABE 13/14 & TABE CLAS-E

Mike Johnson & Brian Shedd

This session will share how states, larger community college programs and local programs have transitioned to the new versions of TABE and TABE CLAS-E. Join colleagues from neighboring states along with curriculum partners to review how programs prepared and transitioned to the newest versions of TABE and CLAS-E and what best practices have they continue to implement to improve student outcomes. Attendees will have the chance to hear from other program directors and ask questions related to their own implementation. DRC will also provide an update on upcoming system enhancements related to the Online testing system for TABE and TABE CLAS-E.

People-Centered Leadership: Meeting Leaders Where They Are to Build Sustainable School Cultures

Dr. Chelsea Kirk

Strong, sustainable school cultures are built through people-centered leadership. This session explores practical strategies that meet leaders where they are, build trust, and strengthen capacity. Participants will examine how empathy and relationships drive staff effectiveness and school success through real-world examples and guided reflection.

The session highlights ways to tailor support, align expectations with current capacity, and maintain high standards, while equipping attendees with tools to create psychologically safe environments, improve collaboration, and embed people-centered practices into daily leadership routines. Participants will leave prepared to apply multiple people-centered leadership practices immediately, recognize clear indicators of a strong, people-centered school culture—including signs of engagement, retention, and collaboration—and commit to a measurable strategy that strengthens the adult experience over time.

Ultimately, the session emphasizes how effectively supporting leaders leads to healthier school cultures, stronger staff retention, and improved outcomes for both adults and students.



Reading to Learn - Strategies for the Struggling Learner

Chris Miller

Many adult educators lack formal training in teaching reading. This session presents key strategies to help struggling readers improve comprehension and performance across academic subjects. Participants will explore how to teach reading in science, social studies, and more—giving learners a structured approach to understanding course content. Active learning methods will support the shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn," helping educators boost student confidence and success.

A Clear Path from Learning to Earning

Lynn Napolitano

Join us to explore the shifting landscape of adult education and the growing urgency for job-readiness skills. We will introduce Burlington Workforce, a new suite of courses designed to prepare learners for in-demand careers. In this interactive session, participants will discover how Burlington supports programs in achieving their vision for the future.

Together, we will identify strategic approaches to better align educational programming with high-growth career pathways. Attendees will leave with actionable insights and practical strategies to strengthen workforce alignment to more effectively support learners transitioning into meaningful employment.

Beyond Group Work: Task or Project — What Makes Learning Meaningful?

Chaw Kalayar

Not every group activity is a task — and not every task is a project. What truly distinguishes Project-Based Learning (PBL) from Task-Based Learning (TBL)?

In this lively and interactive session, we will explore the distinctions between TBL and PBL and examine how their unique features can be intentionally used to design learning experiences. Rather than sitting through definitions, participants will actively engage in designing instructional experiences that spark engagement, build ownership, strengthen retention, and produce lasting learning.



While grounded in the presenter's ESOL experience, the strategies shared in this session can be applicable across disciplines and adaptable to other instructional contexts. Participants can expect collaborative discussion, hands-on exploration, and practical application.

Come curious. Get ready to have fun. Leave with solid ideas.

The Thoughtful Educator: Leveraging Cognitive Tools to Guide Academic Behaviors

Tanisha Paegar

This workshop is intended to teach strategies educators can use to informally use principles of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) as non-clinicians. Participants will not become therapist or process trauma with students after this workshop, but they will leave with tools and strategies to help students notice and challenge thoughts that affect their academic behavior(s).

Invisible Luggage: Leading with Emotional Intelligence, Not Emotional Weight

VerShaun Terry

We all carry invisible luggage: past disappointments, unresolved conflict, fear of failure, and pressure that rarely gets named. In schools and organizations, that emotional weight shows up as reactivity, shutdown, miscommunication, and burnout. When emotional baggage is unmanaged, leaders lose clarity, trust erodes, and accountability starts to feel personal instead of purposeful. This interactive session positions emotional intelligence as a leadership competency for building coherence, strengthening capacity, and cultivating cultures of trust and accountability.

Participants will learn and practice a simple framework called LUGGAGE to locate the emotional load they are carrying, identify triggers, regulate in real time, and respond with intention. This forces leaders to look inward before looking outward. The approach is grounded in widely used emotional intelligence concepts such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Through leader-centered scenarios (team tension, missed deliverables, difficult feedback, and high stakes meetings), participants will compare reactive responses to emotionally intelligent responses that align values with execution. The session emphasizes leading through complexity, aligning strategy with daily interactions, and sustaining improvement in dynamic environments.



Elevate Your Practice: Mastery, Credentials, and Co-Creation with The Collective

Daquanna Harrison

Transform your conference experience with our "flipped workshop." Before the event, complete at least two of the three core courses offered to you on the Elevated PD (EPD) platform: Digital Literacy Lesson Design, Resilient Leadership, and Trauma-Informed Support. You'll earn verified certificates of mastery before you even arrive! This high-energy, in-person workshop provides a concentrated strategy session based on The Collective, our dynamic national meet-up for adult educators. Like the full Collective experience, this workshop skips the theory entirely, acting as a dedicated, peer-to-peer lab. You will work in groups to co-create immediate, "Day 1" implementation plans that blend learnings from all three courses. Bring your best ideas and

questions to share with fellow professionals, breaking down silos and ensuring you leave with credentials and a ready-to-use action plan. Flipped Logistics: Participants are expected to have completed at least two of the three offered courses on the EPD platform before the workshop begins. Access opens 3 weeks before the conference and continues for 2 weeks after the conference. If you haven't finished two of the courses, please use the QR code found in your conference book to complete the mini-course(s).

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Frames, Facts, and Stories: Advocating for Results in Adult Education

Deborah Kennedy

Social, financial, and policy support for adult education can be profoundly affected by educators' advocacy for their learners and their profession. However, many educators are less effective than they could be at creating advocacy narratives that lead to change for the better. They can increase their impact by using facts to guide understanding, stories to elicit engagement, and framing to engender action.

This session will give participants guidance and practice in creating narratives that will resonate with community members, funders, and policy makers. It will increase participants' understanding of different types of advocacy and orient them to an asset-focused perspective that emphasizes strengths, successes, and contributions to the community. Through interactive exercises, participants will identify advocacy needs in their own contexts and outline the major components of their narratives, using framing to connect advocacy outcomes with positive results in the larger community.

Building Workforce Minds: From Attention Span to Application

Chris Miller

Adult learners juggle busy lives and career goals, yet traditional surface instruction often leaves them unprepared for real-world demands. This interactive session explores how attention span influences persistence, why deeper learning matters, and how active learning strategies can bridge classroom instruction with workforce readiness. Through case studies and contextualized activities, participants will gain practical tools to move learners from memorization to application—building critical thinking, communication, and teamwork skills that strengthen both educational and career outcomes.

From Prep to Pass: The Power of GED® Bootcamps and Focused Instruction, A Panel Discussion

Laura Ostrowski, Kim Reid (PGCC), Kelsey Petti & Zachary Smith (SBLC), Linda Hall (AACC), & Pam Jones (CSM)

Adult learners preparing for the GED® Test often benefit from structured, short-term opportunities that help them focus on the most critical skills needed to pass. GED® bootcamps and targeted preparation classes offer an accelerated approach that builds confidence, reinforces key content areas, and provides learners with the focused support they need to succeed.



This session will explore how adult education programs can design and implement effective bootcamps that concentrate on high-impact instructional strategies, essential subject matter, and practical test-taking skills. Presenters will share examples of successful program models that use learner data to guide instruction and help test takers make meaningful progress toward earning their high school credential.

This session will focus on a panel discussion featuring program staff and instructors who have led GED® bootcamps. Panelists will share their experiences implementing these models, discuss challenges, successes, and lessons learned and offer practical insights for programs interested in launching or strengthening their own bootcamp initiatives.

Participants will leave with actionable ideas they can adapt to help more learners move from preparation to passing.

Step Into Leadership: Serve on the MAACCE Board!

Lisa Rawlings & Jose Torres

Are you ready to help shape the future of adult, community, and continuing education in Maryland? Join us for a motivating session that highlights what it means to serve on the MAACCE Board of Directors—and how your leadership can make a statewide impact.

In this workshop, you'll learn:

- Key board responsibilities and how the board drives MAACCE's mission
- How the nomination and election process works
- Why your voice and experience matter

Whether you're an emerging leader or a long-time professional, board service is a powerful way to amplify your influence, grow your network, and strengthen opportunities for adult learners across Maryland.

If you're passionate about this work, we encourage you to step forward. Your leadership can transform lives.



Preparing Students for Success on the GED Math Reasoning Test

Jay Willets

This session will involve essential information that instructors and students should be aware of for successfully passing the GED Math Reasoning Test. Included will be a detailed explanation of the content areas assessed on the test and how the questions may be presented. Practice questions will be provided with adequate time for audience participation. A detailed analysis for solving these problems will follow and the problems will include the 5 different methods in which they can be answered. Special emphasis will be placed on the unique way each content area questions may be asked.

Holistic Approach to Student Success

Jessie Thompson & Beth Johnson

This session will highlight effective strategies for supporting adult learners in achieving their educational goals—from pre-orientation through graduation.

Participants will learn how our team evaluates and updates key components of the student journey, including pre-orientation, intake and assessment processes, onboarding practices, classroom instruction, and the use of rubrics and testing initiatives. The presentation will also explore how instructional tools and platforms such as different modes of instruction online, face to face HyFlex, Proxy Hours, 4th Edition and GOAL to support learning outcomes.

In addition, presenters will discuss how collaboration with campus resources creates a more holistic support system for adult learners. Attendees will gain practical ideas for aligning instructional practices, technology, and student services to strengthen retention and help students successfully progress toward their academic and career goals.



Reading to Navigate Uncertainty: Scenario-Based Problem Solving in Adult ESL

Dr. Monica Bracho Handyside

Adult English language learners often face reading tasks that require more than decoding, they must interpret information, evaluate risk, and make decisions in real-life contexts. This interactive session introduces a practical, scenario-based approach to help adult ESL learners develop both comprehension and critical thinking skills. Drawing on reader-response theory (Rosenblatt), sociocultural learning (Vygotsky), and problem-posing literacy (Freire), participants will explore how reading can be used to navigate uncertainty and solve problems. Teachers will experience hands-on activities in which

learners read authentic texts, identify problems, brainstorm solutions, and consider potential consequences including worst-case scenarios. Step-by-step instructional routines, discussion prompts, and adaptable classroom materials will be shared. Attendees will see how structured problem-solving activities enable students to construct meaning, build confidence, and connect reading to real-life decisions.

By engaging with this framework, educators will leave with immediately implementable strategies, tools, and activities that promote active thinking, collaborative learning, and problem-solving skills in adult ESL classrooms. This approach moves beyond traditional comprehension strategies, preparing learners to read critically and act strategically in an unpredictable world.



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Human-Centered AI for Adult Learners: Practical Strategies to Reclaim Time, Increase Persistence, and Accelerate Workforce Pathways

Dr. William Blake

Adult educators are being asked to do more with less, serve multilingual learners, support career transitions, integrate digital skills, and document measurable outcomes. This interactive session introduces a human-centered framework for using generative AI to increase instructional efficiency, strengthen learner persistence, and accelerate workforce readiness.

Grounded in The AI School Leader, participants will explore practical, step-by-step applications of AI for lesson design, contextualized workforce instruction, formative assessment, and individualized learner feedback—while maintaining ethical, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed practices essential in adult education settings.

Attendees will engage in hands-on prompt routines aligned to adult learning theory (andragogy), WIOA performance indicators, and digital literacy standards. Real-world examples from community college bridge programs, GED/ESL classrooms, and workforce training environments will demonstrate how AI can reduce administrative burden, improve differentiated instruction, and support measurable skill gains.

Participants will leave with ready-to-use tools, a human-centered AI implementation protocol, and a persistence-focused instructional planning template designed specifically for adult learners balancing work, family, and education.



From Legislation to Learner Impact: Policy-Driven Innovation in Maryland Adult Education

Laura Ostrowski, Lauren Gilwee & Jenna Bachman

Strong adult education systems are built on intentional collaboration between policy and practice. This session highlights the powerful partnership between Maryland's Adult Education Office and the Policy Unit within the Maryland Department of Labor, demonstrating how coordinated efforts translate legislative action into meaningful learner outcomes.

Participants will explore how cross-unit collaboration supported the development and implementation of the 4th & Goal Policy—an initiative designed to help GED® test takers complete their final subject and earn a Maryland High School Diploma. The session will also highlight the introduction of MDiplomaWorks through SB0070/HB0297, showcasing how legislative strategy and program implementation work hand-in-hand to expand diploma access for adult learners.

Attendees will leave with an awareness of the legislative process in Maryland, including getting involved with and tracking bills, incorporating the process into civics instruction, and understanding the role of policy development in supporting adult education and adult learners. Participants will walk away with concrete ideas for embedding policy-informed decision-making into program operations to better serve adult learners and expand access to Maryland's diploma pathways.

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MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE**



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Presenters' Bios



Jenna Bachman

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Jenna Bachman is a Policy Analyst for the Maryland Department of Labor's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL). Her portfolio includes both Adult Education and Correctional Education. Prior to joining MD Labor, Jenna worked for the Maryland General Assembly, serving as a staffer in the House of Delegates for six consecutive legislative sessions. She has also worked for the Anne Arundel County Public Library and on local political campaigns. Jenna holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's Degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Maryland, College Park, both with a focus on language, rhetoric, and writing.

Adora Beard

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Adora Beard is the State Relationships Executive Community & Partner Outreach Manager for the GED Testing Service®. Adora leads efforts to empower educational service providers, strengthen access, and increase utilization of the GED program. Ms. Beard also leads the organization's community and partner outreach initiatives in collaboration with external experts and stakeholders.

Donna Butler

Donna Butler is an adjunct instructor at Prince George's Community College who is passionate about helping adults return to learning, build confidence, and reach their goals. She has spent many years working with adult learners from diverse backgrounds and is committed to creating classroom environments where students feel supported, encouraged, and capable of succeeding. At PGCC, Donna teaches all content areas of the GED. She believes learning is most meaningful when students can connect academic concepts to real-life experiences. Donna is especially motivated by the moment when students begin to believe in their own abilities and recognize new possibilities for their future. She earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Bowie State University. Donna lives in Maryland and enjoys traveling and exploring new places.



Dr. William Blake

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Dr. William L. Blake is a veteran educator, Morgan State alum, and author of *The AI School Leader*. He supports schools and adult learning programs in implementing human-centered AI to increase efficiency, equity, and learner persistence across K-12, community college, and workforce pathways.

Dr. Monica Bracho Handyside

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Monica Bracho Handyside, PhD, teaches Adult ESL at Prince George's Community College. A National Board Certified Reading & Language Arts educator, instructional specialist, and author of *Metacognition Matters*, she specializes in helping adult learners develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and language skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Dr. Teddy Edouard

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Dr. Teddy Edouard is a Teaching and Learning Expert and Coach at CBL. He holds a PhD in Adult Learning and Leadership, an MA in Teaching, and an M.S. in Learning Design and Technology. He has trained and spoken in more than 30 states. His research interests include learning theories and technology.

Lauren Gilwee

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Lauren Gilwee is the Director of Policy for the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning at the Maryland Department of Labor. Her portfolio includes resource acquisition/grants, policy, regulatory activities, and legislative efforts. With over 20 years of professional experience, she has worked in state government, K-12 education, the non-profit sector, and community college. Lauren holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Spanish, and a Master's



Degree in Romance Languages with a concentration in linguistics instruction. Specific areas of professional interest include multiculturalism in learning and integrated instructional models. When she's not working, Lauren enjoys baking and volunteering as a Storm Spotter for the National Weather Service.

Kenneth Gilliard, Jr.

Kenneth Gilliard is Program Manager for Cross-Cultural Student Services at Anne Arundel Community College. He leads equity-centered initiatives focused on belonging, leadership development, and student success. His work integrates coaching, cultural engagement, and community-building to support diverse learners.

Daquanna Harrison

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Daquanna Harrison, MA Psy, CNPM, is a professor of psychology and sociology, an innovator of modern andragogy, and the founder of Elevation Educational Consulting Group (EECG). A systems designer dedicated to economic liberation, she leverages two decades of expertise in psychology, training, and social justice to redefine the value of the adult education workforce through EECG's groundbreaking platform, Elevated PD (www.ElevatedPD.net). Annually, she trains over 700 professionals and conducts high-impact keynotes at national conferences, colleges, and retreats.

Beth Johnson

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Beth has served as Intake/Assessment Specialist at Harford Community College since 2019 but has been in Adult Literacy Education for over 10 years. Beth has worked with colleagues to improve processes, student interactions, and testing standards. Beth has presented with colleagues at various state and national conferences. In addition, Beth graduated from Harford Leadership Academy in 2022.



Mike Johnson

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Mike has been with Data Recognition Corp - DRC for over 15 years and has been involved with Adult Education for over 25 years. As the Adult Education National Director, Mike is responsible for guiding the development of all Adult Assessments for DRC including TABE and TABE CLAS-E to meet the needs of Adult Learners in ESL, Basic Skills and High School Equivalency programs. Mike's responsibilities include managing day to day operation of assessments target for Adult Basic Education and providing support test and program development related to industry direction and meeting the needs of the customers.

Chaw Kalayar

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Chaw Kalayar is Program Coordinator of the English for Refugees and Asylees program at Prince George's Community College. With over a decade in TESOL, she previously served as Deputy Director of an English Language Program in Myanmar for World Learning and has led workshops using experiential approaches.

Deborah Kennedy

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Deborah Kennedy is an experienced educator with specializations in adult language learning and language for specific purposes and expertise in instructional design, teacher training, materials and assessment development, and program management. Ms. Kennedy served from 2020 to 2024 as the Executive Director of the National Coalition for Literacy, an alliance of the leading national and regional organizations dedicated to advancing adult education, family literacy, and English language acquisition in the United States.



Dr. Chelsea Kirk

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Dr. Chelsea Kirk is an experienced education leader specializing in adult education and student-centered school design. She has spent over a decade leading programs that support adult learners in earning high school credentials while building pathways to college and careers, including her leadership at the Goodwill Excel Center. She holds a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania, a Master's in Teaching from American University, and a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College. Dr. Kirk is known for her commitment to expanding definitions of success and creating inclusive, high-support learning environments that empower adult learners to achieve their goals.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Ljubic

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Betsy Ljubic is currently an ELD and GED teacher with CREA, a program of Montgomery County Public Schools. She is also an adjunct instructor at Montgomery College and Frederick Community College (teaching Basic ESL, GED, academic ESOL, and English composition).

Julio Maestre

Julio Maestre is an adult educator who teaches ESOL and Spanish to diverse learners, including professionals and government personnel. He is also a Medical Assistant instructor, preparing students for careers in healthcare. As a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA) with a nursing background from Venezuela, he uses a student-centered approach and UDL to support all learners.

Lynn Napolitano

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Driven to help others, Lynn was a Tenured-Teacher within the State of New Jersey Public School Systems. She wrote Civics Curriculum and worked the classroom for nine-years. Lynn moved into ESL print and digital publishing in marketing, sales



and consulting jobs for ten years within East Coast Regions. She joined BurlingtonEnglish in 2018 and her understanding of blended learning is apparent with her customers she serves! Lynn holds a Master of Business Administration and Bachelor of Arts from the Pennsylvania State University. She also attended Fairleigh Dickinson University for a Masters of Teaching Degree.

Laura Ostrowski

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Laura Ostrowski serves as the GED Administrator™ & Adult High School Program Supervisor for the Maryland Department of Labor. In her role, she oversees implementation practices and professional development for GED® Test Administrators across the State. She also coordinates with the Maryland State Department of Education to guide and monitor the Adult High School Program. Previously, as an Adult Education Program Specialist, Laura provided leadership and technical assistance to WIOA Title II funded adult education and family literacy service providers in Maryland to promote learner and program performance as measured by state and federal standards. During her tenure, Laura served as State-level leadership for the National External Diploma Program (NEDP®), and she developed the first-ever NEDP® Roadshow, celebrating graduate success and delivering training and awareness to Maryland's NEDP® providers. She also championed the efforts of the adult education practitioner workgroups to produce and deliver the full complement of the seven online courses that constitute Maryland's Digital Literacy Framework Learning Modules. She also co-created the Office of Adult Education and Literacy Services's newsletter, *Between the Lines*, and she serves on the Communications Committee for the Benchmarks of Success for Maryland's Workforce System.

Laura previously served as a Career Coach for 5 years with the Johns Hopkins Health System (JHHS). She also possesses 10 years of experience in adult education and instruction as an Adjunct Faculty and NEDP® Advisor/Assessor at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). Her professional interests include digital education, adult career pathways, and community and workforce partnerships. She graduated from Northwestern University with a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics and earned her Master's degree in Adult Education and Evaluation from Marshall University.



Tanisha Paegar

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Tanisha Paegar is an experienced educator with over eleven years of dedicated service supporting special populations. She currently serves as the Special Education Instructor and Volunteer Coordinator at The Excel Center Adult High School, where she works to expand access to equitable education for adult learners.

Tanisha began her academic journey studying economics before pursuing degrees in Special Education and Secondary Mathematics. Her passion for supporting diverse learners led her into the classroom, where she developed expertise in differentiated instruction, growth mindset practices, and skill-building strategies that promote persistence and responsible risk-taking.

About five years ago, Tanisha transitioned into adult education as a GED instructor, bringing her background in special education and mathematics to a new population of learners. For the past three years at The Excel Center, she has continued to support adult students in achieving their high school diplomas while also coordinating volunteers to enhance academic support services.

Tanisha is particularly passionate about integrating habits of mind, growth mindset principles, and practical cognitive strategies into classroom environments to empower students to see themselves as capable, resilient learners.

Kathleen Patton

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Kathleen Patton is an educator with 17 years of experience working across adult education, English language education, charter schools, and public schools. Her work has also taken her internationally through the English Language Fellows Program where she supported English language learning and educator development in Uzbekistan. Kathleen currently serves as the Adult Education Manager at Briya Public Charter School, where she focuses on strengthening instructional practice and supporting teacher growth in a two-generation, family-focused educational context. She loves designing and facilitating professional



Lisa Rawlings

Lisa Rawlings, is President of the Board of Directors of the Maryland Association for Adult, Community and Continuing Education and has served on the board since 2021. She also leads UMB Workforce Initiatives at the University of Maryland Baltimore Office of Community and Civic Engagement. Lisa is a Baltimore native who has worked in higher education for about 20 years. In her current role, she helps neighbors find jobs and gain access to free career training. She also works within the University of Maryland Baltimore to mitigate barriers to employment for community members.

Kim D. Reed

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Kim D. Reed currently serves as the ABE/GED Director for Adult Education at Prince George's Community College. Over the span of 20 years in the field of adult education, she has assumed various roles, including those of an instructor, coordinator, coach, tutor, etc. She earned a Master's Degree in Finance and a Bachelor of Science in Engineering. She is past MAACCE Board member; a member of the GED Testing Service's Program Director's National Leadership Group; and was a contributor to the GED Playbook for Instructors. She loves learning! She is currently enrolled in ceramics at PGCC and is an avid traveler.

Grayla Reneau

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Grayla Reneau has over 19 years experience working in Adult Education. She is currently employed as an Education Program Specialists at the Maryland Department of Labor, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning. In 2009, Grayla earned a Wilson Reading Dyslexia Practitioner certification and taught reading strategies to basic skills learners for 11 years at a local community college. In 2021, she completed the Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) training designed for intermediate level ABE and ESL learners. Grayla is currently one of two State trainers for the Maryland STAR (Student Achievement in Reading) Program. She is also the lead specialist for IELCE/IET in Maryland.



Chantal Ross

Chantal Ross is a career educator and literacy researcher. She holds an MA in TESOL from The School for International Training and is a doctoral candidate in St. John's University PhD in Literacy program. She is passionate about reading instruction and professional development in adult education.

Brian Shedd

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Brian has been in the field of education for the last 24 years. He began his career as an Identification & Recruitment Specialist for the Georgia Migrant Education Program. He went on to teach K-5 ESOL and Spanish at the middle and secondary levels in GA and CA. Brian also spent time working for the CA Department of Education before joining DRC as an Assessment Solutions Consultant.

VerShaun Terry

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V (affectionately known by friends and peers) is a thought leader, a systems-first, people-centered leader who serves as a Director of Special Education in the District of Columbia. He is a leader with a coach's mindset that blends structure, empathy, and high expectations. Known for helping others uncover solutions while pushing through challenges; V thrives in mentoring roles where "aha" moments turn into real growth.

With experience across educational leadership, life coaching, and athletic coaching in football and basketball, V brings a unique voice that connects with students, educators, executives, and everyday leaders alike. His work focuses on emotional intelligence, personal growth, and practical leadership, equipping people to move from pressure to purpose. As a speaker, V is building a platform centered on leadership, hope, clarity, and impact, delivering messages that are honest, energizing, and actionable. Whether in schools, organizations, or community spaces, his mission is simple: help people lead better, live better, and become the best version of themselves in their everyday work.



Jose Torres

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Jose V. Torres is an ESL educator, scholar, and author specialized in foundational literacy for multilingual learners, having developed the research-backed "I Want To Learn English" project to address gaps in adult education. His work, which combines structured phonics with multimedia, is published in academic journals and presented at major industry conferences like TESOL and LESLLA. His show, "I Want to Teach English," is available on YouTube.

Jessie Thompson

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Jessie has served as an Instructional Specialist at Harford Community College since 2017, supporting Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED®, and ESL instructors and students. In her role, she collaborates with instructors and staff to strengthen instructional practices and improve student outcomes in adult education programs. Jessie is also a contributing member of the GED® Testing Service Student Handbook and the Rise to the Challenge Burlington English Podcast episode, "Strategies for Strengthening Student Accountability and Program Structure in Adult Education."

Dr. Antione D. Tomlin

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Antione (Anton) D. Tomlin, PhD, PCC, is a tenured Associate Professor and Chair of Academic Literacies and Program Director for the Life and Engagement Coaching Certificate at Anne Arundel Community College. As a first-generation college graduate and PCC-credentialed coach, his work centers on belonging, student success, and connection.



Jay Willetts

Jay Willetts has been an educator for 50+ years, concentrating for the last 25 years on adult education and specifically GED Math instruction. Mr. Willetts has taught GED Math classes at all levels, both in-seat and virtually, and at several programs in the Baltimore area. He has provided GED math instructional strategy workshops at the local, state, and national level for instructors and program managers.



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