What Role Does Adult Education Play in the Nation’s Economic Recovery?
In these days of drastic budget cuts, it is more important than ever to not only partner with our fellow adult educators across the country, but also to educate and inform our stakeholders and decision-makers about the economic impact of adult education.

Ninety percent of welfare recipient are high school dropouts. Three out of four food stamp recipients perform in the lowest two literacy levels. More than 60% of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate.

Dropouts from the class of 2008 will cost the state of Nevada almost $1.3 billion in lost wages over their lifetimes. It costs the state approximately $23,500 a year to incarcerate an individual. Nevada Adult Basic Education programs’ cost-per-student in FY09 was less than $600 a year. What are the figures for your state?

Adult Education is a good investment; it is the most cost-effective way to get people out of the social service system and keep folks out of prison. Adult Education provides opportunities to dropouts to return to school and build their basic skills, earn their GED and transition to college and technical certificate programs.

Adult Education’s increased focus on Career Pathways and Transition to Postsecondary programming also pays in lower unemployment rates across the country. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, the 2010 unemployment rate for Americans 25 years and older without a high school diploma: 14.9%; with a high school diploma: 10.3%; some college, but no degree: 9.2%; Associate’s degree: 7.0%.

For more information on MPAEA and our role in workforce development and economic recovery, Like our page at www.facebook.com/MPAEA, Follow us at www.twitter.com/MPAEA or visit our website at www.mpaea.org.

Parting Thoughts from Donna Bakke
This last year went by so quickly! MPAEA faced some challenges when I became president – no planned conference site for 2011, difficult economic times and limited travel budgets, and a few of our member states not participating in MPAEA. Through a lot of hard work, good communication, and collaboration, the board made some difficult decisions that hopefully will benefit the organization in the future. I want to thank all of the board members for a fun and successful year and wish Nancy Lambott and Jake Gustin well as they
Parting Thoughts (cont’d)

leave the board. For this next year, I am excited to work with our new president, Brad Deeds, and hope he has a successful and rewarding year as the leader of MPAEA. I look forward to working with the board to plan a successful conference in Montana in 2012!

HOW ABOUT A BIG CONGRATULATIONS AND HOORAH TO DONNA BAKKE FOR WINNING THE AWARD OF MERIT!!!!!!

The Award of Merit honors an individual who has made an outstanding contribution toward furthering the concept of adult education as a process continuing throughout life.

Award of Excellence (Colorado) acceptance speech by Stephanie Moran

It’s such a privilege to accept this award, and I thank my friends and colleagues for their support. We are all the unsung heroes of education because if it weren’t for us in this room and those teaching around the country today, our students would have nowhere to turn, and in some cases, I mean that quite literally.

Let me start by asking that age-old question: How many adult educators does it take to change a light bulb? Well, hang on a minute! You can’t go changing light bulbs just like that! You need to write a grant first and an action plan and include a way to sustain the change beyond the grant period. And of course, you have to be clear about what you are trying to achieve by changing the bulb—have you written your objectives and outcomes and reviewed them with the team and that new volunteer you’re training? Furthermore, what accommodations have you already tried to make sure that it’s the light bulb that needs to be changed and not your instructional approaches? And just because the light bulb may be flickering a bit—well, you can’t just discard it or push it out. All bulbs can learn and should be assessed appropriately to find the best learning style and modalities so that they can reach their full brilliance. What metrics will you use to assess the success of your teaching after the change is made? Do you have scaffolding in place to transition the light bulb to the next educational level, perhaps graduate as a compact fluorescent bulb? Finally, have you partnered with your workforce One Stop and community and technical college and businesses to bring change to all the light bulbs in your community? Got all that in place? Then by all means, go for it!

Sound familiar? Every adult educator can relate. That’s why I accept this award for every teacher who stays late to make that extra phone call to an absent student or a concerned guardian, who takes the time at the grocery store with a graduate who needs some advice on getting into college, who explains patiently—for the umpteenth time—how to punctuate a complex sentence or apply the Pythagorean theorem to a word problem, who loans a book she never sees again—who often buys the book that she may never see again—who drives over to the food bank for the student with downcast eyes because there is no food in the fridge.

I accept this award for the directors who work with so many organizations and other nonprofits to find inventive ways that strengthen collaborations and partnerships and bring essential services to our students and their families—people who have sometimes given up thinking that anyone cares.

I accept this award for the majority of adult educators, who work part-time with no benefits and still give their best to their students.

I accept this award for my hard-working colleagues in CAEPA, the Colorado Adult Education Professional Association, the organization that puts on the annual Rendezvous conference where hundreds of educators share their expertise. Since Colorado does not directly fund adult education, CAEPA’s mission is critical; it offers professional development opportunities to our far-flung colleagues and promotes advocacy and resource sharing to improve the quality of life for every Coloradan.
Acceptance speech (cont’d)

I accept this award for those of us who hear the door clang shut behind our students in America’s jails and prisons. We transform lives every day in our schools whether they exist in a public high school, a store front, a library, or a detention center.

I accept this award for our volunteers, who bring amazing skills to our students and our centers, helping with instruction, data mining, fundraisers, graduation speakers, board work, and more. These folks give freely their time, their money, their expertise, and their spirit, which is felt by all who benefit from their gifts.

I accept this award for my colleagues who teach people English so that they can become more engaged citizens, help their children more effectively with their school work, live healthier lives, and have more success in the workplace; for my colleagues who teach reading and lift adults from the darkness of illiteracy into the glad light of reading a newspaper or a book or a story to their children for the first time; for the family literacy teacher who goes into schools and homes and helps parents, teachers and children work together for the good of all.

Lastly, I accept this award in the name of adult educators who know that all people deserve an education even when they may not have made the healthiest choices in the past. We open the door and invite all to enter, and we work tirelessly to keep our doors open so that when our students are ready for a new direction, we are there to guide, to support, to inspire, and to applaud them. Thank you for doing all that you do—most of all, for believing in our students.

Award of Merit Winner
Donna Bakke

Award of Excellence Winners

Arizona
Lily Beth Brazones

Colorado
Stephanie Moran

Idaho
Kevin Laughlin

Montana
David Strong (posthumously)

New Mexico
Hilda Pacheco-Peeples

Nevada
Angela Andrade

Wyoming
Kelsee Miller

Utah
Emily Box

Scholarship acceptance letter by Susan Morss

What a privilege to receive an MPAEA Scholarship to attend COABE in San Francisco! As it was my first time attending a national conference of this scope and size, the number of attendees representing every state amazed me. I valued the opportunity to learn how other states run programs. Another thing that really amazed me was the conference program, the size of a spiral notebook, and the extensive choices of workshops, speakers, and events. It took much time and thought each evening to decide which workshops to attend.

Picking a favorite workshop is impossible, as several ones stand out for their excellence. I found the presentation on the Center for Community Building to End Poverty extremely inspiration. The ability of a small group of people to make such a huge difference in their communities is very encouraging. The Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN) presented another excellent workshop on 21st Century Skills and Digital Literacy. In this session, the presenter showed some amazing resources and tech tools.
Acceptance letter (cont’d)

The skills that 21st century learners will need were clearly offered and explained. A third workshop that I really enjoyed was GED Boot Camp. The presenters had so much positive energy and gave so much concrete information about how to create this type of block class. They gave us a flash drive with all their handouts and I even got a boot camp hat. Lots of fun.

The keynote speakers, Cheryl Keenan and Dr. Frank Benest were both informative and interesting. Their messages about the need to keep adult education aligned with the global economy and prepare students for careers and postsecondary are vital. As I’m writing this article, I’m appreciative of the time to reflect on the conference. One of the highlights for me personally was meeting MPAEA Board Members at our pre and post conference meetings. It was nice to put faces with names on emails. I am honored to be part of a regional professional organization and join such a dedicated and enthusiastic group of people. The other real bright spot in the conference was the MPAEA Awards Luncheon. Seeing my friend and colleague Hilda Pacheco-Peeples recognized was very exciting.

Of course, spending time in San Francisco is always a thrill. The dinner Bay Cruise, even if it was overcast and freezing outside, was fabulous! Great food, drinks, music, and dancing with friends is always enjoyable. The conference blended business and pleasure just perfectly. Thank you MPAEA for making this fantastic professional development possible!

Scholarship comments by Kelsee Miller

What a wonderful conference we had in San Francisco! I so look forward to seeing this group of people each year and this year was no exception! San Francisco provided a wealth of culture that is unlike anything in my great state of Wyoming!

The breakout sessions were invaluable to me this year as we are continually facing new challenges from motivating our adult students to performance based funding with everything in between! One session in particular that provided me with an “ah-ha” moment was presented by Anthony Chan, Grant Services Manager, Texas LEARNS/ the State Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy, Houston, Texas.

His techniques of letting students discover basic math rules for themselves is genius! I walked away with new tips and techniques that I have tried in my classroom that help with the fear and anxiety that math can produce.

It is always wonderful to have an opportunity to network and learn about other programs! Learning useful strategies for the classroom drives to the core of our purpose: to help adults better themselves!

Scholarship comments by Laura Porfirio

The fact that we were able to attend the COABE/CCAE Conference was because of great fortune and great efforts. Six of us from Pima College Adult Education in Tucson went to San Francisco thanks to multiple funding sources, including scholarships from MPAEA. Me and my cohorts: Regina Suitt – manager of Adult Ed Services, Mireya Gomez – assistant coordinator of Civics & Student Leadership, Rosalinda Gallardo – AmeriCorps Service volunteer and Ambassador, and Silvia Baiza – Student Leadership Council member and Ambassador – drew from no fewer than 5 different pots of money for professional development and student activities. We were honored to have our session on Student Leadership and Advocacy in Arizona as a Featured Presentation in the Social Justice Strand. We appreciated the focus on meaningful, empowering education and student-centered practice... in the Social Justice strand and in the Public Policy Panel. It’s a healthy counterbalance to the extensive focus on employability and standardized testing and practice in adult education. We are energized to continue doing student leadership develop in Arizona, promote social justice oriented practice, and follow through on the effort to raise awareness and advocate for adult education across the nation.

More scholarship comments by Mary Guillen

It’s so important to have this conference, so we can learn from others from all over the country and get different ideas, especially from the students.

When you meet others and learn about their process of learning and advancing, that makes you feel like there’s a larger effort that we’re a part of. For example, it was great to hear the student stories in the “Shame to Learner to Leader” workshop led by adult learners from the Berkeley READS program. There was a woman who never went to school and didn’t know how to read. Nobody knew she didn’t know how to read or write, and now she’s presenting at a national conference.
Comments (cont’d)

We met people from Rhode Island where they have an adult learner organization that’s totally run by adult learners. We also met with representatives from VALUE, and now they want us to help plan the next conference.

It was great to present our workshop for some teachers and administrators who are interested in doing student leadership development, but there weren’t very many people in the audience. Next time, it would be so great if there was more publicity and advertising about students’ participation and presentations. The few who attended were very interested, and need to know more from the perspective of students and how to organize student councils.

Additional scholarship comments by Mary Koscinski

A great part of the conference was learning more about social changes and how the vast social networking can be incorporated into Adult Education centers to help communicate with our clients. I had never thought of using social networking as instant messaging for our center. However, when I talked with some of my students, they were thrilled to think of communicating with Adult Education on a social network. I hope to have a Blog ready for our center before Fall sessions.

Breakouts at the conference were a wonderful resource, explaining how to set up a network and use it to reach many of our students who move often to follow work. Hopefully, communicating through the social network will help clients stay in touch, finish educational goals, and be able to compete in the global economy, earn family sustaining wages, and make meaningful advances in their jobs.

Additional scholarship comments by Lou Workman

The conference in San Francisco welcomed 90 MPAEA members. Some are new members this year. It was a pleasure working with the COABE staff and everyone involved in putting on this conference. I enjoyed working with the COABE/CCAE registration staff as well as at the MPAEA table. The dragon dance performance was a rare treat. The keynoters and presentations were well done, and it was exciting to be part of such a large conference. I’m now looking forward to the 2012 conference in Helena, where it will be good to be among mostly familiar faces again. Thank you for the opportunity of representing MPAEA at our joint COABE/CCAE/MPAEA 2011 conference.

More scholarship comments by Donna Bakke

The 2011 COABE conference in San Francisco was an opportunity for me to witness how important collaboration is to the field of adult education. Facing difficult economic times, a hotel in the midst of a union contract issue, and dwindling travel budgets, CCAE and COABE, with the help of MPAEA, had a successful and well attended conference. Before, during, and after the event, the coordinators of the event were in constant communication with the MPAEA board – checking every detail and working together to make the conference a success.

Through my participation in this event and the planning process, it reinforced my belief that collaboration is the key to strengthening our organization and its members. Often times as we work daily to meet the needs of our students, staff, teachers and the program requirements, we forget to reach out to our fellow adult educators. I encourage you to participate in forums, reach out to other educators, and get involved. Our website now has Twitter and Facebook links. Use these tools to communicate with fellow MPAEA members. In addition, our advocacy committee members are sending out important and pertinent information for you to use in your communication with local, state, and federal legislators. As a member of MPAEA, you have access to valuable tools to communicate and collaborate with others in the field. I encourage you to take advantage of those tools and make a difference in your life and the lives of others!

www.mpaea.org
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The MPAEA conference in San Francisco was the second MPAEA conference I have ever attended. The first was ten years ago. My work partner and co-author, Jennifer Quinn-Williams, and I had received an innovation grant from MPAEA for a pilot project to create book clubs in our adult ELL classroom. We also started writing books of fiction for our students that connected to their lives and that they could love. We presented our ideas to a full crowd at the conference in Phoenix.

With my interest in reading and books, I was initially looking forward to seeing what other programs and other states were doing along those lines. But several things influenced me to change my focus at this convention.

Fast-forward to today: The first four books in the Newcomer series, plus Creating Book Clubs in the English Language Classroom, A Model for Teachers of Adults are published by The University of Michigan Press. As a way to promote them, I brought two sets of books to the conference and they were raffled off at the MPAEA State Meetings. I’m very interested to see how the winners like and use them.

I am a different kind of conference “attendee” than I used to be. In the ‘old days,’ I raced around going to as many sessions as I could—sometimes two in one time slot—and gathering all the handouts I could, and never exploring the host city. Now I’m more intentional about focusing on one or two topics, plus adding a couple of just-for-fun sessions. And I leave time to relax, enjoy my colleagues and see some sights. It was easy to do in San Francisco.

The structure of the whole conference helped. There were several general plenary sessions for all. Then, it was organized into four strands or Inquiry Areas which attendees could choose from to follow throughout the conference. Each Inquiry Area had a plenary, and earmarked sessions during the Concurrent Sessions. The strands were ‘The 21st Century Classroom,’ ‘Social Change,’ Workforce Development,’ and ‘A Learner-Centered System,’ which I attended for the most part. The nice thing was that I wasn't locked into these because the Concurrent Sessions were filled out with many choices within our familiar Educational Focus areas (ESL, ABE, Technology, Professional Development, etc.) Several times I went to something in another strand or educational focus.

My work now involves coaching and training teachers of ELLs rather than teaching the ELL students directly. I enjoyed learning about Faculty Inquiry Groups, an example of a Learner-Centered System. It was interesting to think about the similarities to Learning Labs and collegial protocols which I help facilitate in several secondary schools in the Denver area.

The people I knew and those I met greatly enhanced my experience. I loved the conversations, exchange of ideas, shared meals, walks around China Town, and the dancing and views of the Bay area from the cruise ship. I really enjoyed the conference, and so appreciate the scholarship which allowed me to go. Thank you!
Reflections (cont’d)

and scary for many, but I still had this lingering concern.

When it comes to this new work, I think the field is beginning to see the scope of what is necessary to survive. Unfortunately, I didn’t see a focus at the conference on what our students can do for their programs. I saw that reflected in the poor attendance at the three sessions which were focused on student learners and leaders. I think it was unfortunate and a missed opportunity to learn from our students. At one session, a Director even mentioned that he was saddened by the low number of his colleagues listening to their very own students.

We have a great opportunity in adult education to work with and learn from student leaders. We can create an opportunity for adult education staff and student leaders to learn from each others’ experiences, share the political context of their communities, lay the foundation for an active network of adult education advocates who can effectively connect with key community leaders and organizations, further develop a vision for adult education to face political challenges, and finally help students and staff develop skills to think and act critically.

This is a pivotal moment in the history of Adult Education, a moment when each of us will be challenged to stand up and say clearly what we want adult education to be and what we don’t want it to be. If we want to continue as a field, we have to act and we have a responsibility to provide our students with the tools to act too. The elimination of adult basic education opportunity for the hundreds of thousands of working people throughout the nation is one more step in the direction of disregard for the needs of not just the most vulnerable among us, but for the future welfare of the nation as a whole. The future of our most vulnerable is precisely the future that as a community and nation we will either enjoy or lament ourselves. We all have to think, learn, and act together.

Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it. Marian Anderson

Keynote Speaker:

Cheryl L. Keenan
Director of the U.S. Department of Education’s Division of Adult Education and Literacy in the Office of Vocational and Adult Education

Photo by Brian Castagne

Andy Tyskiewicz
COABE President
(above photo)

Matthew Smith (left) accepts the George C. Mann Distinguished Service Award from Mike Wada (right), CCAE State President

Photo by Brian Castagne

Keynote Speaker Dr. Frank Benest
Co-Keynotes (invited):
Brenda Dann-Messier
Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education
Jane Oates
Secretary for Employment and Training Administration
Sunrise yoga in the Cityscape room of the Union Square Hilton provided energy for a stimulating day of learning at the 2011 COABE Conference! Energy was also generated by the thousands of adult educators who came together to share and learn. We are so often challenged by the lack of resources and priority assigned to adult education programs that it was gratifying to see that we are part of thousands of professionals engaged in providing educational services to adult learners.

The 21st Century Classroom Inquiry Area was particularly relevant. Featured speaker Steve Midgley, deputy Director for Education Technology, US Department of Education encouraged us to embrace technology, saying essentially that we cannot ask students to “power down” in order to learn, when technology is the way they learn and interact with the world.

Consider:
- The only way for the US to lead the world in college graduates is to increase adult skills and prepare them for post secondary. Just graduating those in the system won't do it
- Facebook has 500 million users
- 35 hours of video is uploaded every minute of every day on YouTube
- Twitter has 110 million tweets a day - much is irrelevant. How to extract relevant info from the noise is what education needs to be about
- Wikipedia is an incredible jumping off point for almost everything. It creates a staircase to knowledge
- OpenSource School - all papers are blogged and commented on via Craigslist, Google and others
- We can put our brains in the “cloud;" we don't need to know everything - just how to get it
- 47 percent of teens can send a text with their eyes closed
- 94 percent of students who went to college use the Internet. Of those who did not graduate from high school only 39% do
- By 2020, 50% of high school classes will be taught online

Implications for Teaching/Assessment
- It is hard to stay up to date with technology!
- We need to look for different; not the same but electronic
- Assessment – consider video games; they measure the level and adjust on the fly. If it’s too hard or too easy, it's not fun. They have used technology to deliver the game at the appropriate level
- Harness the power of play.
- Technology helps bridge time and place for part time learners and teachers. We can still learn from one another even if we are separated by time and place.
Adult TESL Approaches for 21st Century Results workshop by Aiko Nagao

Presenters:
Tanya Conover, Multi-level ESL Instructor & EL/Civics Grant Coordinator, PWCS Adult Education ESOL Program, Manassas, Virginia/ conovetl@pwcs.edu and Debby Cargill, Lead ESOL/Program Developer at Prince William County Schools, Manassas, Virginia/ cargildh@pwcs.edu

The workshop addressed "What do adult ESOL students need in order to be able to participate in the 21st century global community"—21st century workplace skills: digital literacy, inventive thinking, effective communication, high productivity, etc.

Instructors need to be aware of those skills and instructors should be trained to be able to teach those skills in class.

They introduced "process writing for students," focusing on dynamic integration of language usage that "makes brains happy."

A process approach to writing instruction gave us a nice step-by-step writing process chart:

- Ideas are like seeds. (Prewriting - getting ideas)
- Ideas sprout. (Drafting - expressing ideas)
- Ideas take root and grow. (Peer Review and Revising – developing ideas)
- Clear and powerful Ideas reach out to touch the community. (Editing and Publishing)

Service learning (they have a literacy fair in school, students volunteers plan/advertise/run the event, volunteer peer tutors who are former students are available for current students)
Project-based learning (Students make posters of their writings and present in class or at the literacy fair)
Technology in the classroom (Teachers teach basic computer skills, and students can print out pictures for their poster projects)
In the end, they publish students' work (writing) in Our Voices

It was a great presentation. We had to engage in some activities such as discussion and hands-on activities during the presentation and they showed a couple of students' learning journeys with pictures and video: First day of class with their nervous face to the day of presenting their work at literacy fair with confidence and happiness. They emphasized student-centered instruction, meanwhile teachers assist as facilitators.

The presenter got so emotional when she showed the video of her student presenting at their literacy fair. I understand that feeling as a teacher. The students' success is my success. It would be not difficult to implement the idea of their step-by-step writing process in any levels of class.
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