Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators: Conference Review

In February, Chrissie Klinger, Workforce Development Project staff, attended the Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators (PACTA) conference in Hershey, PA. This year's theme was Pathways to Career Readiness.

When preparing adult learners to enter the workforce, or assisting learners to progress through their career pathway, providing opportunities to explore a variety of careers early in the educational process is crucial. Although some adults come to a program with a career goal in mind, many learners know little about possible careers that may match their interests and skills. During the Equity Exploration session, administrators from York County School of Technology shared best practices for helping both females and males explore non-traditional career options. By bringing female welders and engineers into classrooms to speak with learners or having health career posters hanging in the classrooms showing male nurses, learners were encouraged to explore careers that they may have thought they couldn't do. Educators can also show learners career videos located at careeronestop which include both males and females working; these videos can be a great resource for adult learners to discover the daily tasks and responsibilities of an occupation.

Another resource to consider using with adult learners to explore careers is the Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE & ESOL Classroom Curriculum Guide. Activities in Section I: The Cultural Context for Career Awareness help both native and non-English speakers explore careers and recognize personal bias and stereotypes that may affect the types of occupations they choose to pursue. Since career exploration may lead to career goal changes, incorporating career exploration activities into CCRS-based lessons during the first few weeks of class may help instructors better contextualize instruction and keep learners more engaged.

Another session at PACTA-Personalizing Career Development provided a framework that motivates learners to take ownership of their career development. The presenters shared how teachers offered opportunities for learners to explore career ladders and lattices, determine transferrable skills within and across industry sectors, and develop personal career portfolios that provide evidence of academic and employability skills.

In adult education classrooms, using the Foundation Skills Framework and requiring learners to document evidence of skill competency can promote learners’ ownership of
their career development. *Embedding Workforce Preparation Skills into Instruction Using the Foundation Skills Framework* guides instructors through the process of helping students collect evidence and provides formative assessment tools to help students personally monitor their success. For more information on this course or for personalized assistance around Career Pathways or the Foundation Skills Framework contact Chrissie Klinger (cok5111@psu.edu) or KayLynn Hamilton (klh267@psu.edu).