

2022 Advancing Equity in Career-Connected Education Summit

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The summit hosted by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) brought together a diverse range of presenters and panelists, including a re-entry student currently enrolled at a Michigan university. The summit emphasized the federal government's commitment to advancing an equity agenda for career-connected education, including adult education, career and technical education (CTE), community colleges, and correctional education. Adult education providers can use the information from this highlighted session to ensure equitable access and support for their diverse learners.

"Meeting the Diverse Needs of Adult Education Students" – presenters listed below.

Trauma informed practice - Statistics emphasize the need for trauma informed practices within our educational programs and with student transitions – 31% of dropouts and 80% of refugees meet the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Creating instructional environments with high structure-high warmth, a healing centered lens, instructional time for reflecting and making personal connections to new material, and a positive organizational response to stress is critical for students to persist who are experiencing hyper- or hypo-arousal responses to anxiety or stress. As equally important is a program's commitment to providing access to external agencies for support and building relationships with community partners who are safe and inclusive, so that students can experience a confident, warm hand-off to partners who can be trusted.

Addressing disability inclusion - Statistics illustrate the prevalence of learners with disabilities enrolled in adult education programs across the nation or employed by the nation's workforce – 25.5% self-report disabilities (visible or invisible) and 21 million working-age adults have disabilities according to the 2019 census. Significant gaps exist between those with disabilities and those without in education, employment rates, and earnings. Four ways program administrators can address disability inclusion within adult education: 1. All program materials including recruitment brochures, orientation handouts, and digital platforms should be accessible. 2. All staff should be trained to understand disabilities and

how resources can be made accessible. 3. Adult learners with disabilities should be given the tools to make employment more accessible for them – for instance, self-advocacy training. 4. The culture should be stigma free so that teachers and staff with disabilities feel included and valued. Other recommendations for building and maintaining inclusive programs include conducting a self-audit (askearn.org), prioritizing areas for improvement, identifying and providing training, examining policies and procedures, and ensuring on-going support and access to resources for staff and students.

Hy-flex learning model - Successes and challenges of conducting simultaneous instruction, when a group of students are online and in class at the same time. With this approach students can choose the model that fits them; in-class students can continue to improve their digital skills; enrollment increases; and persistence and retention improve. Classroom management can be a challenge along with managing multiple presentation or instructional tools at one time.

Q & A - **Q:** What are the most effective systems for connecting students to support services and community partners? **A:** Have a designated point person, depending on the size of the organization, who would be the primary contact and source for referral. Additionally, human and financial resources should be dedicated to partnership-building. Students should have access to a counselor and a student handbook (print and digital) to access critical resources when needed.

Panelists Lucy Rosario, District Program Facilitator for Culture, Minneapolis Public Schools; Dahlia Shaewitz, V.P., Transition, Disability, and Employment, Institute for Educational Leadership; and Alisa Takeuchi, ESL Teacher, Garden Grove Adult Education