

Conference Review: National College Transition Network Conference

From November 12th to 14th, 2018, Chrissie Klinger, Workforce Development Project staff, attended the National College Transition Network (NCTN) conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This year's theme was *Advancing College and Career Readiness: Preparing Adult Learners for the Future of Work*. The panel discussions and breakout sessions highlighted innovative approaches that are helping adult learners successfully enter and transition through career pathways programming.

One of the keynote speakers at the conference was lifetime Boston, Massachusetts native, Aaron Dale. Aaron shared his personal adult literacy journey and how he navigated various career pathways on- and off-ramps to arrive at his current position as a post-secondary coach at X-Cel Education. He urged conference participants to think about how they help adult learners set goals. Aaron expressed his concern about many adult learners losing their personal identity by pursuing career goals that people decided for them. Aaron encouraged adult learner practitioners to help adult learners have full ownership of their goals, and learners should not be afraid to change their goals along the way. He emphasized the importance of helping adult learners understand how to get on and off various pathways and navigate opportunities for upskilling and reskilling throughout their lives.

A panel discussion titled *Leveraging Technology to Prepare for the Future of Work* covered how technology is helping adult learners upskill, reinforce classroom learning on the go, and become lifelong learners in an increasingly digital world. Panelist Jessica Rothenberg-Aslami, CEO and Founder of Cell-Ed, noted that although new technologies are allowing learners to access more and more learning opportunities, the role of student coach (also known as, student support coordinator or navigator) is still very important. Even as adult education practitioners and adult learners increase technology usage, technology will not replace the need for regular check-ins to discuss career goals and re-visit action steps.

Andjela Hariatma Kaur, a research assistant at University of Massachusetts at Boston, reinforced the importance of one-on-one meetings with adult learners on a regular basis to explore career goals and evaluate action steps during her session, *Motivational Interviewing in Adult Education and Workforce Development*. Motivational interviewing is a student-centered approach to goal-setting and working through barriers as they arise. Recently in

Pennsylvania, participants of the *Reentry Resources and Best Practices for Offenders* sessions had an opportunity to practice some motivational interviewing skills. (This face-to-face professional development opportunity will be offered again during the spring of 2019). Adult education practitioners can also learn more about motivational interviewing in the on-line course *Supporting Adult Learner Transition: The Role of the Student Support Coordinator*. The next offering of this course is in March 2019 and is accessible through the PD Portal.

Another resource from the NCTN conference worth sharing is the Minnesota-based website, Atlasabe.org. Several adult education practitioners from Minnesota discussed resources that are currently used to support students to choose and complete programming matched to their career goals. Pennsylvania programs may be interested in exploring Atlas's resources for [managed enrollment](#). The site also has a section dedicated to [adult career pathways curricula and lesson plans](#).

For more information on career pathways or workforce development strategies, please contact KayLynn (klh267@psu.edu) or Chrissie (cok5111@psu.edu).