

2026 Adult Basic Skills Conference



FROM LEARNING TO EARNING Empowering Adult Learners for Economic Success

All times are Pacific Standard Time

October 16, 2026

9:00 AM Welcome from State Title II Director - Donna Lewelling

9:10 AM Welcome from HECC Executive Director - Ben Cannon

9:20 AM Morning Panel - Oregon Community College Presidents

9:50 AM Agenda and Structure of Virtual Conference

10:00 AM Breakout Sessions #1 (see session information below)

11:00 AM Breakout Sessions #2 (see session information below)

12:00 PM Lunch (1 hour)

1:10 PM Afternoon Panel – COABE and Burlington English

2:00 PM Breakout Sessions #3 (see session information below)

3:00 PM Breakout Sessions #4 (see session information below)

3:50 PM Closing Remarks

4:00 PM Conference Concludes

Breakout Session #1 Topic (10:00-10:50)	Room
Session Title: Using AI to Support Teaching in the ABS Classroom Session Description: Many educators are resistant to exploring the use of AI and other online programs in the classroom, often because of questions of integrity. This is valid, and as intelligent people we know that efficiency can save time. This is the POV I take when it comes to using new tools like AI: can it add improvement to my lessons without a bigtime commitment? Not to rely on it for curricular content or direction, but to use it as a tool to invigorate lessons we already do. Join me if you would like to see some free platforms that can boost your lessons with quick quiz games, great visuals, alternate ideas on presentations and group activities, plus more. Presenter(s): Lori Lundine, GED® Instructor, Rogue Community College	Room 1
Session Title: Career and Industry Exploration Session Description: Discover potential careers and industries that align with your innate skills and interests. Explore creative ways to validate students' direction and decision making. Presenter(s): Kyle Kavas, UPLIFT Leadership	Room 2
Session Title: What's New with GED®! How Products & Initiatives Like the GED & Me™ Mobile App & Post Grad Support are Boosting Engagement, Progress, and Success Even After the Credential! Session Description: We're meeting learners where they are at. Today's GED® learners are independent, mobile, and seeking support that fits into their daily lives. With nearly 500,000 downloads, the GED & Me™ Mobile App meets learners where they are—on their phones—by combining targeted practice, short instructional videos, and personalized guidance to support progress and motivation. We are also meeting learners where they are going. Let's talk about what comes next! GED Testing Service® is finding new ways to support grads with their next chapter. Come get informed about our latest exciting developments and initiatives and share your success stories! Presenter(s): Lisa Pool-Osorio, State Relationship Manager, GED Testing Service®	Room 3
Session Title: Understanding Dyslexia: Empowering Adult Learners and Earners Session Description: Participants will hear from a panel of adults with dyslexia and/or other common co-occurring conditions and learn what has empowered them to successfully navigate the classroom and the workplace. Educators will have the opportunity to ask questions and get tips to help learners with dyslexia and other conditions prepare for a successful transition to the workplace and help them advocate for themselves. Presenter(s): Panel: Gareth Hood, Chris Chudy, Brandon Ashford-Whitfield, Jesse Cox	Room 4

Breakout Session #1 Topic (10:00-10:50)	Room
Resources: Danielle Thompson and Betsy Ramsey, of The International Dyslexia Association-Oregon Branch	
Session Title: Portland YouthBuilders: A Holistic Model for Supporting Opportunity Youth Session Description: Portland YouthBuilders will share an overview of its 30+ year program model supporting low-income youth (17-24) from historically marginalized communities in completing high school, developing workforce skills, and beginning pathways toward living-wage careers. This session will explore how academic instruction, hands-on construction and technology training, wraparound supports, and long-term career development are integrated into a cohesive learner-centered model. Presenters will highlight the role of relationship-based practice, high expectations, barrier removal, and interdisciplinary case management teams in supporting student persistence and success. Participants will leave with practical strategies for coordinating holistic supports and building workforce-connected educational pathways within their own programs. Presenter(s): Allison Callahan, Career Services Manager, Portland YouthBuilders and Micah Young, Academic Team Lead, Portland YouthBuilders	Room 5
Session Title: Open-Source Mindset Materials: Share Out Session Description: Presenters will discuss fixed vs. growth mindset, imposter syndrome, and present open-source mindset materials that can be embedded into curriculum. We will set up a site for participants to post their own resources, collect those resources, and send them out to everyone who gives us an email address. Presenter(s): Lisa Nielsen and Melinda Nickas, GED® Instructors, Clackamas Community College	Room 6

Breakout Session #2 Topic (11:00-11:50)	Room
Session Title: Adapting Foundational Literacy Approaches for Adult Beginning English Learners Session Description: Most foundational literacy teaching materials focus on helping native English speakers (often children) develop efficient reading skills. Most ESOL teaching materials focus on helping learners who are already literate in their first language. The objective of this workshop is to identify practical ways to bridge these two practice domains to enhance foundational literacy and ESOL instructional methods when working with early-literacy adult beginning English language learners. Presenter(s): Amy Grant, Teacher and Instructional Designer, Beaverton Literacy Council	Room 1
Session Title: Finding Funds - Oregon Financial Aid Session Description: This presentation provides a general overview of the financial aid process including key terms and concepts, an overview of Oregon Grant programs, and the OSAC Scholarship Application. Presenter(s): Olivia Perez and Selena Galindo, State Grants Administrators, Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission	Room 2
Session Title: Impact of Adopting the Teacher Portal Session Description: We at Portland Community College use the Teacher Portal as automated system to keep track of attendance, various reports, CASAS scores, MSGs, etc. TOPSpro® is a parent software for Teacher Portal, so whatever change happens in TOPSpro® reflects immediately in Teacher Portal. Also, CASAS scores are uploaded directly into TOPS and Teacher Portal. Instructors can see NRS Level placement. Attendance is available for both distance learning and face-to-face options. Presenter(s): Jasmin Huskic, Database Coordinator, Portland Community College and Anne Greenhoe, ABS Director for Adult Ed/GED and ESOL, Portland Community College	Room 3
Session Title: Career Power: Preparing Adult Learners for Workplace Success Session Description: Communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, problem solving, and work ethic are essential for workplace success. This interactive workshop supports educators in teaching employability skills through practical, classroom-ready lessons grounded in realistic workplace scenarios. Participants explore activities that build academic and professional skills while preparing learners for the workforce. By the end of the session, participants can identify key transferable skills, design or adapt lessons promoting real-world skill development, facilitate problem-based learning, and leave with concrete tools and resources they can immediately implement to prepare students for the modern workplace.	Room 4

Breakout Session #2 Topic (11:00-11:50)	Room
Presenter(s): Patricia Celidon, Educational Sales Consultant, ProLiteracy/New Readers Press	
Session Title: Use Instructional Routines to Support Student Progress and Persistence Session Description: In math classrooms, instructional routines are predictable structures that encourage thinking and shared discourse—not just right answers. Unlike one-off activities, instructional routines are meant to be used again and again. They create a rhythm that helps foster classroom environments where students feel safe exploring ideas and teachers can focus on understanding and guiding student thinking. We will discuss how they can be used in tandem with learning standards to address and identify gaps in skills, learner progress can be accelerated, and persistence supported. This session will focus on math instructional routines and participants will engage in routines and discuss the variety and types of instructional routines and their benefits. Participants will be given resources for incorporating these into their classrooms. Presenter(s): Lori Lundine, GED® Instructor, Rogue Community College and Aren Lew, Consultant for the SABES Math and Adult Numeracy Curriculum and Instruction PD Center at TERC	Room 5
Session Title: Education to Employment: The Importance of Executive Function Skills in the Transition Session Description: In addition to the academic skills and career training that students learn in our programs, learning executive function skills such as organization, prioritization, and time management also helps with employability. Learn about the impact of EF skills on employment, ways that students can build their EF skills while in school, and how EF development can be integrated into the classroom. Presenter(s): Angie Ebba, ICAP Coordinator, Mt. Hood Community College	Room 6

Breakout Session #3 Topic (2:00-2:50)	Room
Session Title: Re-engaging Youth through Education and Work Readiness Partnerships Session Description: During this workshop, Youth Development Oregon (YDO) staff and system partners will share details about Oregon’s integrated network of Reengagement and Workforce providers, all of whom support connection between education and career pathways. Participants will discuss the community-based programming that is opening doors to increased youth opportunities. In the context of Oregon’s Reengagement System, participants will identify and explore their specific needs in expanding local educational and work readiness options for the youth they serve. Presenter(s): Paul Sell, Associate Director, Youth Development Oregon and Jarrod Shaw, Grants Manager/Workforce Analyst, Youth Development Oregon	Room 1
Session Title: Supporting Adult Learners with an Open Educational Resource Session Description: We are creating an OER textbook that integrates all four GED® subjects. This integrated textbook is centered on themes that are culturally relevant and inclusive of students lived experiences. The thematic nature of this text, combined with the overarching subjects, encourages student and teacher collaboration. We will share the first three units of this project. In this session, participants will interact and share ideas about teaching strategies and how they support learners. Presenter(s): Juliet Pursell, Adult Education Instructor, Portland Community College and Sam May-Varas, Professor, Portland Community College	Room 2
Session Title: A Panel Discussion: From Learning to Earning Session Description: Join us to explore the shifting landscape of adult education and the growing urgency for job-readiness skills. In this interactive session, participants will discover how BurlingtonEnglish supports programs in achieving their vision for the future from a panel discussion of Oregon instructors. Attendees will leave with actionable insights and practical strategies to strengthen workforce alignment to more effectively support learners transitioning into meaningful employment. Presenter(s): Mara Schwartz, Customer Manager and Daphne Lagios, Customer Representative, BurlingtonEnglish	Room 3
Session Title: An Update on Oregon’s Implementation of Advance CTE’s new National Career Clusters® Framework: A central building block for every learner to chart their path to career success! Session Description: Oregon is at an exciting moment. Advance CTE’s 2024 update of National Career Clusters® Framework better reflects today’s evolving industries, learner experiences, and workforce needs. Oregon’s CTE programs, industries, and occupations have an opportunity to use the new framework to better align their work for everyone’s	Room 4

Breakout Session #3 Topic (2:00-2:50)	Room
benefit. In this interactive session, speakers will quickly share an overview of the new framework and Oregon's efforts to adopt and implement to date. Then participants will engage in an interactive experience to catalyze questions, discussion, feedback, and other opinions to inform state development of implementation resources. Presenter(s): Marshall Curry, State and Federal Policy Advisor, Higher Education Coordinating Commission and Liz Rain, CTE Education Specialist, Oregon Department of Education	
Session Title: Foundational Skills in Reading Instruction Session Description: Based upon a structured literacy approach, members of the Language and Literacy Fund, Portland Literacy Council, and Portland Community College are collaborating on a program to teach native English-speaking students with low (or no) literacy skills. We'll discuss how we prepare tutors to work with these learners, the resources that are available and how they're deployed in the program, and how we're working with instructors at PCC to match tutors to learners who will benefit. The program is poised to scale to other community colleges and venues. Please join us to learn more. Presenter(s): Julie Hiefield, Literacy Specialist, Language and Literacy Fund; Lorie Wigle, Foundational Literacy Director, Portland Literacy Council; Lucy Marincel, Volunteer Literacy Coordinator at Portland Community College	Room 5
Session Title: IET Educator Networking & Support Session Description: Are you an Integrated Education & Training (IET) educator or an educator interested in sharing with and learning from other IET educators? Join us! We want to strengthen relationships and professionally support IET educators across the state. This session is for all past, current, and potential IET educators, whether you are part of an ABS, Career Pathways, or CTE program. Presenter(s): Melody Abarca-Millan, IET Faculty Lead and ESOL Instructor/Program Co-Chair, Chemeketa Community College; Rosa Lopez, Career Pathways Coordinator, Lane Community College; Tracy Henninger-Willey, Career Pathways and ESL, Lane Community College	Room 6

Breakout Session #4 Topic (3:00-3:50)	Room
Session Title: Achieve, Compete, Thrive: A Data-Driven Look at the Future of Work Session Description: As ABS students explore their futures, better outcomes can be expected if the exercise is an informed one. This session will highlight some of the narratives driving current and long-term demand in different career clusters, as well as explore those trends across the state. We'll also show free tools and resources that can help students and jobseekers get informed about job openings and career opportunities in Oregon. Presenter(s): Jason Payton, Occupational Economist, Oregon Employment Department	Room 1
Session Title: Tutor Training inside Oregon Correctional Facilities Session Description: This panel of Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) Education Directors will discuss ABE inside of DOC facilities. There will be an emphasis on Adults in Custody (AIC) tutors and how they are highly valued as part of the DOC Education Program. The Ed Directors will discuss general tutor training, how they train, skill sets that are needed, success stories, etc. Presenter(s): Jay Sklenar, Greg Jones, and Carol Fitzgerald, Education Directors, Department of Corrections	Room 2
Session Title: From Comics to Critical Thinking Session Description: Students in all areas of Adult Education have limited or unhappy experiences with literacy. Educators need to find materials that will catch adult students' attention and keep it engaged if they are to reach the learning outcomes required. This presentation will exhibit and demonstrate the use of a wide variety of materials that have been used a variety of classroom contexts. From comics and graphic novels to young adult literature and non-fiction financial business books. There will be time to share personal and professional experiences. Presenter(s): Stephina Brewer, Adult Educator, Central Oregon Community College	Room 3
Session Title: IET Data Tracking for Title II Data Professionals Session Description: This solutions-focused workshop is designed specifically for WIOA Title II data professionals managing IET data. Building on the discussion from the summer OCABSD meeting, this session will dig deeper into workflows, documentation, TOPSpro Enterprise® specifics, partner data alignment, and statewide consistency. Participants will share tools, troubleshoot challenges, and help shape Oregon's emerging statewide IET FAQ and Promising Practices Guide. Bring your workflows, templates, and	Room 4

Breakout Session #4 Topic (3:00-3:50)	Room
questions; this collaborative session aims to clarify processes, strengthen alignment, and identify practical strategies to continue supporting high-quality IET data tracking across the state. Presenter(s): Kelly Zinck, Education Team Research Analyst, Higher Education Coordinating Commission	
Session Title: ESL Conversation Zoom Class Session Description: A highly participatory Zoom workshop in which students practice conversational skills in community settings. Vocabulary is presented through visual and aural formats to acquaint the students with the subjects presented and the environments to be experienced (for example: doctor's offices, telephone conversations, restaurants, stores, banks, emergencies, birthday parties, etc.). Students participate as a group, improving their conversational skills together. Grammar, pronunciation, and phonics are emphasized throughout the class. Presenter(s): Evalyn Hansen, Instructor, Rogue Community College	Room 5