

# California Adult Education Insider

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## OTAN Program Honors Adult School Students

**Adult Education Students Succeed** is a new OTAN (Outreach and Technical Assistance Network) program that recognizes successful students in the state's 375 adult schools. Graduates and program completers of adult education programs are eligible to be nominated by their schools.

One of the first to be so honored is **Hector Pinon**, now a teacher at **Placer School for Adults**, the same school where he started out as an ESL student.

In 1988, at age of 15, Mr. Pinon left Patzcuaro, Mexico, to work with his brother at a mill in Auburn, but what he really wanted to do was go to high school. Instead, he attended ESL classes in the evening where he showed such promise that his teachers urged him to go on to the local community college.

His employer, a landscape company, helped pay for his studies. He first earned an associate's degree at Sierra College and then, two years later, a bachelor's degree from California State University Sacramento. But he still wasn't finished learning and went on to get a master's degree in Spanish and become a part-time professor at Sierra. "I was a full-time student and a part-time employee. It seemed to me that I never wanted to stop going to school."

Today, as an American citizen, Mr. Pinon encourages other immigrants to get an education. "I want to set an example for people," he said, "because I know many of them don't believe in themselves." Evidence that he has overcome his own self-doubt is that he now teaches Spanish at Placer Adult School and also works as a volunteer in the classroom of the same teacher who taught him English many years ago.

For additional student success stories, go to [www.adultedlearners.org](http://www.adultedlearners.org). For details on the nomination process visit [www.otan.us/index.cfm?fuseaction=fullstory&id=9349](http://www.otan.us/index.cfm?fuseaction=fullstory&id=9349).

## Nominate for GED Award By April 2

The application period for nominations for the 2004 Cornelius P. Turner Award is now open. Named for the founder of the GED Testing Program, the Turner Award was established to honor GED graduates who have made outstanding contributions to society in one of the following areas: education, justice, health, public service, or social welfare.

Nominations may be submitted by GED administrators, GED chief examiners, GED examiners, GED and ABE teachers and program staff, adult education directors and CDE staff.

Nominations must be postmarked no later than April 2, 2004. Nomination forms and guidelines are available at [www.otan.us/images/publicarchive/News/TurnerAward.pdf](http://www.otan.us/images/publicarchive/News/TurnerAward.pdf).

## Distance Learning Symposium

On March 29-30, the California Distance Learning Project will host a symposium on the practical, hands-on uses of distance learning resources and tools. The event, which will take place at the Sacramento County Office of Education, 10474 Mather Blvd. in Sacramento, is free for adult education programs receiving federal and /or state adult education funds. Scholarships are available for small programs.

For a schedule and complete list of workshops, visit [www.otan.us/index.cfm?fuseaction=fullstory&id=9524](http://www.otan.us/index.cfm?fuseaction=fullstory&id=9524). For registration and further information go to [www.cdlopnl.org](http://www.cdlopnl.org). Contact: Dennis Porter, director, CDLP, tel. 510-664-0437, email [porter\\_d@pacbell.net](mailto:porter_d@pacbell.net).



### News clip of the month...

#### CSCAE's Drop-In Day

*Highland Community News, San Bernardino Adult School:* "Of the 135 who came for counseling, over 100 enrolled in courses. This was the first year the school has had a special day to get dropouts back in school and it was considered a 'tremendous success.'"



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### Programs of Excellence...

## Charles A. Jones Skills & Business Education Center

**Angela Bevill** was a homeless single mother with three children and no high school diploma. Although she lacked education, marketable skills, and a roof over her head, Ms. Bevill had no shortage of inner strength and determination.

That fortitude served her well; within a span of two years she obtained her GED, graduated with honors, and earned a \$700 scholarship which she used to enroll in the Electronics program at the Charles A. Jones Skills & Business Education Center (Skills Center) in South Sacramento.

One of over 5,500 adults who walk through the Skills Center's doors each year, Ms. Bevill is now taking a serious look at a cutting-edge career — that of home technology integrator.

The Skills Center offers Sacramento's adult community more than 20 vocational training programs. The campus is also home to a busy One-Stop Career Center which is open to the general public and offers workshops and career planning assistance.

A crucial ingredient to the success of the Skills' Center's vocational programs is the close relationship with regional industries through program advisory committees. Comprised of industry professionals, these committees provide input on workplace trends and needs, thus enabling Skills Center staff to consistently offer state-of-the-art training for students.

Partnerships with local businesses offer students "externships" in their field of endeavor. For example, the Medical and Pharmacy programs have partnered with the U.C. Davis Medical Center where students are placed during their final six-weeks of study. This allows them to work in their chosen field under the supervision of both Medical Center and Skills Center staff to ensure that their

experience is successful.

One partnership that has recently been honored by ACSA's "Partners in Educational Excellence" program is the Skills Center's Heavy Duty Truck Driving partnership with the California Highway Patrol and the Prison Industry Authority. Through this relationship, truck driving students haul materials and supplies for community service projects, and transport items to warehouses maintained by Prison Industries.

Another critical component for student success is the Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) program, which prepares adult students of limited English proficiency to enter vocational training programs and ultimately be successful in the job market. The VESL program has been extremely successful in assisting students to become comfortable enough with their English to pursue vocational classes, obtain employment, and gain a greater understanding of life in their new country.

A vast majority of students learn about the Skills Center from friends and neighbors who are current students or successful graduates. Student **Darryl Scott** learned about the school from a family member.

A man with a past, Mr. Scott walked through the doors of education, leaving behind a life on the streets and on the run. From gang leader to student council president in just over a year, he is now passionate about his future and the opportunity for legitimate self-sufficiency. He speaks to incoming students at the school's weekly orientations and will be a featured speaker at the CCAE spring conference in Monterey.

Skills Center Principal **Kirk Williams** acknowledged that the school is successful because everything is a team effort. "We are a Program of Excellence because of the quality of our staff and students, and everyone at the school understands this," he said.

For students like Angela Bevill, Darryl Scott, and thousands of others, the school represents a beacon of hope and an opportunity for a second chance.

## Assembly Examines Adult Ed

The Assembly Select Committee on Adult Education was created to address concerns over proposals contained in both the Master Plan for Education and the Governor's 2003 budget proposal that all adult education in the state be consolidated under the community college system.

The committee, whose findings will be reported to the full Assembly, will assess the organization and structure of existing adult education programs by examining these topics:

- Delivery of services, funding structure, and collaboration efforts
- The role of adult education within the larger pre-K to university continuum

- Other funding, structural, and implementation issues.

Committee members are chair **Carol Liu** (D-44), **Lynn Daucher** (R-72), **Mark Wyland** (R-74), **Ed Chavez** (D-57), **Jackie Goldberg** (D-45), **Loni Hancock** (D-14) and **Patricia Wiggins** (D-7).

So far, three hearings have been held but on two of those occasions the Governor called a special session and all testimony was heard by committee staff only.

Though the committee's role is primarily a fact-finding one, it does have the potential to become a joint committee with the State Senate which, in turn, could appoint a task force to recommend implementation of elements of the Master Plan.

Visit [www.assembly.ca.gov/acs/newcomframeset.asp?committee=274](http://www.assembly.ca.gov/acs/newcomframeset.asp?committee=274)

**What's Working: Report from the Field**

**Students with Learning Disabilities**

**Eric Ingle** said he has been down so low that there was nowhere to go but up. The tattoo sleeves on his arms tell of another time in his life, marked by hard living and hard labor.

"My education's not been that great," he said. "I'm tired of living on the low level in society." At 32, with a wife, two small children and a body worn down by construction work, he was ready for a change.

In October he enrolled at **Winterstein Adult Center** and this summer will try to pass the GED, after having dropped out of high school in the ninth grade.

The San Juan Unified School District's Adult Education program helps thousands of people such as Mr. Ingle complete their educational goals.

One segment of the population, however, remains under-served: adults with learning disabilities. Because San Juan's adult education program lacks the necessary funding to test for learning disabilities, these students miss out on approved testing accommodations and the specially-tailored curriculum they require in order to succeed.

**Vanessa Adolphson**, a counselor at Winterstein, estimates that 20% of the school's population has a learning disability.

The district's adult education program serves 20,000 students annually, and of the roughly 5,000 enrolled in high school completion or GED courses, 1,000 are suspected of having learning disabilities. But like Mr. Ingle, few have been officially diagnosed.

Eric Ingle knew there was something different about the way he learned. He couldn't follow lectures or memorize formulas from the blackboard. But, he said, if he could write it, he could retain it.

For years he struggled in school, falling farther behind until he gave up. "It hurt my self-esteem," he said. "It made me feel like a loser."

Students often come to the program with no transcripts or testing data, said **Linda Martin**, the district's director of adult education. "We take them where they are and go from there," she said.

Once enrolled, students are given placement tests to determine their math and reading levels, though the school neither screens nor tests for disabilities.

They are then given a study plan based on their general test scores and are expected to complete exercises from a workbook.

That method isn't always the most effective, said **Angel Van Strate**, a Natomas resident who has dyslexia and struggles with reading.

The 20-year-old student said the reduced class size and individualized attention are helping her succeed despite her disabilities.

Instructor **Tom Brewer**, who has taught at Winterstein for 20 years, suspects most of his students have learning disabilities, which helps explain their poor academic achievement and frustration.

He said veteran teachers find it isn't difficult to spot certain learning disabilities; students transposing letters and numbers, not paying attention, being restless and not retaining information are warning signs.

Despite an expertise based on years of "slugging it out in the field," Brewer said program instructors need to assess specific learning disabilities. A specialist also is needed to develop a plan of study for the students and tailor curriculum for teachers.

But, Ms. Martin points out, adult education programs get half that funding elementary schools receive from the state for student attendance and can't afford such a diagnostic. She says it is a plight experienced by adult education programs statewide.

Borne of this same frustration, **Elk Grove's Adult and Community Education** program applied for a \$183,000 grant from the county Department of Human Assistance to launch a pilot program that tests for learning disabilities.

The grant will pay for administrative costs associated with the test and a full-time psychologist trained in special education to interpret the test results.

Ms. Martin says San Juan will be watching and learning from Elk Grove's program.

In order to help teachers prepare for serving these students, CalPRO, the California staff development project, has developed and now offers a one-day workshop for identifying and serving students with learning disabilities. For more information about this training contact your local Regional Resource Center.

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## Adult School News & Notes

✓ Building Bridges to Business (B<sup>3</sup>) is a joint effort of **Liberty Adult Education** in Brentwood, and **Los Medanos College** in nearby Pittsburg. The program's goal is to assist non-English speaking workers obtain jobs and be successful in the workplace. B<sup>3</sup> is funded via a two-year grant from the federal Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. Fees for tuition, books and materials are waived for eligible students who also receive free on-campus childcare and help with transportation costs. Classes, which range from five to 10 weeks, include vocational training in retail, customer service and office occupations, plus necessary verbal and writing skills. Contact: **Gene Claire**, Liberty Adult Education, 925-634-2565, [clareg@Libertyuhsd.K12.ca.us](mailto:clareg@Libertyuhsd.K12.ca.us).

✓ **Donald "Dobie" Gelles**, director of **Castro Valley Adult School**, will retire in July after 38 years with the district as a teacher, counselor and administrator. He will be replaced by **Jerry Green**, vice principal at **Hayward Adult School** and incoming president of the Bay Section of CCAE.

✓ **Walter Ruehlig**, a special education counselor at **Pittsburg Adult Education Center**, has been named "humanitarian of the year" by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors. Mr. Ruehlig has helped build homes in Pittsburg with Habitat for Humanity and in Mexico with the Corazon Group. He also serves on the county Human Relations Commission and organized Antioch's "Season for Non-Violence" peace march in 2001.

✓ The **Los Angeles school board** has approved a plan to link high school students to vocational training programs the district runs for adults. The proposal will create mini-high schools of a few hundred students each on the campuses of LAUSD's 11 occupational centers. The students will take a college-prep academic program for part of the school day and spend the rest learning skilled trades. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, studies show that pairing a career-training program with ambitious aca-

ademic courses not only lowers the dropout rate but improves student performance in English, math and science.

✓ **Elizabeth Tapia**, a GED and High School Diploma instructor at **Monrovia Adult School** was named 2003 "Teacher of the Year" for Monrovia USD. Ms. Tapia, who has been at Monrovia for six years and is active in CCAE, is the first adult school teacher to be so honored by her district.

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