

# OVAE CONNECTION



## Community Conversation Held With Career and Technical Student Organizations

OVAE Assistant Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier continued her series of Community Conversations on May 6 in Washington, D.C. with students, teachers and advisers from Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs). Issues pertinent to the success of CTE were covered along with those relating to the forthcoming reauthorization of the *Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act*. The students (pictured above) shared their experiences as members and leaders of CTSOs. They focused on the opportunities these organizations provide to develop their leadership skills and enhance their academic and technical competencies. Several students said their participation in a CTSO has given them confidence and changed their lives. In a separate conversation, Dann-Messier asked teachers and advisers if schools are doing a good job preparing students for success both in college and in their careers. This led to a discussion of issues such as: the relationship between core or academic courses and CTE courses; the differences between what colleges expect of high school graduates and what employers expect of them; the lack of adequate funding for CTE in high schools; the differences between rural areas and suburban and urban areas and how these affect the need for and the delivery of CTE; and the attitudes of parents and students toward CTE. Especially important, given the current emphasis on measurement of results, was a discussion of the best ways to measure the success of CTE. Dann-Messier highlighted the need for rigorous and reliable measures of CTE in order to make the case for its funding in budget requests and congressional appropriations. The teacher and adviser participants agreed, but they expressed concern about the effectiveness of current assessment tools.

## Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy (TEAL) Center Launches Website

The [Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy \(TEAL\)](https://teal.ed.gov/) Center has launched a website. The TEAL Center, funded by OVAE and operated by the American Institutes for Research, is designed to improve the quality of teaching in adult education with a particular focus on writing for adult basic education (ABE) students. The center offers an intensive program of professional development and individualized technical assistance to participating local staff in 12 states: California, Florida, Idaho, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, and Wyoming. It also supports quality instruction in adult education programs through: professional development and technical assistance, including materials and strategies for professional development. For more information on project resources, including topical fact sheets, a searchable bibliography, and links to external sites, please visit: <https://teal.ed.gov/>.

## Basic-Skills Classes Key to Upward Mobility

The [Hechinger Report](#) found that many U.S. workers in low-paying jobs try to get ahead by taking free basic-skills classes. Workplace literacy programs offer opportunities to improve basic skills and to advance in careers. While the number of programs offered is unknown, hospitals, hotels and the food-service industry have provided them for years. Anthony Carnevale, director of the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, estimates that \$6 billion is spent on them annually. It is unclear whether that level of investment will continue due to high rates of unemployment providing companies with a large pool of literate applicants. Evidence from Jobs for the Future is that about 60 percent of participants in its program earned some sort of certification, and 47 percent received raises. A study done by [W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research](#) found that workplace literacy programs increased students' interest in attending college and that employers and employees alike "reported significant morale gains and frequent productivity gains." Harvard's Bridge to Learning and Literacy Program reported that after completing bridge-program classes, many employees saw hourly wages jump from \$9 or \$10 to more than \$15. Such gains may mean not having to work multiple jobs, enjoying a higher quality of life, or pursuing higher education.