



# TEXAS Adult Education & Literacy QUARTERLY

**Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy & Learning**

## **Congressional Briefing Highlights Effective Adult Education and Upskilling Policies**

*by Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, Director of Upskilling Policy  
National Skills Coalition*

It was standing-room-only for National Skills Coalition's recent Congressional briefing on adult education and upskilling. More than 65 Congressional staff and other attendees packed a Senate briefing room to hear from state leaders about effective policy approaches for helping American adults to build skills and advance in the workforce.

NSC Director of Upskilling Policy Amanda Bergson-Shilcock kicked off the briefing with an overview of the issues. Amanda explained the crucial role of federal policy in creating "on-ramps" that enable adults with basic skill gaps to access educational opportunities that equip them for middle-skill, family-sustaining jobs.

Choices that Congress makes in the coming months as key legislation is reauthorized will affect how many adults are able to pursue upskilling opportunities and how successful they are able to be, she said. Reauthorization for several major federal investments – the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, Higher Education Act, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families – can be strengthened to better support upskilling.

Amanda thanked Senator Jack Reed (RI) for his office's assistance in arranging the briefing and for his longtime advocacy as a champion for adult education. NSC is a supporter of Senator Reed's proposed [CTE for All Act](#), which would foster tighter connections between Perkins Act programs and adult education programs.



# Many Graduate from IET Programs

by Anthony Fraga, Socorro ISD

In the rural town of Socorro, TX is a Community Learning Center with roughly 25 years of experience educating adults. The Socorro Independent School District Community Education Program has recently seen changes to its program that has led to state recognition by the Texas Workforce Commission for the past two years. Now, the SISD Community Education Program boasts a successful career pathway program that has incorporated the use of the district's Career and Technical Education (CTE) facilities generally reserved for use by its high school students.

This June 2017, Socorro ISD Community Education Vocational IET Program graduated 12 students in their HVAC certification program, 13 students in their Computer Maintenance program, 16 students in their Microsoft Office program, 6 students in their Law Enforcement program, and another 7 students in the Building Maintenance and Electrical certification program. Career Pathways and Transitions Coordinator, Rosanne Loya, says, "We wouldn't have the success without the cooperation of many people in the community." She says that besides the support of her director, she has welcomed the support of SISD's CTE Director, George Thomas, who has developed one of the best Career and Technical Education programs in the southwest. Mr. Thomas has made available every resource that the district has to adult basic education students. In other words, each program is using the facilities at the same high school location that Socorro ISD's high school students use. Adult basic education students enjoy, for example, the use of the HVAC lab at El Dorado High School while the Building Maintenance and Electrical Technology students use the Electrical Technology classroom at Americas High School. Ms. Loya explains how

the program is currently coordinating the use of the district's medical magnet school so that adults have the opportunity to receive their Certified Nursing Assistant certification and/or Certified Medical Assistant certification this coming school year.

Andres Talavera is one example of the successes that are coming from this great program. He began his studies in the ESL program four years ago, after immigrating to the United States from Cd. Juarez, Chihuahua. During this time, he completed the GED program and went on to become a U.S. citizen two years later through our citizenship class. This school year, Andres, a very proud father of 2 daughters, will complete the Computer Maintenance and Repair course. He will receive the industry-recognized A+ Certification and the Network+ Certification and improve his chances of being employed in El Paso, Texas.

Socorro has been able to meet its Career Pathway target by creatively expanding its program without having to invest in infrastructure or without having to use its limited budget to rent facilities or without paying high tuition costs at post-secondary institutes that

provide this type of workforce training. Ms. Loya is proud to say that the Socorro program offers these skills development trainings at no cost to the participant. In a community like Socorro, TX, which is in desperate need of employability skills, the program could not have come at a better time. Ms. Loya goes on to say, "In this economically disadvantaged community, we are happy doing our small part in helping



ing our students earn industry and state-recognized credentials that will help them build their economic self-sufficiency."