



SHOP TALK # 19:

New Efforts to Bridge the Gap Between Adult Education and Workforce Education and Training

TEA/Texas LEARNS, the Texas Workforce Commission and The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board have worked steadily for more than four years to identify ways to integrate adult education and post-secondary opportunities for Texas' adult education students. The discussion of system integration occurs on many levels, but real change takes place at the instructional level.

Elma Ramirez, an ESL instructor at Harris County Department of Education (HCDE), was recently certified as a National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Core Curriculum trainer, making her the first adult education instructor in Texas who has pursued and achieved this certification.

Elma is now positioned to provide her students with a unified vision of instruction that integrates industry related subject matter with English language learning, a service to students that usually requires not only separate instructors, but usually separate institutions. Janell Baker, adult education program director at HCDE, was instrumental in facilitating Elma's pursuits. Janell plays a key role in workforce literacy efforts with the Houston Business Roundtable and Houston Safety Council. She continually seeks ways to make adult basic education more effective in meeting industry's critical workforce needs and has a number of workforce literacy initiatives in place.

NCCER: (<http://www.nccer.org>) The National Center for Construction Education and Research is a not-for-profit education foundation created to help address the critical workforce shortage facing the construction industry and to develop industry-driven standardized craft training programs with portable credentials.

The NCCER Core Curriculum is an introduction to craft skills development that includes instruction modules in basic safety, construction math, introductions to hand and power tools, introduction to blueprints, basic rigging, communication, and employability skills. Known as the *Contren* Learning Series*, these materials were developed by industry for industry. Industry is expected to face a shortage of trained craftsmen to replace a generation of retiring baby boomers.

While the curriculum was not written for those with limited English language proficiency, it is a valuable tool in the hands of a trained and certified instructor with expertise in second language learning and the adaptation of authentic materials for instructional use.

NCCER has begun the developmental process of translating into Spanish a designated group of select crafts training materials including the following level one courses: carpentry fundamentals, concrete finisher, drywall level, pipefitter, electrical, rigging fundamentals, masonry, and industrial coatings. Products already available in Spanish are the Core Curriculum, Safety Orientation, and Sprinkler Fitter.

A complete 2008 online catalog can be found on NCCER's website. The *Contren* Learning Series* is distributed by Pearson/Prentice Hall. Both printed texts and online programs are written at an 8th grade reading level based upon the Flesch-Kincaid metric. For additional information, see http://www.prenhall.com/crafttraining/core_curriculum.html.

SHOP TALK is a series sponsored by Texas LEARNS to highlight promising practices and address issues, concerns, and questions related to meeting the adult education needs of Texas' emerging, incumbent, and displaced workers. For additional information or to request that a particular topic be addressed, contact Barbara Tondre at btondre@earthlink.net