

# IX.A.

## CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION Hartford

**TO BE PROPOSED:**  
**June 2, 2021**

**WHEREAS,** Adult education exemplifies the concept of lifelong learning with nearly ten thousand Connecticut residents in adult basic education/secondary school completion programs and nearly twelve thousand Connecticut residents in English as a Second Language (ESL) and U.S. citizenship preparation programs; and

**WHEREAS,** The Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE), through its CAACE Student Award, recognized eight individuals who have overcome numerous obstacles and hardships to persist and succeed in adult education; and

**WHEREAS,** These individuals exemplify the spirit and determination necessary to achieve a goal and serve as role models to all adult and young learners in our communities; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** That the Connecticut State Board of Education recognizes the following individuals for their accomplishments in this major adult education endeavor:

Fathima Anis	Farmington Adult Education
Malgorzata Augustowska	Manchester Adult Education
Carol Bennett	EASTCONN
Angel Freeman	Naugatuck Adult Education
Maria Lazaro	EASTCONN
Chaimae Mamjoud	Middletown Adult Education
No Nguyen	East Hartford Adult Education
Anthony Rongetti	Danbury Adult Education

and directs the Acting Commissioner to take the necessary action.

Approved by a vote of \_\_\_\_\_ this second day of June, Two Thousand Twenty-One.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Secretary  
State Board of Education

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Acting Commissioner of Education

**DATE:** June 2, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Recognition of the Connecticut Association for Adult and Continuing Education Student Award Winners

*Executive Summary*

**Introduction**

Adult education is an essential component of Connecticut’s lifelong educational system, providing individuals with instruction in U.S. citizenship, English as a Second Language (ESL), basic skills, and secondary completion. In the 2020-21 school year, nearly ten thousand individuals were enrolled in adult basic education/secondary school completion programs, and nearly twelve thousand individuals were enrolled in ESL and U.S. citizenship preparation programs. In order to persist and succeed in adult education, many of these learners face substantial challenges to balance their life activities.

**History/Background**

The Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) honored eight individuals from Connecticut’s adult education programs on March 12, 2021, for their perseverance and accomplishments. We would like to acknowledge these individuals for their efforts and recognize them as excellent examples of lifelong learning for all students in the adult education system.

**Recommendation and Justification**

I recommend that the State Board of Education recognize the following individuals for their accomplishments and the following commentary provided in their nomination processes:

**Fathima Anis**  
**Farmington Adult Education**

Ms. Anis is a student who breaks through barriers, overcomes obstacles, and pursues learning and knowledge with a level of humility only seen in few individuals. Regardless of the concept or its corresponding level of difficulty, Ms. Anis actively works with the material until she has a complete understanding. While on this educational journey, Ms. Anis also helps other students in class to overcome difficulties and learn material and concepts presented in class. Ms. Anis’ presence helps to put the other students at ease, and her pleasant demeanor helps to enhance the learning experience for all.

**Malgorzata Augustowska  
Manchester Adult Education**

Ms. Augustowska was born in a rural village of Kopciufka, Poland and lived on a farm with her family. At 16, she left school when her family decided to immigrate to the United States. Her father passed away shortly afterwards. With the support of her extended family, she was able to start a whole new life in America repairing houses, which ultimately led to her family establishing a small real estate business. Ms. Augustowska knew that if she were to achieve true success, she had to thoroughly learn English, obtain a diploma, and ultimately study and obtain her real estate license. As her English improved, she was able to take a Customer Service Class specifically designed for EL students, and then she was ready to enroll in the GED program. She has made strong progress and wants to earn her GED by the end of the 2020-21 school year.

**Carol Bennett  
EASTCONN**

Ms. Bennett is a caretaker by nature. She has raised two children and has spent her career working in group-homes caring for the residents. When she started the National External Diploma Program (NEDP) program, she was also taking care of her father-in-law who had health issues. Even with this responsibility and exhaustion, Ms. Bennett pushed herself to set aside time to work on NEDP. She continuously challenges herself. She also volunteers once a week at a church in Putnam, Connecticut to help prepare and pack meals for over 100 people. Additionally, Ms. Bennett also enrolled and passed an online CNA course to get her a step closer to her goal once she earns her diploma. Over this past year, Ms. Bennett has faced, like all of us the challenges of COVID-19, but she has also experienced the loss of her father-in-law and her brother-in-law within months of each other. Ms. Bennett is almost done with the NEDP program, and she will be earning her diploma over the next few months. Her drive and big heart are motivators to those around her. She is pushing forward, keeping her goals in her sight. She has been recognized for the CAACE Learner of the Year Award.

**Angel Freeman  
Naugatuck Adult Education**

Ms. Freeman has an extremely kind heart and supports her friends, family, classmates, and anyone else in need. When Ms. Freeman came into Naugatuck Adult Education, she took the program by storm. She would not be stopped from earning her credits and made sure that she was going to finish and receive her diploma. Her perseverance, dedication, and goal to finish the program was truly admirable. Every week, Ms. Freeman would simultaneously work on her independent studies and her core academic classwork while maintaining multiple jobs during the day. She would forbid personal strife and familial matters from hindering her progress of achieving her academic goal nor her outgoing personality. Ms. Freeman is very

resilient and has a talent for handling adversity without letting it get the best of her.

**Maria Lazaro**  
**EASTCONN**

Ms. Lazaro is a delightful student who is always willing to contribute and look for solutions as a general approach to life. She is an inspiration to her classmates, family members, and church community. Ms. Lazaro started her educational journey once her own children were grown and out of the house. Given her low literacy levels, she first had to learn to read and write in her native language (Spanish). This was a slow process but one that she took on with great effort and dedication. After about three years of extremely hard work, she obtained her Spanish GED. Once she obtained her diploma, she enrolled in our National Customer Service Credential and completed several ServSafe certifications. She has turned her passion for cooking into a small entrepreneurial venture. Ms. Lazaro sells authentic Mexican food and specialty cakes for weddings and other special occasions. Since the pandemic began, and despite not being comfortable with the new technology, she has attended every live Zoom class. Her dedication, enthusiasm for learning, positive attitude, and community and family involvement make Maria Lazaro a dream student.

**Chaimae Mamjoud**  
**Middletown Adult Education**

Ms. Mamjoud emigrated from Italy to the United States in 2016. She wasted no time and, in the fall of 2016, enrolled in ESL classes at Middletown Adult Education. Through her perseverance, consistent practice, and excellent attendance, she progressed to a higher level. By 2019, she enrolled into the GED preparation classes and concurrently enrolled her two children into Manchester's Family Literacy Program. Ms. Mamjoud was an active student and utilized the resources available at adult education. She attended resume writing workshops at our College and Career Center that later helped her gain part time employment at Subway and FedEx. In January 2020, Ms. Mamjoud passed her GED exams and became a high school graduate. As a participant in the WIOA grant, she qualified for the Phlebotomy certification at Middlesex Community College. She has been working as a phlebotomist with an end goal of becoming a nurse. This October, Ms. Mamjoud also passed her citizenship exam. As a new U.S. Citizen, she proudly registered to vote for the first time.

**No Nguyen**  
**East Hartford Adult Education**

Ms. Nguyen was born in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. As a young girl with a Black American father, she and her family faced many hardships growing up. After she left

Vietnam for the Philippines, then finally for the United States, she married and had four children. Now, many years later, Ms. Nguyen has four grown, highly successful college-educated children. The time felt right for her to come back to school and focus on her own education.

As a model student, she showed up for her ESL class each evening eager to learn. Last year, East Hartford had the opportunity to visit New York City for a Lancôme “Give Back Day.” Ms. Nguyen was one of the four women chosen to visit the city with two chaperones. It was her first time in New York City, and she realized her recent English skills came in handy as the students navigated streets and chatted with other students present at the event. Ms. Nguyen came home to East Hartford with additional confidence, knowing that she had visited New York without needing anyone to translate for her. ESL students make up the largest group of adult education students in East Hartford and across the state, and Ms. Nguyen’s story is an inspiration to all of them.

**Anthony Rongetti  
WERACE/Danbury Adult  
Education**

Mr. Rongetti is an incredibly hard-working and driven young man. He is a good-natured student who always strives to be the best person he possibly can be. He has a desire to learn and a real passion for doing well in his studies. His respectful personality and his kind, affable nature make him a real asset to the WERACE program.

Mr. Rongetti takes the time to figure out what the best next step would be and then proceeds to move forward making good choices. He has always been true to himself; a wonderful trait for anyone in today’s world. His self-reliance and dedication are attributes that make him a remarkable student and person. He believes in treating all people with respect and dignity. These characteristics will continue to positively contribute to his future endeavors. Although Mr. Rongetti may have had some difficulty when in traditional high school when he was younger, he never gave up on himself and is now a model student. He continues to work hard to achieve high standards. He often states that it is not where you start, but where you finish that matters.

Prepared by: Sabrina Mancini, Education Consultant  
Adult Education

Approved by: Glen Peterson, Division Director  
Office of Student Supports and  
Organizational Effectiveness