

# VII.D.

## Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

**To Be Proposed:**  
**June 1, 2022**

**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 United States 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:

Ridha Ahmed	Hamden Adult Education
Teneshia Biggs	New Haven Adult Education
Phyllis Dorman	East Hartford Adult Education
Edna Elias	Naugatuck Adult Education
Min Min Feng	Norwich Adult Education
Tracy James	Windsor Adult Education
Kadire Kuscal	EastConn Adult Education
Fatima Saidu	Manchester Adult Education

and directs the Commissioner to take the necessary action.

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

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, Commissioner of Education

**Date:** June 1, 2022

**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 2021-22 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 11, 2022, 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:

**Ridah Ahmed  
Hamden Adult Education**

Mr. Ahmed grew up in Iraq, moved to Jordan, and became a refugee in 2009. The immigration process included stops in Frankfurt, Chicago, Pennsylvania and finally New Haven. Mr. Ahmed wanted to come to the United States because of opportunities to pursue his passion in art. He sold his artwork in Jordan and tried to sell some in the United States, but the English language became a barrier. Mr. Ahmed enrolled in ESL classes at Hamden Adult Ed and attained his U.S citizenship in 2014. Concentration was often difficult for Mr. Ahmed as he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder from all the bombings he experienced in Iraq. After he gained English proficiency,

Mr. Ahmed enrolled in GED classes in Hamden where he worked diligently, attending classes for two years, while working nights as a security guard. He ultimately received a Connecticut State high school diploma.

**Teneshia Biggs**  
**New Haven Adult Education**

Ms. Biggs emigrated from Jamaica in 2007. She worked full-time in a convalescent home and part-time as an independent care person. Simultaneously, she enrolled in the New Haven Adult Education program in 2017 and became a U.S. citizen in 2018. It was difficult to work two jobs and go to school, but Ms. Biggs had high hopes for a brighter future, and always wanted to be a nurse. Despite troubles with some subject areas of the GED, her goal was achieved in December of 2021. She has since earned certifications in phlebotomy, electrocardiogram (EKG), and basic life support. She is working in the North Star technology program to get various certifications in areas of technology. Ms. Biggs is applying to Gateway Community College for an associate's degree in nursing. She intends to continue her education as she continues to strive for her goal of a better life.

**Phyllis Dorman**  
**East Hartford Adult Education**

Ms. Dorman has been deaf since birth and for twelve years attended Clarke School for the Deaf, Northampton, Massachusetts. Her family includes four children and eight grandchildren. Ms. Dorman has worked all her life, but decided she wanted to attend adult education and earn her high school diploma. After beginning work in the GED program, Ms. Dorman moved into the National External Diploma Program (NEDP). She began working with a team that included an advisor, the technology coordinator, and her American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter. COVID-19 required her studies to move online, requiring Ms. Dorman to learn to operate three devices to see her advisor and interpreter and share her screen. In addition, ASL has its own grammatical differences from spoken English, requiring her advisor to restructure her guidance through the assignments. Ms. Dorman showed a strong, positive spirit throughout the program, and completed her Connecticut State high school diploma in December 2021.

**Edna Elias**  
**Naugatuck Adult Education**

Ms. Elias is currently an English as a Second Language (ESL) learner at Naugatuck Adult Education. She left Brazil to give her daughter a better opportunity. In her native country, Ms. Elias taught children with special needs and was head of administration for schools in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Coming to America did not stop her from pursuing to

further her education. Ms. Elias found a volunteering opportunity to teach Portuguese to Brazilian children at a church in Bridgeport. Ms. Elias says that she swapped a white board and markers for a mop and a broom, when she started her own business painting and cleaning houses to support her and her daughter here in the United States. Her goals include continuing her education, improving her English, and publishing a book for children.

**Min Min Feng**  
**Norwich Adult Education**

Ms. Feng came to the United States from China about ten years ago. She spoke little English but knew learning English was a necessity. She began learning English on her own for several years but was reminded of her shortcomings one day when she struggled to help her daughter with her homework. Her daughter suggested that she go back to school. Ms. Feng enrolled in Norwich Adult Education Adult High School Credit Diploma Program. Ms. Feng is a leader to her fellow classmates, and solidifies for her teachers how inspiring the adult education community truly is. Encouraged by her two young children, Ms. Feng has not missed a single day of school. Balancing the roles of wife, mother, student, and full-time employee is nothing short of challenging, yet Ms. Feng's unwavering ambition allows her to be successful in all categories of life.

**Tracy James**  
**Windsor Adult Education**

Ms. James moved to the United States from the United Kingdom in 2010 and soon enrolled into the CNA program at Capital Community College. Ms. James has worked as an elder care CNA for over ten years, including during the pandemic. She enrolled in Windsor Adult Education's GED classes because she was looking for other career opportunities. Her enthusiastic participation in class activities and dedication to her studies made her a leader in the classroom. While her first semester would be the only traditional in-person learning experience, that did not stop her from reaching her goal. She borrowed a computer from the adult education program and continued her studies online until she passed all her exams on the first try and earned her Connecticut State high school diploma. Ms. James left her CNA job in November to join Windsor Adult Education as the new program associate. There she has shown the same eagerness to learn as when she was a student, developing the spring brochure, and adding it to the website.

**Kadire Kusal**  
**EastConn Adult Education**

Mr. Kusal is from Turkey where he owned a successful window installation business for twenty years. In the United States, he has embraced the enormous task of learning a new culture and language with great enthusiasm and true grit. He enrolled in EastConn's ESL program, and he has been a cornerstone of the ESL classes for the past year. The pandemic was a difficult time for students to transition into adult education and remote learning, and this was especially true for ESL students. However, Mr. Kusal demonstrated determination and persistence. His leadership and example helped to solidify a more engaged and active class and helped to build community through the zoom environment. As a result of his success, Mr. Kusal was selected to be a part of EastConn's initial cohort of students co-enrolling with Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC). He attends both a morning the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education class and evening classes at QVCC, where his instructors were so impressed that they advocated for him to continue to be co-enrolled and to access an additional free class at the college. While Mr. Kusal is clearly working hard toward his own personal and professional goals, he never loses sight of the needs of those around him and is ready to lend a hand and is eager to see everyone access the resources they need to achieve their goals.

**Fatima Saidu**  
**Manchester Adult Education**

Ms. Saidu is a hard-working and highly motivated student who is almost finished passing the GED tests. She has spent years juggling the responsibilities of being a parent and a student trying to follow her own dreams of achievement. She is from Nigeria, speaks Hausa as her first language, and knows several other languages. Ms. Saidu represents the best traits of successful students because she has an intrinsic drive to learn and to increase her access to opportunities. She does all this while she balances taking care of her home and raising a family. She represents the tenacity that inspires all of us to keep trying until we reach our own goals. Ms. Saidu has been a joy to have in class, but even more so, she has benefited classmates through her endless determination and commitment to achieving success. She passed her citizenship naturalization test this past year. She plans to attend Manchester Community College in the fall of 2022 to earn an associate's degree in biology to then transfer to UCONN to attain her bachelor's degree with eventual admission to medical school.

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