

# VII.C.

## Connecticut State Board of Education Hartford

**To Be Proposed:**  
**June 14, 2023**

**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 five 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 State Board of Education recognizes the following individuals for their accomplishments in this major adult education endeavor:

Marina Carvalhais	Bridgeport Adult Education
Ellen Tadese	Manchester Adult and Continuing Education
Nicole Taylor	Norwich Regional Adult Education
Diannek Miranda	Wallingford Adult Education
Brandon Zaniewski	Naugatuck Adult and Continuing Education

and directs the Commissioner of Education to take the necessary action.

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

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 14, 2023  
**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 United States (U.S.) citizenship, English as a Second Language (ESL), basic skills and secondary completion. In the 2022-23 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 faced substantial challenges to balance their life activities.

**History/Background**

On March 24, 2023, the Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE) honored five individuals from Connecticut’s adult education programs 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:

**Marina Carvalhais  
Bridgeport Adult Education**

Ms. Carvalhais arrived in the United States in 1988 in pursuit of a better life, given the economic challenges Brazil was experiencing in the 1980s and 1990s. She lived with a family in the United States as she learned English and worked. She later married, had three sons, and returned to her home country of Brazil. After her divorce, Ms. Carvalhais returned to the U.S. in 2017 even more determined to learn English. She enrolled in ESL classes where she completed the most advanced level in May 2021. A dedicated student, she not only excelled, but was encouraged to continue her education and earn her

Connecticut State High School Diploma. While studying, Ms. Carvalhais also started her own house cleaning business. Her three sons had seen her never-ending work ethic, so much so, that they have succeeded despite their own initial language barriers. While Ms. Carvalhais' focus has been continuing her education, she also has been beyond generous in helping others. She is very involved with the Brazilian community in Bridgeport. She works hard to make it easier for newly arrived immigrants by offering to help them in finding employment, registering in adult education programs, and finding any other assistance they may need. Ms. Carvalhais' next goal is to enroll in a U.S. citizenship class so that she can apply for her United States naturalization.

**Ellen Tadese  
Manchester Adult and Continuing  
Education**

Ms. Tadese's quest for her education began in 2006 when she left her native country of Eritria with a dream of reaching the United States to continue her education. She traveled thousands of miles on foot in her quest for a better life. She reached Malta after a long and dangerous journey through the desert and across the Mediterranean Sea. In 2009, she traveled to the U.S. where she demonstrated her love of learning by studying and passing the United States naturalization test. She worked at several jobs to support her family and understood that she needed an education if she was to best provide for her family. In the fall of 2022, she enrolled in the Adult Basic Education (ABE)/General Equivalency Diploma (GED®) classes at Manchester Adult and Continuing Education. When Ms. Tadese finally achieved her goal of attaining her GED®, she shared the news with tears of joy and disbelief. She spoke of her many challenges and hurdles, and she gave beautiful advice to her peers about never giving up on their hopes and dreams, particularly when it comes to their education. She is making a transition from learner to teacher by instilling a love for learning in her three children. She continually demonstrates that anything is possible with hard work. Ms. Tadese encompasses all the qualities that make up a successful adult education student. As a GED® graduate, she is planning to attend Manchester Community College to earn a degree in phlebotomy and eventually nursing.

**Nicole Taylor  
Norwich Regional Adult Education**

Many students at Norwich Regional Adult Education are motivated, hardworking, kind, and helpful. What makes Ms. Taylor stand out are the extraordinary barriers she continues to overcome. As a child, Ms. Taylor never attended school or received any homeschooling. She took care of her younger siblings when she was just a child herself. At the age of 14, she and her siblings were removed from their

home. She taught herself how to read and write, but had little academic success when she finally attended school. She then became a teen mother and left school.

Ms. Taylor was unsure of her abilities when she returned to Norwich Regional Adult Education in January 2022. She wanted to prove to herself and her children that she was capable of success. Despite very little formal education and low placement scores, Ms. Taylor persevered. She worked harder to make up for her academic deficiencies and enrolled in as many classes as she could. She attended both daytime and evening classes and extended her learning by enrolling in Connecticut Adult Virtual High School courses to augment her learning. She accepted help from her teachers, retook the placement test, watched her test scores soar, and her confidence grew. Ms. Taylor continues to attend both daytime and evening classes while caring for her two youngest children and working full-time as a housekeeping supervisor. Her anticipated graduation date is in June 2023, and she plans to attend Three Rivers Community College with the goal of attending one of the state universities to become a licensed domestic abuse counselor.

**Diannek Miranda  
Wallingford Adult Education**

Ms. Miranda arrived at Wallingford Adult Education in 2021 after she was accepted into a Registered Medical Assistant (RMA) program at Tunxis Community College. Although she could begin the program, she was informed that she would need to have her high school diploma before completing the program. While trying to advance her education, she also was working part time as a home health aide, raising four school-age children, and navigating the COVID-19 pandemic as a mom, frontline employee, and student. In January 2022, Ms. Miranda started a rigorous schedule at Tunxis Community College. She quickly learned to balance this rigorous schedule and her National External Diploma Program (NEDP) activities. Her excellent organizational and time management skills helped but it was her incredible energy, tenacity, and determination that allowed her to do so many things at once and to do them all well. She accepted feedback graciously, and whenever she was in the office, she encouraged other NEDP clients to keep going and not give up. Ms. Miranda graduated in June 2022. She is completing her RMA program and is enrolled in Wallingford Adult Education's phlebotomy program as she hopes it will be an added enhancement to her career skills. Still raising and caring for her four children, Ms. Miranda found employment as an optician technician, and as of December 5, 2022, she will be employed at Hartford HealthCare as a nursing assistant.

**Brandon Zaniewski**  
**Naugatuck Adult and Continuing**  
**Education**

Mr. Zaniewski fosters a culture of community within the classroom and proves himself to be extremely diligent and hardworking. He attends class every night with a smile and positive attitude. His peers find him to be personable, and they love talking to him because he has a way of making people feel comfortable and valued. Mr. Zaniewski is someone who excels in propelling a class discussion by sharing his ideas and engaging with others by elaborating and collaborating on their thoughts. He is someone who celebrates the success of others and encourages his peers to take risks and try their best. He also helps his peers to clarify their ideas when they need help. He is a conscientious student who wants to always do his best. He is disciplined and pushes himself to strive for excellence. Mr. Zaniewski seeks feedback and is willing to revise his work when needed. In his own words, "For the longest time I have always researched, thought, and done anything that has to do with an engine. Unfortunately, when I had dropped out from school to work to help my family financially, I slipped away from chasing my goals for some years to come. My ultimate goal is to be a master mechanic. Continuing my education will help lead to the biggest thing everyone works hard for, financial stability and a feeling of security. Growing up was tough enough, I don't want to live a life where growing old was just as bad." Mr. Zaniewski's future goal is to attend Universal Technical Institute.

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