

Agenda



Wisconsin Literacy's
Fall Conference



9:00-9:50 | The Fastest Path to Results

Presenter: Jake Gorges, Wisconsin Literacy

Use data in your adult education programs to make smarter instructional decisions and create stronger learner gains. Using NRS Levels 2 and 3 as a practical example, this session will show how accurate placement, gap analysis, targeted instruction, and reassessment can help instructors focus on the skills that matter most. Participants will leave with a simple framework for turning assessment results into clear next steps and moving learners forward with greater purpose and impact.

10:00-10:50 | Practicing Language with Poetry

Presenter: Rob Podlasek, Literacy Minnesota

Do you have a student who's a poet but doesn't really know it? Writing poems is a great way to Rob Podlasek is the training director for Literacy Minnesota. He began his career in literacy as a volunteer tutor in 1986. He has since been a VISTA volunteer, instructor, volunteer coordinator, program manager and trainer. language. Come explore the pros and cons (mostly pros!) of using poetry in your tutoring/teaching. We will look at (and try) a variety of poetry structures including acrostic poems, sentence stems, list poems, cinquains, diamond poems and free poetry. Examples of real student poetry will also be shared!

11:00-11:50 | Can't Find It? Build It!

Presenters: Anna Bierer and Robyn Hallet, Wisconsin Literacy

Ask AI to create lessons learners need. Instead of spending 30 minutes searching online for the perfect dialog or worksheet, build your own activity around the exact situation the learner needs. Create reusable prompts and templates that can be quickly adapted for different scenarios, skill levels, and learning goals. Then take it one step further by giving learners tools they can personalize themselves—using AI to practice the conversations, situations, and skills that matter most in their lives.

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1:00-1:50 | Community Health Workers: A Vital Link in Health Literacy-Connecting Adult Learners to Health Information, Resources, and Community Support

Presenter: Shannon Mason Young, Wisconsin Literacy

Community Health Workers (CHWs) can be valuable partners for adult literacy programs, connecting learners to health information, healthcare services, and community resources. This session will explore how CHWs help individuals understand health information, navigate healthcare systems, access needed services, and use digital health tools. We will also identify practical ways adult literacy programs can partner with CHWs to support learners, expand connections to resources and services, and strengthen health literacy in their communities.

2:00-2:50 | Know Your Why

Presenter: Mercedes Butts, Joyce's Legacy Learning Center

When learners first walk through our doors, they're usually motivated. They're excited. They're ready for a fresh start. But then life happens. Work happens. Children happen. Bills happen. Setbacks happen. That's why I believe motivation isn't enough.

My passion is for me, but my purpose is for others. The same is true for our learners. If we only help them stay motivated, they'll struggle when motivation fades. But if we help them discover their why, they'll have something deeper to return to when the journey gets difficult.

In this interactive session, I'll share how Joyce's Legacy Learning Center helps adult learners identify, revisit, and stay connected to their "why" throughout their educational journey. Participants will leave with practical coaching conversations, reflection activities, and simple tools they can immediately use to help learners build resilience, strengthen persistence, and remember that earning a GED isn't just about a diploma. It's about finishing the story they started and creating a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities.

3:00-3:50 | Why Adults Learn Differently - and How to Teach Accordingly

Presenter: Anne Damiecka, ESOL Specialist, Cambridge University Press & Assessment

Adult ESL learners bring experience, goals, and a strong sense of purpose to the classroom. This session examines what adult ESL learners consistently respond to, using adult learning theory (andragogy) as a guiding framework. Participants will explore how principles such as relevance, respect, autonomy, and the use of learner experience are reflected in effective ESL instruction. This session highlights concrete, adult-centered practices that support engagement and persistence across proficiency levels. Participants will leave with practical strategies they can immediately apply in their own contexts.