

DECLARATION

Fall 2014 Newsletter of the Durango Education Center



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Student Highlights

Seeking a Better Life

The English as a Second Language (ESL) program at the Durango Education Center is for non-native English speakers who aim to improve their lives through better English skills and community involvement. We serve non-native speakers with any level of education of English skills. We teach everything students need to develop skills to improve their job prospects and navigate the Durango community. The unique class environment creates community and supports new immigrants.



We offer classes and individual tutoring with trained volunteers who provide one-on-one help with English reading, writing, conversational skills, citizenship study, and basic literacy to meet the specific needs of our students. We currently have students from over 12 countries ranging from Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia, France, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, Taiwan, and Ukraine.

Our students bring a wealth of information and life experiences to our Center. They come from many different places and have numerous reasons for attending class. The one thing they all have in common is that they add richness and diversity to the Durango community and we feel extremely privileged to share in their American dream.



Linda Chiu, Taiwan

"I have been in Durango for about 2 weeks. I want to learn more English so that I can speak with peoples here and make friends".



Lukman, Indonesia

"I'm attending classes to get better in English and go to university here. I hope I can use my English to help people in my country and get a good job".



Blanca Zavala, Mexico

"I want to speak, read and write English very well for a better job and help my sons with their homework".

Test Your Knowledge: GED Sample Test Question

The diagram below shows a typical energy pyramid.



Which statement correctly describes the flow of energy through this pyramid?

- A. All of the energy from the lower levels is available to the top level.
- B. The producer level directly provides energy for all of the other levels.
- C. The highest amount of energy is transferred between levels that contain consumers.
- D. Energy is directly transferred from the primary consumers to the secondary consumers.



Director's Note

We love the busy fall season at the Durango Education Center. The classrooms are overflowing with new and returning students – so many in fact that we made program additions to serve more of our community. A second math teacher was hired to help students prepare for the more rigorous GED math exam. And we added an advanced English language class for non-native English speakers to prepare for the GED or go on to post-secondary programs.

Here at the Center, we pride ourselves on how effectively we help our students experience success. We are constantly evaluating and refining our methods to ensure that students meet their goals of earning a GED, improving their English skills, or gaining basic technology skills.

The majority of our students flourish during their time at the Center, which is truly rewarding given the many hurdles that some of our students need to overcome. Yet what happens to them after they leave the Center? Do they attend post-secondary education or training? Do they become employed? Do they achieve economic and social mobility? And most importantly, why is their success relevant to our greater community?

These are important questions that we address in our recently completed strategic plan. I invite you to read it and share it with others. A brief overview is included in our Program Updates section. To access the full plan, please visit: www.durangocenter.org/aboutus.

I think you'll agree that our work is an absolutely critical service in our community, none of which could get done without your support. Hope to see you at GED graduation on December 18!

With appreciation,
Teresa Malone, Executive Director

Legislative News

Adult education has recently received some well-deserved statewide and national attention. This summer, Governor Hickenlooper signed the Adult Education and Literacy Act of 2014 - the first time that Colorado has funded adult education. The Act provides \$960,000 per year to help the 430,000 working-age Coloradans without a high school diploma or its equivalency. This year, \$820,000 of those funds are available through a competitive grant process.

"[Passing the Adult Education and Literacy Act of 2014] means that adult-education programs and the low-literacy, low-skill, low-income Coloradans they serve will no longer be without a face or a voice in the legislative process. Because of the bill's passage, they now are recognized through state statute. They now have a voice through the state budget."

Frank Waterous, Bell Policy Center

While this is certainly a positive step for Colorado, it still means that adult education programs, like the Durango Education Center, will continue to rely primarily on local support to sustain adult education classes.

Nationally, the focus of adult education will start to shift over the next few years. On July 22, 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This long-awaited legislation replaces the expired Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which provides federal funding for adult education.

The new law will provide funding for programs that have a greater emphasis on employment outcomes. Colorado receives approximately \$4 million annually through the existing Workforce Investment Act and disseminates this funding throughout the state through competitive grants.

How will this affect adult learners in Durango? The Durango Education Center has already begun to subtly shift our programming (see Director's Note) to help our students achieve economic self-sufficiency and workplace readiness. Our students are already receiving career and college preparation; that will increase as additional resources are available.

Program Updates

Planning Ahead

After many months of gathering community input, the DEC formulated a Strategic Plan, which will guide the direction of the Center into 2016. We believe that the entire community benefits from an educated populace and that all people have inherent worth. By serving primarily at-risk individuals and families, our work provides all of La Plata County with an essential educational safety net.

We envision...

All students improving their social mobility, economic mobility, and developmental assets.

All students pursuing higher education to enter at the college-ready level.

All students obtaining and retaining livable wage work.

Our work will focus on three main priorities:

- 1) Program Effectiveness. We will ensure our programs are leading students towards long-term success.
- 2) Community Engagement. We will foster investment and partnership from the private and public sectors to support the learning needs of our students.
- 3) Organizational Readiness. We will build organizational capacity for longevity and program enhancement.

For the complete Strategic Plan, please visit our website: www.durangocenter.org/aboutus.

Technology Upgrades Keep Our Students Current

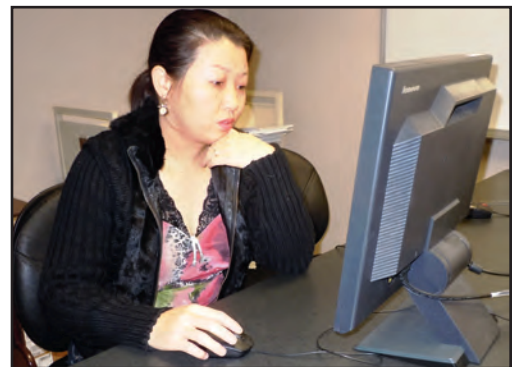
With a generous grant of \$8,600 from the La Plata Electric Association plus \$5,600 in upgrades from Pearson Vue, students now have access to state-of-the-art technology and programs that enhance both their academic instruction and technology skills.

In addition to our upgraded computer lab, students use technology in their classes with newly acquired Chromebooks, an entry-level netbook computer.

Welcome New Staff

The 2014-2015 program year has started with a large increase of new and returning students.

We are excited to announce the addition of new staff to better serve our expanding student population. Our new staff include: Sandra Cramer - Office Assistant; Ingelise Donin - Childcare Aide; Sarah Fisher - ESL Teacher; Janet Oliver - GED Resource Specialist; Sally Olsen - Math Teacher; Alex Prime - GED Teacher; Marie Tenold - Accountant.



GED Test Answer:

D. The shape and structure of the diagram shows that energy is directly transferred from one level to the next, starting from the bottom of the pyramid. Therefore, energy is transferred directly from primary consumers to secondary consumers because they are next to each other on the pyramid.

Upcoming Events

November 12:

2nd Annual Literacy Luncheon

Contact Kelly Quach at kquach@durangoeducationcenter.org for more information.

December 18:

GED Graduation

6pm - Durango Public Library

January 28, 2015:

Spellebration - Snowdown Spelling Showdown

5:30 pm - Henry Strater Theatre

SAVE THE DATE

April 11, 2015:

Around the World Food & Cultural Fair

DEC Mission Statement

The mission of the Durango Education Center, a caring learning community, is to fill educational gaps by equipping adults, children and families with the skills and knowledge necessary for 21st century careers, post-secondary education, and social and economic mobility.

Why I Volunteer

I began volunteering at the Durango Education Center in 2011. I chose to volunteer with the Center because I believe having a high school diploma, the ability speak and write English, or being a U.S. citizen is important to help open economic and social opportunities. The DEC gives students a second chance to complete a high school degree and the teachers are very dedicated. Students can progress at their own pace and they are motivated to succeed. I get a lot of satisfaction knowing that I can contribute to helping the students succeed.

When I first began volunteering, I worked with international students who wanted to become citizens. The Center provides the study materials, which consist of 100 questions that might be asked at the INS interview. Besides studying the questions, I also stress reading and speaking in English because students must demonstrate basic reading and writing skills at the INS interview. I bring in newspaper articles about current issues to help the student connect the civics concepts they're studying with current news events.

I can think of many memorable events from the past 4 years. So far, two of my students became citizens, and a third sent in his INS application. When they find out they passed, they (and I) are exuberant. In GED or ESL, I find it very rewarding when I know a student has mastered a new concept.

Marie Roessler, Volunteer



Address Correction Requested