



the **Change** Agent

An Adult Education Magazine
for Social Justice

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September 2017

THE CHANGE AGENT

Adult Education for
Social Justice: News,
Issues, and Ideas



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ENGAGING, EMPOWERING, AND READY-TO-USE.

Student-generated, relevant content in print and audio at various levels of complexity—designed to teach basic skills & transform & inspire adult learners.

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Using the “Career Pathways” Issue in the Classroom



New England Literacy
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Contact People

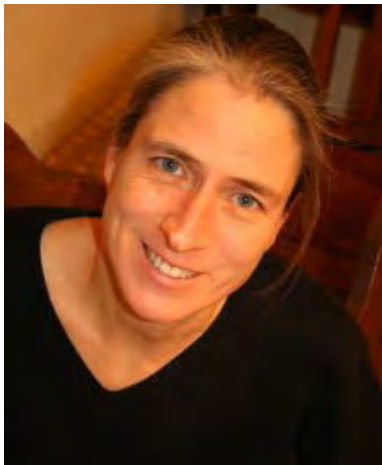
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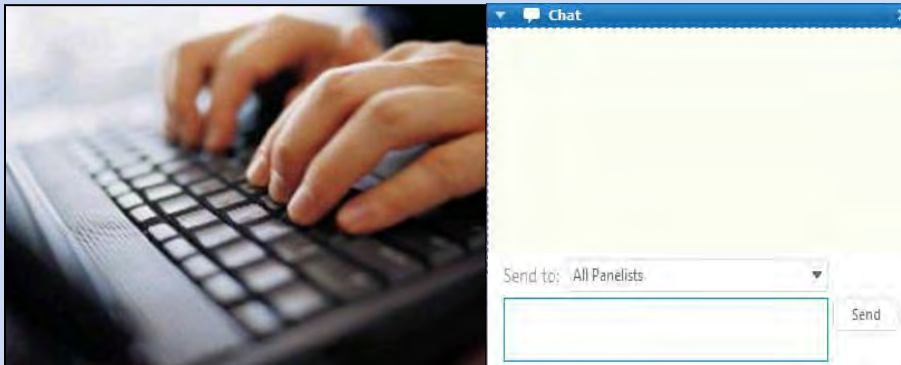
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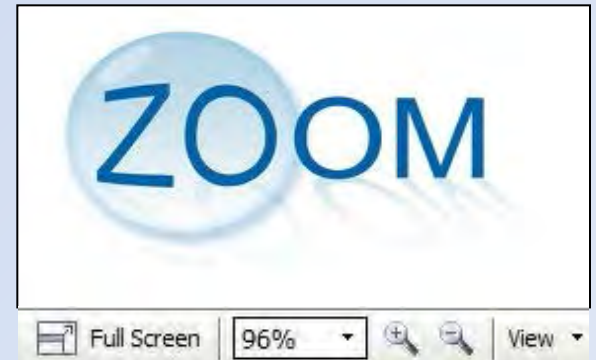


Webinar Tools

Use chat box for discussion

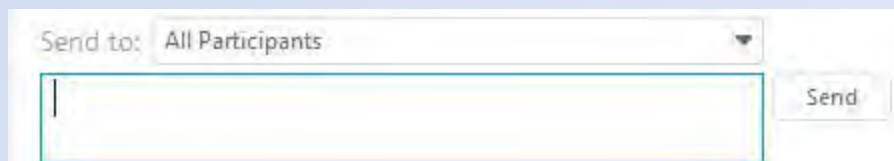


Adjust Screen



Write your questions in the chat box.

*Please remember to please send chats to “**all participants**” **NOT** “all attendees.”*



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In this webinar, you will:

1. Explore 3 articles that help teach CCR-aligned academic skills, including:
 - Speaking and listening skills
 - Study graphs and charts that encourage critical thinking about job prospects.
 - Pursue research that teaches about jobs and careers, and how to connect with resources.
2. Another dimension of Career Pathways: “raising the floor”!
3. Learn about our Call for Articles and how to support students to write for *The Change Agent*.

My Winding Career Path

Kelsey Littlefield

My career goal is to study Early Childhood Education and to work in childcare. I want to be a preschool teacher. So, after graduating from high school, I went to Great Bay Community College (GBCC) to study Early Childhood Education.

When I started school at GBCC, I struggled with math. I felt unprepared and frustrated. My math teacher explained to me that the Dover Adult Learning Center could help me improve my reading, math, and writing skills, so that I wouldn't waste money on tuition if I wasn't ready for college.

I took a year off college to improve my academic skills. My teacher is helping me to achieve my goals and gain more confidence. I took a college class in Early Childhood Development last summer. It was both hard and fun, and I passed it!

To get started in my field, I decided to look for a job working with young children. I found a daycare called Little Blessings. I have been there for almost a year (working as an Assistant Teacher). I really enjoy working there because I can see all the children grow. I like to play with them and watch them laugh.

The pathway to my goal is to finish up at the Dover Adult Learning Center and then go back to college and to take more classes in my field. Finally, I will get my degree, and I will be successful.

Kelsey Littlefield is a student at Dover Adult Learning Center in Dover, New Hampshire.

Reaching Goals



What they say

Reaching Goals



What it really

Reaching Goals

What it looks like

LEVEL 6

This is the activity on the page. What other kinds of diagrams could you have your students draw?



Almost everyone has a winding career path. Interview people in your class or in your community, and find out how they got into their current job or career. Share a time in your life when you had to go "backwards" or "sideways" in order to keep going down your chosen path.

From Impossible Journey to Successful Career

It takes a village.

Sidonie Gbazale

A Dream Resurfaces

As a child growing up in the Ivory Coast, my dream was to be a midwife. However, for financial reasons, I had to drop out of school. I thought I would not be able to pursue my dream. When I immigrated to the U.S., I did not expect miracles because I did not speak English. Still, I enrolled in ESL classes in Providence, Rhode Island, to begin my new journey.

Once I started feeling more confident in English, my dream of becoming a midwife resurfaced. My teachers encouraged me to get a high

school diploma through the National External Diploma Program (NEDP), which I accomplished in just three months. With a high school credential in hand, I had more employment options. I enrolled in a skills training program, became a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and I moved on to a better job.



"Midwife" comes from the old English "mid" (with) and "wife" (woman).
Source: <weknowyourdreamz.com>

Getting Support to Go to College

The next step in my journey was to find a way to enroll in college to study nursing. It was then that I met the Transition to College (TTC) team at Rhode Island Regional Adult Learning (RIRAL). TTC played a significant role in my education. Through this program, I worked closely with teachers who encouraged me to excel in subjects where I had previously struggled. Moreover, they provided the guidance necessary for me to enroll in the Community College of Rhode Island Nursing Program. The TTC team was with me every step of the way—checking to make sure I took the right courses and getting help when I needed it. Believe me, navigating the sea known as the U.S. higher education system would have been much rougher if I had not received support from TTC.

After years of working hard and receiving the guidance to pursue my education, working as

Believe me, navigating the sea known as the U.S. higher education system would have been much rougher if I had not received support.

dition, being a mother of five who also needed to work full time meant that I could not always study as much as I needed to. Thankfully, I was able to overcome all those hurdles to becoming a nurse.

Despite the many challenges, I learned to adjust by working harder than I ever had in my entire life. Over time, I excelled in my courses and even started helping other struggling nursing students. After years of hard work, sacrifice, and countless challenges, I graduated as one of the top students in the nursing program and landed a job as a nurse in a local nursing home shortly after graduation. Moving from an entry level job, to a better job, to a great career in nursing took time, a village, and a strong commitment for a better life.

Still Working on My Dream

Regarding my dream of becoming a midwife, I am still working toward it. Unfortunately, for now, due to the various financial responsibilities that I have, I am going to be working to support my family. But hopefully in the near future I will be in a better financial situation, and I will return to school.

Sidonie Gbazale is from the Ivory Coast in West Africa. In 2010, she graduated from RIRAL's Transition to College program and went on to complete her degree in nursing at the Community College of Rhode Island.

a CNA, and raising a family, I finally passed the nursing entrance exam and am proud to have "RN" at the end of my name. I faced many hurdles along my way, which I believe contributed to making me the strong woman that I am today. Not being a native English speaker was one of the biggest barriers I faced. In addition,



Healthcare Occupations with the Most Projected Job Openings in the U.S. 2010-2020

	Job growth number (in 1000s)	Job growth percent increase	Job openings due to growth & replacements (in thousands)
Registered Nurse	711.9	26.0	1,207.4
Home Health Aides	706.3	69.4	837.5
CNAs and Orderlies	302.0	20.1	496.1
LPNs and LVNs	158.5	22.1	369.2
Physicians	158.3	24.4	305.1
Medical Assistants	152.9	30.9	243.8
Pharmacy Techs	108.3	32.4	166.3
Dental Assistants	91.6	30.8	154.0
Pharmacists	59.7	25.4	139.6
EMTs and Paramedics	75.4	33.3	120.8

Make several true statements about the information in the chart. Explain how RNs could have higher job growth in numbers than Home Health Aides but a lower percent increase. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Look at Language

Read the pull quote. Find three words that Sidonie uses to create a metaphor that describes her experience going to college. Write a new version of the sentence using a different metaphor.

What does she mean when she says it required a "village" to help her become a nurse? Who was in her "village"?

Who is in your village? Write about what supports you have and some specific ways they support you. What supports could you add to your network?

Look at the career pathway on p. 7. What steps should you take if you want to become a nurse?

Career Steps
What steps has Sidonie taken so far to realize her dream? List them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What steps do you think she will need to take to reach her ultimate dream? (Hint: see the career pathway on p. 7.)

1. _____
2. _____

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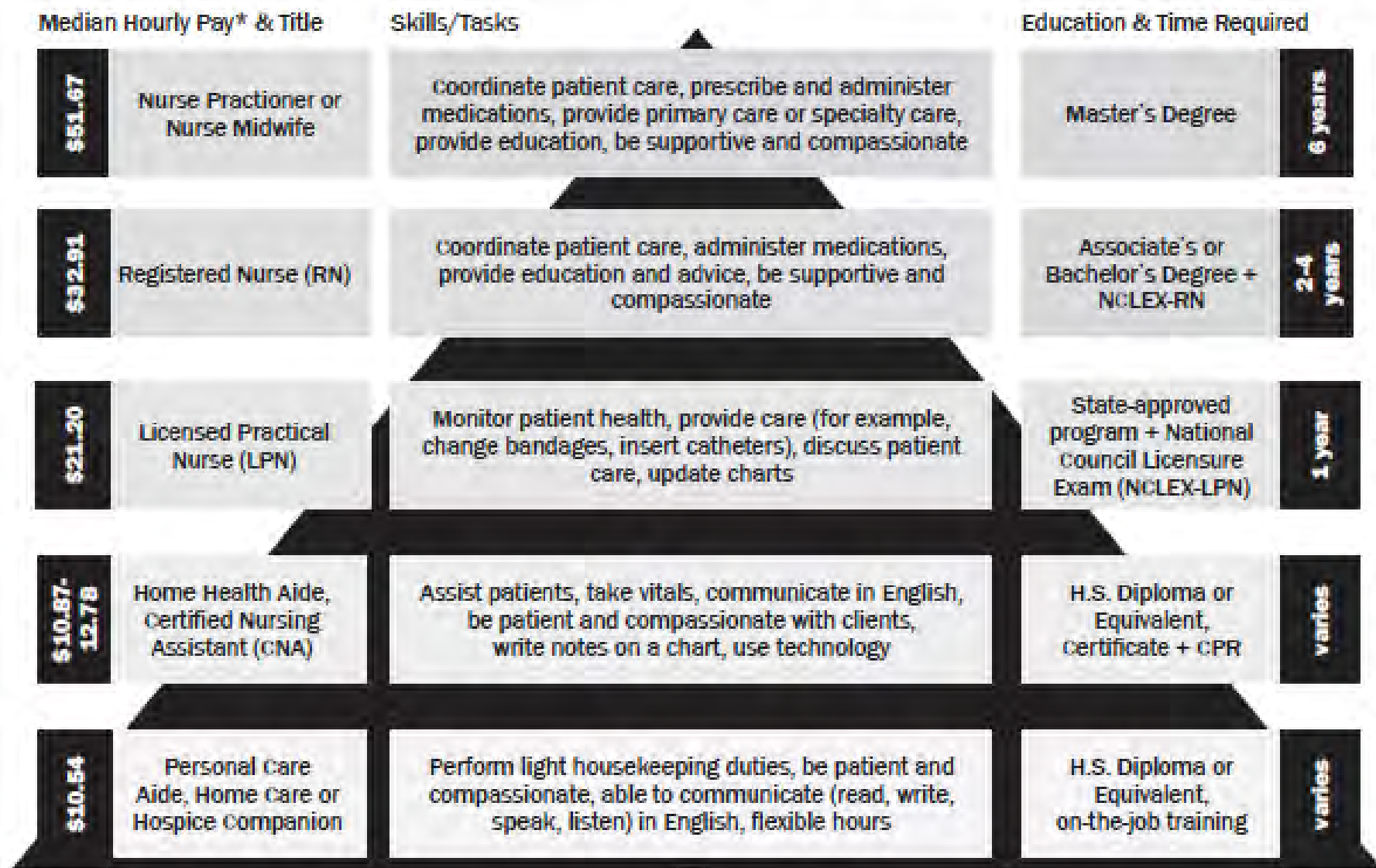
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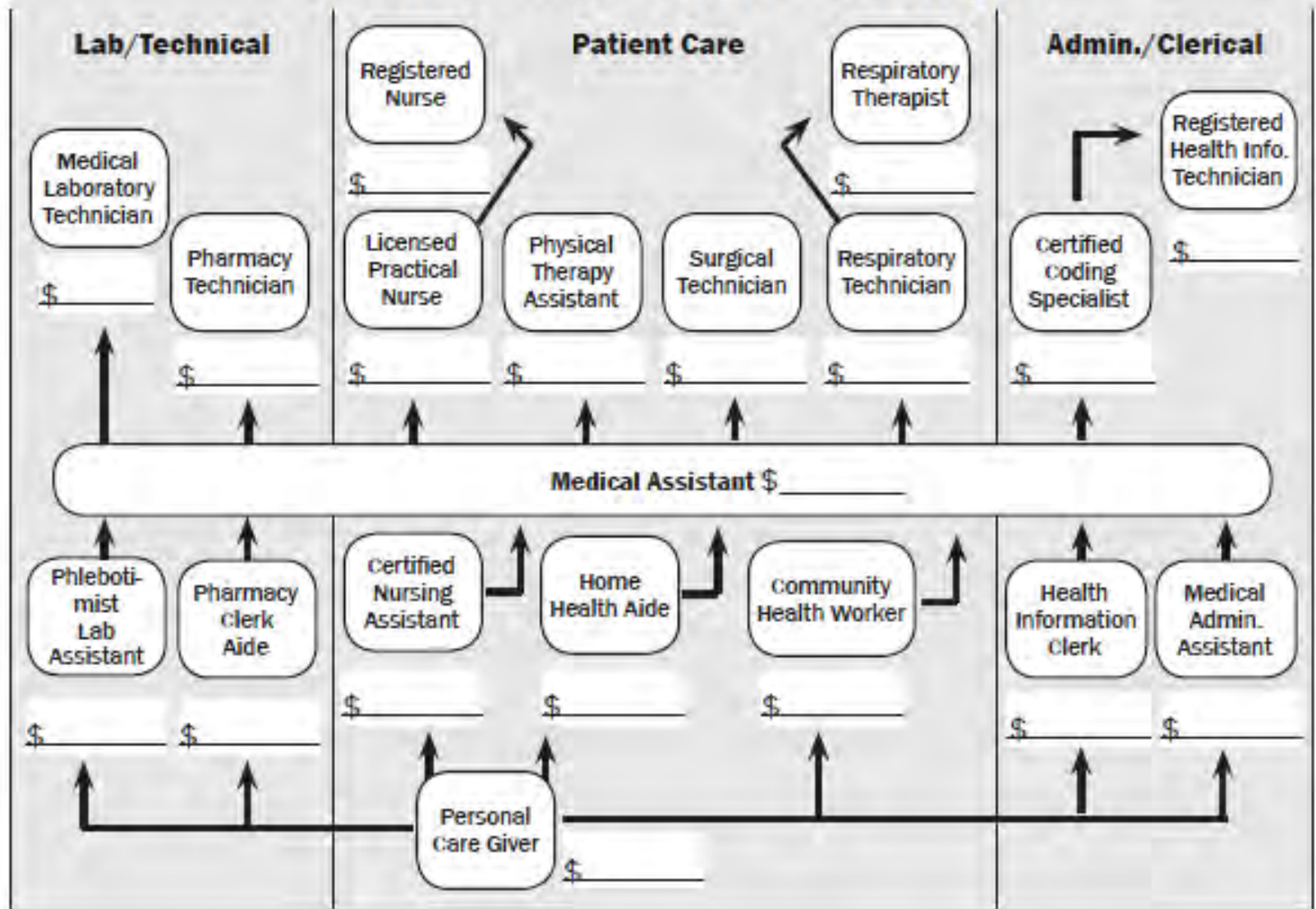
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Nursing Career Pathway

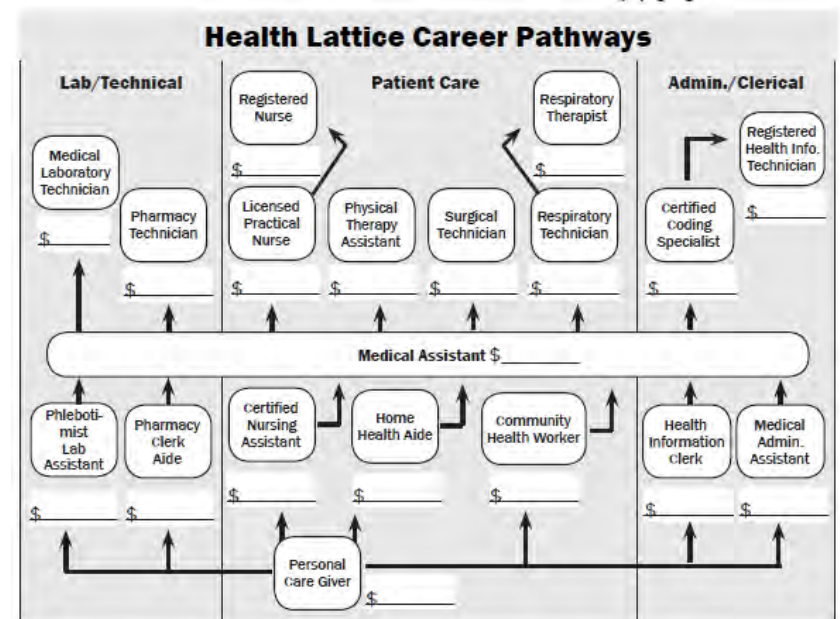
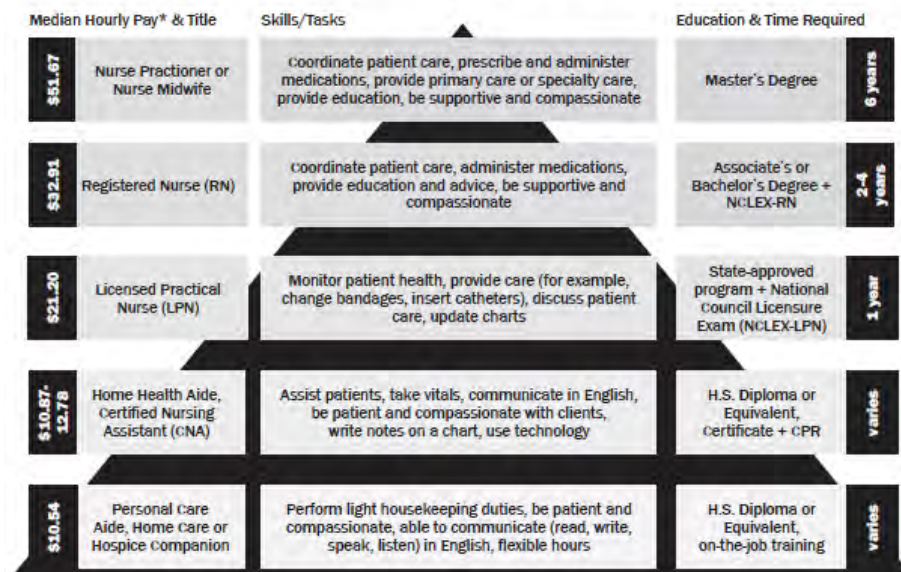


Health Lattice Career Pathways



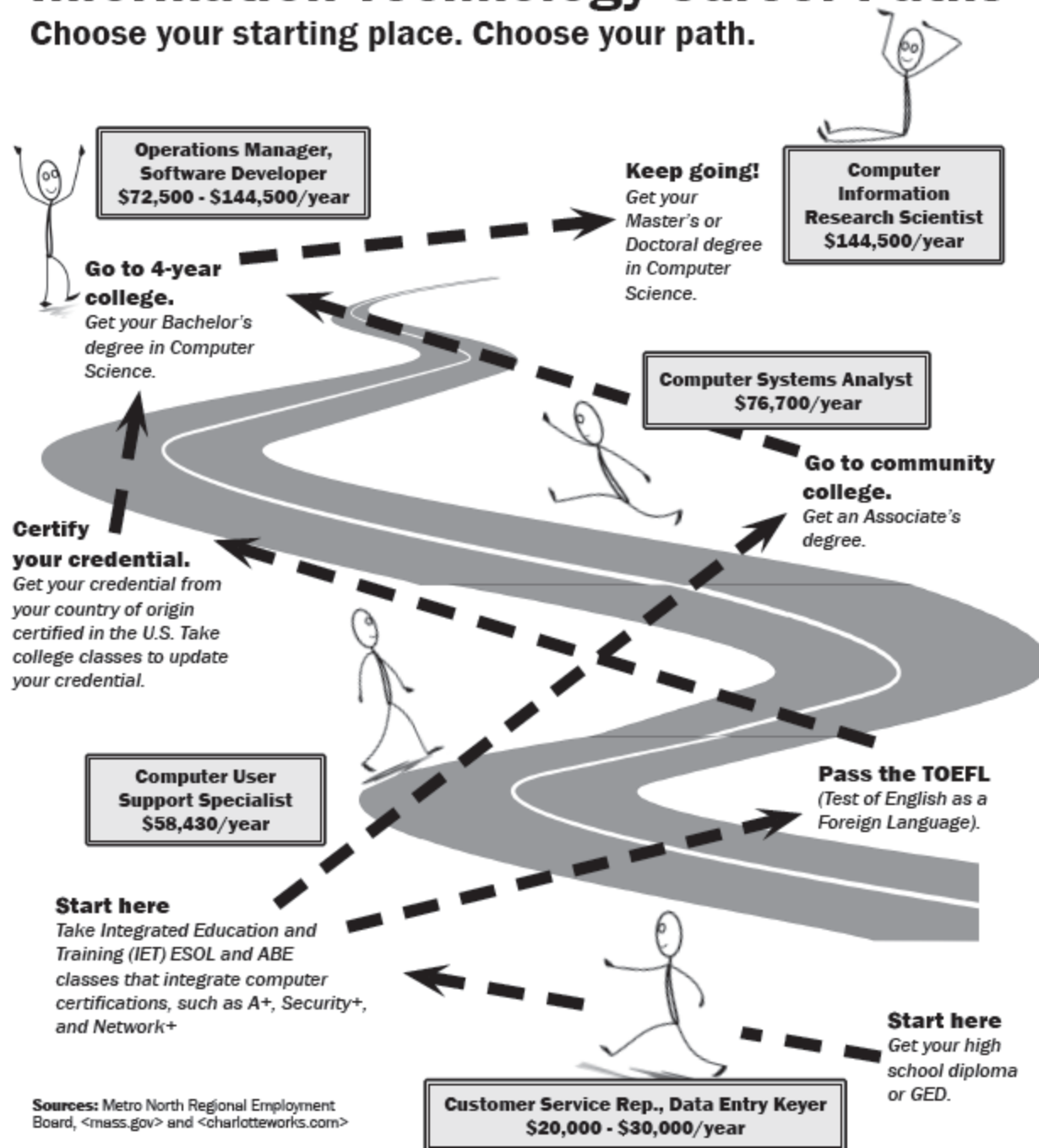
Compare “pyramid” vs. “lattice”

Nursing Career Pathway



Information Technology Career Paths

Choose your starting place. Choose your path.



Reality: Carlos's Story



“Now these hands have a different purpose.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5ij3pFkGA8>

Carlos Contreras Article

My Life in Concrete

Carlos Contreras

Written in loving memory of my father, Frank (Mighty Mouse) Contreras, my main teacher in the trade.

Starting from the Bottom

Let me tell you how it began. My life in concrete started one summer when I went to work with my father. I was young, so it was fun for me. We started work at 5:00 a.m. We poured the concrete and then sat around for about an hour waiting for it to "set up" (get hard). That's when we had lunch. By the time we were done with lunch, the concrete was set up. Then we would start finishing it,

which meant working on my knees.

I worked that summer, and it was great. I had a lot of fun and the money was good. It felt good to contribute

to the household. The summer ended, and I decided I didn't want to go back to school. I wanted to work. My parents were upset, but they said ok. My father took me to work with him, but instead of working in concrete, I started as a laborer doing pick and shovel work. He told me that's where I was going to start—from the bottom. He told me I could work my way up at the pace I wanted to.



Finishing concrete can be hard on your knees!



Carlos Contreras points to his name on the plaque outside the U.S. District Court in Tucson, AZ.

I labored for four years. Being a laborer meant digging ditches and leveling the dirt where you pour the concrete. It was fun. Then I started setting forms. You set forms around the foundation of the building that the concrete is poured in. That was also fun. I swung a sledge hammer all day, pounding in steel stakes that held the wooden forms in place. I did that for about four years, as well.

Now I drive around town and see my work everywhere.

Becoming a Finisher

Then I started finishing concrete. That's when the fun really started because you get to go to different

job sites. For example, worked at the U.S. District Court and at the University of Arizona. I poured the concrete for the Student Union and the Main Library. It was fun because at the end, I got to see my finished work. This work lasts forever, and when you go by places where you worked, the memory returns.

My father and my uncles taught me the trade. They always told me to work smarter not harder. After they were done with me, I was one of the best concrete finishers in town. Everybody knew me. I could go to any company and get hired.

I worked for about five companies in the time I was finishing concrete. Each one paid me more money than the previous one. One of the jobs I did is the Tucson Federal Building. My name is on the brass plaque by the door along with everyone else that worked there.

Knees Gave Out, Time for a New Career

I am very satisfied with the career path I chose. Finishing concrete is and always will be a favorite part of my life. Sadly, my knees gave out and I

couldn't finish concrete any more. Now, I'm on a new path. I got back into school; I'm getting my GED and I'm aiming to get a degree in Social Services work. I picked this path because I can relate to many individuals I will be working with. I can have empathy and compassion and I want to give back to my community. I am very optimistic about what the future holds and I cannot wait for the next chapter in life!

Carlos Contreras is a student at Adult Basic Education for College and Career (ABECC) in Tucson, AZ. He is a single father of a 12-year old boy, and Carlos wants to show him that education is important. Carlos is active in the student leadership council at El Rio Learning Center. Volunteering in his community has made him want to continue his education in social services to be a better advocate and resource for those in need.

AFTER YOU READ:

- 1) Carlos is changing careers. What skills from his "life in concrete" might be transferable to a career in social services?
- 2) Concrete is a hard, fixed substance. Is there any irony in the title "My Life in Concrete"?

Some Careers are Hard on the Body

In the pictures below, what activities does each worker do? Which do you think is hardest on the body? Why? Considering the wear and tear on the body, what are the pros and cons of each job? What kind of job would be right for your body?



Roofer



Office Worker



Housekeeper

Learn more about workers' rights to safety on the job. See "Workplace Safety: Learn It, Teach It." Available for free at <changeagent.nelrc.org/in-the-classroom/lesson-packets>.

Look for our "extras" at <changeagent.nelrc.org/issues>; read an essay by Salisa Chuon, "From Assembly Line to Accounting," about wanting work that is easier on her body.

LEVEL 4

Career Pathways Are Not Enough

Andy Nash

Education is Just One Key Component

Adult education programs are offering a lot more work-focused classes nowadays. They teach basic education and ESOL in the context of workforce training. And the training depends on where local employers have said there are jobs. Why focus so much on job preparation? One reason is because most living wage jobs need workers who have stronger math, communication, and technology skills. Also, employers are not doing as much in-house training as they used to. Finally, govern-

ment funders see education as the solution to the problem of low-wage jobs.

Of course it's true that education helps some adults access a career pathway and move out of low-wage work. However, the fact remains that those low-wage jobs are still there and someone's going to do them! The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the fastest growing jobs (in real numbers) are low-wage, poor-quality jobs that require no more than a high school diploma.¹ These jobs include retail sales, home health, food preparation, and food service. (See the chart on the next page.) And these jobs are not only low-wage, they also often have poor working conditions, irregular hours, few employment benefits, and limited options for advancement.



How does "raising the floor" make working

So What Should We Do?

According to the Aspen Institute,² to help low-wage workers secure high-quality jobs, we need to follow two strategies:

- 1) BUILD LADDERS.** We need to help low-wage workers climb out of poor-quality jobs by providing access to education and training (career pathways).
- 2) RAISE THE FLOOR:** We need to make poor-quality jobs better by improving compensation, benefits, schedules, training, and working conditions so that every worker can have some security and dignity on the job.

"Building ladders" and "raising floors" would improve life for ALL workers—not just provide an escape route for the minority of workers who have the support to succeed on their career pathway.

What Would This Look like in Programs?


If adult education programs embraced this broad

Many of the fastest growing jobs do not pay a living wage

Top 12 Occupations with the most job growth, 2014-24 (Numbers in thousands)						
Occupation	Employment		Change, 2014-2024		Median Annual Wage, 2014	Typical education needed for entry
	2014	2024	Number	Percent		
All occupations	150,539.9	160,328.8	9,788.9	6.5	\$35,540	
Personal care aides	1,768.4	2,226.5	458.1	25.9	20,440	No formal credential
Registered nurses	2,751.0	3,190.3	439.3	16.0	66,640	Bachelor's degree
Home health aides	913.5	1,261.9	348.4	38.1	21,380	No formal credential
Food prep. & servers (incl. fast food)	3,159.7	3,503.2	343.5	10.9	18,410	No formal credential
Retail salespersons	4,624.9	4,939.1	314.2	6.8	21,390	No formal credential
Nursing assistants	1,492.1	1,754.1	262.0	17.6	25,100	Postsecondary nondegree award
Customer service representatives	2,581.8	2,834.8	252.9	9.8	31,200	High school diploma or equivalent
Cooks, restaurant	1,109.7	1,268.7	158.9	14.3	22,490	No formal credential
Operations managers	2,124.1	2,275.2	151.1	7.1	97,270	Bachelor's degree
Construction laborers	1,159.1	1,306.5	147.4	12.7	31,090	No formal credential
Accountants and auditors	1,332.7	1,475.1	142.4	10.7	65,940	Bachelor's degree
Medical assistants	591.3	730.2	138.9	23.5	29,960	Postsecondary nondegree award

Analyze the chart. Make true statements about the data you see. Source: www.bls.gov/news.release/econwage106.htm

Many articles in Issue #36 by students who share their story of working to “raise the floor.”



THE CHANGE AGENT

Adult Education for
Social Justice: News,
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GOOD JOBS, NOT JUST ANY JOBS!

Humans, Not Machines: 3
My Work as a Beautician: 4
A Tale of Two Jobs: 5
A Job is a Job is a Job...Right?: 6
Soaring Skyward with Heavy Lifts: 8
Hell in a Steel Mill: 9
Greasy, Wet, and Stinky Work: 10
Should My Fingers be Faster: 11
The Best Job I Ever Had: 12
Sweet Scents, Customer Satisfaction: 14
Mister Larry, The Daycare Chef: 16
Taking Care of People Gives Me Joy: 17
My Fulfilling Job as a Social Worker: 18
What People Like and Don't Like: 19
"I Must Say": 20
Inspired to Become an Architect: 22
My Ideal Job: Mexican Dance: 23
From Dishwasher to Chef: 24
"Daniel of All Trades": 25
"We Can Fix It" and "We Can Do It": 26
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Raising Children is Work: 38
Women: Like Men, Only Cheaper: 39
Putting a Stop to Discrimination: 40
Legislating Wages: 42
Fighting for Economic Protections: 44
Nobody Makes it on their Own: 46
Organizing for Our Fair Share: 48
You Are Not Alone: 52
Visions for the Future: 54


Paid Today, Broke Tomorrow

Mariama Diallo

A good job should allow you to pay your bills, to eat, to get clothes according to the weather, and to get medical treatment when needed. Not only that, a good job should pay you enough so that you can have time to live and enjoy a little of life.

I've been at my job for almost 11 years but I have never gotten a raise even though the price of everything has gone up. We receive only minimum wages. We work hard for a paycheck that doesn't allow us to survive. Who wants a job where you get paid today and you're broke tomorrow? It makes you feel like things are falling apart around you because you know that you are not going to be able to pay your bills.

Nowadays, many adults realize that it's time to make a change for a better life. We don't want to accept any job in order not to be unemployed. But how can we get good jobs—jobs that allow us not only to survive but to enjoy life too?



Mariama Diallo is a student at the Adult Learning Center Mid-Manhattan: 15 in New York City. Mariama came from Senegal over 11 years ago. She is delighted to show her work to her 10-year old daughter, Fatoumata, who is an excellent fifth grade student. Fatoumata has been selected to participate in the school's math bee.

Issue 36 www.nelrc.org/changeagent March 2013

Back Issues Still Relevant!



<http://changeagent.nelrc.org/issues/>

Write for *The Change Agent*

- Check out our “Call for Articles” The theme of our next issue is “HAIR.”
- Students can write for a national magazine.
- Their story will be read by peers.
- They will experience “the editorial process,” including revisions, etc.
- Next writing deadline is Nov. 3, 2017.
- Students whose pieces are accepted receive \$50.

Download “Call for Articles” at:

<http://changeagent.nelrc.org/write-for-us/>

Submitting Articles to *The Change Agent*



Each submission includes all relevant contact information for the student and the teacher.



Please email submissions as attachments.

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Finally...

A recording of this webinar will be available at changeagent.nelrc.org

Questions or comments? Contact Cynthia Peters cpeters@worlded.org

Thank you for participating!



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