

Amanda's Student Testimony to the Vermont Legislature, 2/29/2024

Hi, my name is Amanda. I live in New Haven, Vermont. I am a small business owner and a student at Vermont Adult Learning in Middlebury.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story today.

I am taking this course at Vermont Adult Learning so that I can improve my life skills. I have my high school diploma, but I left school with a low reading level. Some of my challenges are understanding directions, reading my woodworking magazines, and reading menus in restaurants. I do not use computers because I am not familiar with them. It is hard not to be able to use computers in this society.

I signed up at Vermont Adult Learning about seven months ago. I was assigned to work with a teacher who understands how to help a student like me. She is a reading teacher trained in the Orton-Gillingham approach. The best part of our lesson is that we have a great work environment at the library in Bristol. We are working on basic skills and my teacher has found interesting things for me to read at my reading level, like a book about the Titanic, and a book about Daniel Boone. I have also enjoyed articles about other adult students with all kinds of challenges in life. The name of that magazine is called The Change Agent and it is for adult education students. It is good to know that I am not the only one out here with difficulties.

I have these goals for myself: I would like to be a better reader so that I can do the things I need to do in life, like get my health records on the computer and deal with doctors, because they give me a lot of papers to read that are hard to understand. I would also like to be able to read for enjoyment. I like mysteries. I would like to read better so that I can understand and use the computer better. I would like to learn CAD. (Computer Aided Design.) I am a woodworker and I have stacks of woodworking magazines that I would like to be able to read more versus just looking at the pictures.

I am not afraid to ask questions and I asked my caseworker Elizabeth to help me find a place to improve my skills and she helped me find Vermont Adult Learning. I always say, "Don't run away from your fear because it will always catch up with you." That is why I signed up for classes. I wanted to face my fear and improve my life. I am really good at cabinet making, fine carpentry work, electrical wiring, and now I want to be good at reading, too.

I am also taking this course because I *want* to learn. I am not made to do it. It is my choice. I meet with my teacher three days a week and I have not missed one class, yet. The hour goes by so fast. I enjoy learning and am thankful I have this opportunity through Vermont Adult Learning.

After every 40 hours of class, I have to take a test to check my progress. I have already gone up one whole level on the TABE. My teacher provides me with good quality reading that I enjoy and now I read sometimes in my free time.

Thank you for your support of Vermont Adult Learning. This program is important to so many Vermonters, like me.

Thank you for listening.