

# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

## ESL teaching duo develop individualized study plans with goals and barriers in mind

By Nicole Carr

No two adult students are exactly alike: Each has their own unique life and career objectives and their own particular set of obstacles. At Poway Adult School, each individual's goals and barriers are taken into account to create a personalized pathway to success.

Jacquie Uriell and Ann Fisher are the co-lead English as a second language teachers at Poway Adult School, overseeing the school's Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program. Both also serve as student advisors. They and other staff at the school recognize that students who have a goal in mind—and can see a vision of themselves in the future—are far more likely to succeed.

Based on each student's goals and through building relationships with them, Uriell and Fisher tailor individualized development plans including career preparation, academic studies or training programs aimed at helping them reach their career and personal objectives. They also help identify the student's obstacles—like child-care or transportation needs—as well as ways to mitigate them.

"We employ an agile approach to provide wraparound services for building careers, addressing food and housing insecurities, and attaining personal and educational goals," says Fisher. "By being good listeners, we get to know the students, which makes mentoring easier and establishes personal connections that build trust and lasting relationships."

"The strength of Poway's ESL Program is building relationships, and a strong learning community helps students build confidence to reach goals, make friends and thrive in their daily lives," adds Uriell.

Uriell and Fisher have seen many success stories, including a recent student who was struggling with English fluency



As ESL instructors and student advisors, Jacquie Uriell (left) and Ann Fisher (right) tailor individualized development plans for Poway Adult School students. Photo by Charlie Neuman

as well as being unfamiliar with effective job-search techniques. Thanks to their strong connection with this student they were able to help them build essential career preparation and interviewing skills, ultimately leading to a promising job.

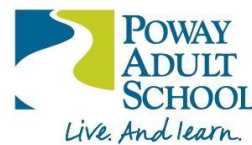
Many students use their new language skills to secure employment or assist family members with medical and appointments by serving as English language translators.

"Learning English has a direct application to day-to-day successes ... what students learn today, they can use tomorrow," Uriell says.

Fisher also has a positive impact on students through her role as school's Student Advisory Council Advisor. In this capacity, she collaborates with ESL, CTE, GED and Basic Skills students to develop leadership skills and improve common campus areas, such as the student lounge and picnic areas. These activities allow Fisher to forge bonds with students and implement strategies to further assist them in achieving their goals.

Uriell and Fisher both began their careers in K-12 schools and have been at Poway Adult School for 20 and 11 years, respectively. Both say they love teaching in adult education and can't imagine going back.

"I am deeply connected to this work and the students I serve," says Fisher. "Helping non-native learners in the Poway community learn English so they can help their own children in school and function in society is a daily accomplishment that brings me incredible job satisfaction."



Poway Adult School is one of almost 300 adult schools in California that are operated by K-12 school districts. California Adult Schools provide education, training, and support services to ensure that adult learners reach their education and workforce goals. For more information, visit [powayadulthoodschool.powayusd.com](http://powayadulthoodschool.powayusd.com) or call (858) 668-4012.