

NEWSLETTER

QUARTERLY



**VIRTUAL
CAREER FAIR:**
Coming to you on
October 29!

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**WORKSHOP
WEDNESDAYS:**

Resume advice,
interviewing tips and more!

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INNOVATION FORUM:
How we're adapting
to a digital world

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Felicia Hopson
Freeholder Director



Dear Readers,

The COVID-19 public health crisis continues to impact us all in some way. The County is working hard every day with our local, state and federal partners to stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep the community up to date on programs and resources.

To date, Burlington County has led the state in providing free testing to County residents, first responders and healthcare workers. More than 8,000 tests have been conducted so far. The County has also distributed more than 1.8 million items of personal protective equipment and supplies as part of the county's continuing efforts to safeguard vulnerable residents and staff at long-term care facilities, as well as first responders and health care workers during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The County recently announced new at-home COVID-19 tests, to ensure that we can continue to test even more residents. How can you get a test? Visit: homecovidtest.org to learn more. In-Person testing is also still available Tuesdays & Thursdays from 9 am – 4 pm at Rowan College at Burlington County in Mount Laurel. Registration is done on site.

Providing our residents with the basic necessities has been important throughout the pandemic. We have been partnering with New Jersey Farmers Against Hunger and Food Bank of South Jersey to provide drive through food distribution events. Since the pandemic's start, the two nonprofits have helped the county distribute more than 3,000 boxes and bags of food to households. The County will be sponsoring additional distribution events with the next one on **Saturday, November 7** from 10 am to noon in the parking lot of the County Emergency Services Training Center in Westampton. The site is off Woodlane Road next to the Burlington County Institute of Technology's Westampton campus.

Additionally, Burlington County's Meals on Wheels program is available to Senior Citizens who need assistance with obtaining food. This service offers a prepared meal Monday through Friday. Residents must be 60 years of age and older. The phone number is **(609) 702-7053**.

Furthermore, as part of their commitment to helping small businesses stay afloat during the coronavirus pandemic, the Freeholders announced the County will continue to offer to defer all loan repayments for businesses participating in its small business assistance programs. The Freeholders offer deferrals of all new and existing loans for businesses participating in either the County's Small Business Loan Program and its Route 130 Revolving Loan Program.

More information about the county loan programs and other resources for businesses is available online at bcbridges.org/financial-resources-programs/ or by calling the Bridge Commission's Office of Economic Development and Regional Planning at **(609) 265-5055**.

Lastly, the Board is reminding residents that time is running out to respond to the 2020 Census! The deadline to respond is **October 31**. To get counted visit, 2020census.gov or call **(844) 330-2020**.

Please know we are all in this together and there is support if you need it. You can continue to stay up to date on County information and updates by downloading the free COVID-19 Health & Related Social Resources app. You can download the app free of charge from the Google Play/Android and Apple app stores. The app features a variety of information for County residents from where to find testing, locating a food pantry, healthcare resources, free educational apps for children and families, mental health support and other relevant information.

Contact my office with any questions or concerns at **(609) 265-5020**. Please know that we are here for you to support you however you may need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Felicia Hopson".

Felicia Hopson
Freeholder Director



Dear Friends and Partners,

This year marks five years since the establishment of the Workforce Development Institute in Burlington County. We began our work with advisory panels to understand and prepare for the future of the manufacturing industry and an industry consortium-led effort to create the first Women in Sustainable Employment (WISE) program in New Jersey. As we move forward through these times of tumultuous change, our current environment affirms both ongoing need and continued impact of work. Our WISE program has expanded to include Energy Industry Fundamentals and to serve as a technical assistance guideline for the implementation of the program throughout the southern region. As we highlight Manufacturing Month this October, we do so as leaders in the development of a South Jersey Manufacturing Alliance that expands the reach of our county efforts to better serve our industry partners.

So, while this season has brought about abrupt changes in the nature of work, it has done so in such a way that accelerated and affirmed our approach. We have developed new pathways and access points to meet people where they are and created new bridges for our unemployed friends and neighbors to find new careers and educational pathways, while helping businesses address unmet needs.

This newsletter features these adaptations and how they have prepared us to better serve our role of preparing the workforce of the region for the future of work. We highlight the ways we continue to serve through remote instruction, with hybrid models of education and career services. These stories showcase the resilience and resolve of the team that is featured, including our community and institutional partners, in their commitment to moving us all toward a stronger, healthier economic future. Please join me in thanking the team for this commitment.

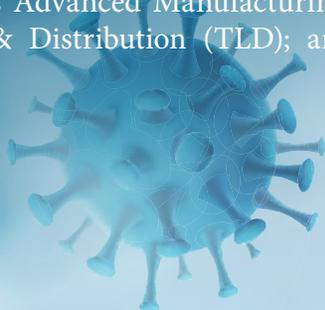
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Payanzo Cotton'.

Anna Payanzo Cotton
Vice President, Workforce Development

Message from the Board

The mission of the Burlington County Workforce Development Board (WDB) is to provide strategic management of the workforce development system. The Burlington County Workforce Development System is a partnership of organizations that work collaboratively to provide services to both job seekers and employer customers. Our main goal is to connect skilled and well-educated employees with businesses in our community.

In an effort to live our mission, the Burlington WDB has recently provided support for the US DOL Strengthening Community Colleges grant. This federal funding, if awarded, will assist the NJ Southern Consortium (includes Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cumberland/Salem and Gloucester counties) with retraining and upskilling individuals who have been displaced and/or lost their employment due to the impact of COVID-19. This grant will encourage training and education for in-demand industries, such as Advanced Manufacturing; Transportation, Logistics & Distribution (TLD); and Information Technology.



COVID-19 UPDATE*

In accordance with Governor Murphy's executive orders, the Burlington County AJC at 795 Woodlane Road, Westampton, NJ and all American Job Center locations (One-Stop Career Centers) are closed to in-person services due to COVID-19 response efforts. Staff are doing their best to work with customers virtually to address their training and employment needs.

The COVID-19 emergency will end, but we do not know when. The Workforce Development Board will be at the forefront of local innovation to help bring people back to the workforce to begin to recover.

Please visit NJDOL online for updates from:

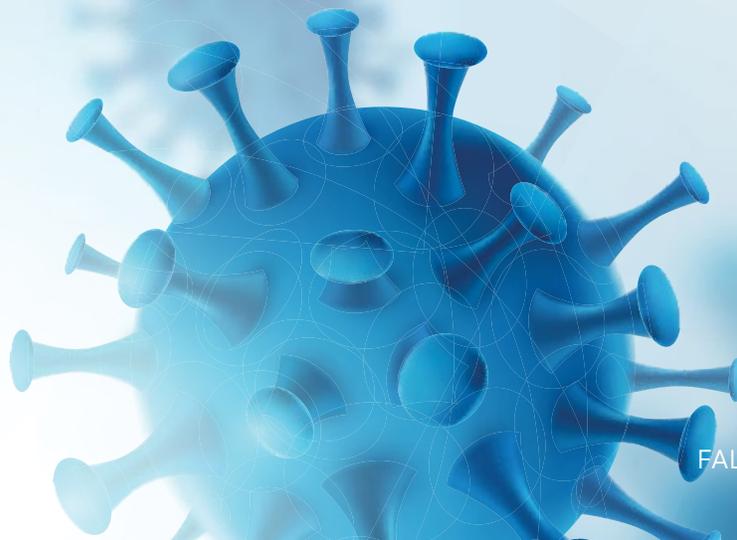
Workforce Development:
nj.gov/labor, (609) 984-9414

Unemployment:
myunemployment.nj.gov

Temporary Disability/Family Leave:
myleavebenefits.nj.gov

Please check back for updates.

In the meantime, the Burlington County WDB is working with our partners to find innovative ways to provide services in a safe, efficient manner – now and in the future.



Virtual CAREER FAIR PREVIEW

Contributed by Stephen Huff and Barbara Weir

With capacity restrictions still in place for in-person events, the RCBC Career Services Team is happy to announce they will host another Virtual Career Fair this fall. Offering job seekers and employers a safe way to participate, the VCF is set for **Thursday, October 29 and will run from 1 to 3 pm.**

Our Career Services Team hosted their first [Virtual Career Fair](#) this past spring, with more than 25 employers and 80 job seekers. Employer participants included Aveanna Healthcare, Bancroft, CVS Health, Evesham Police Department, New Jersey Courts, Oaks Integrated, Productive Plastics and YMCA to name a few.

This Virtual Career Fair will be a little different, as employers and job seekers will have the opportunity to chat face-to-face or in a group setting. This upgrade will provide for a more engaging experience for both employers and job seekers. Job seekers get to view the list of employers, and vice versa, before the event. Job seekers can choose their top employers and employers can mark their potential hires. So job seekers, you may want our Career Services team to review your resume before you share with an employer. [Join us every Wednesday for Career Readiness Workshops.](#)

Our team is excited to host this event, we are looking forward to sharing more information soon. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please email careerservices@rcbc.edu. ■



WORKSHOP

WEDNESDAY

Contributed by Stephen Huff and Barbara Weir

Throughout the entirety of the COVID-19 pandemic, the RCBC Career Services team has supported our students, alumni and the local community through a series of digital Wednesday Workshops.

Our career readiness topics featured *Tips for Building your Resume, Improving your Online Image and Preparing for a Successful Interview*. Due to COVID-19, our team modified our *Preparing for a Successful Interview* to include *Remote Interview* tips. We also introduced *The Importance of Networking* to our rotation and will continue to add additional workshops.

Our workshops occur on a rotating schedule, so viewers who missed out can always catch up with a later one. [Head over to our events page to stay up-to-date on which workshops are taking place!](#) ■



Need a weekly reminder?

Sign up for our free Engage by Cell* app by texting **WDI_Careers to 56512.**

**Message & Data rates may apply. You can unsubscribe at any time by texting STOP to short code 56512. Text HELP to 56512 for help. <http://www.co.burlington.nj.us/privacy>*



In the SPOTLIGHT



Contributed by Dan DeLuise

Grant Spotlight

In January 2020, the Workforce Development Institute (WDI) at RCBC was awarded a **\$51,849** grant to run two, 30-person cohorts of its Energy Industry Fundamentals course. These funds were awarded from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Training for the purpose of training women and minorities for jobs in construction trades. As a part of this program, participants will receive free training in Energy Industry Fundamentals and will be placed in utility jobs after training.

In the utility industry, the Energy Industry Fundamentals training is an in-demand credential for water meter readers, utility locators, safety watchers and

carpenters. Out of the 60 people trained in Energy Industry Fundamentals, the WDI projects about 66% of participants will be placed in full-time employment and 34% will be placed in apprenticeship programs. Being that construction trade workforce is traditionally white and male, the WDI's program (with the support of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Training) is working to redefine the landscape of the construction industry by training underrepresented groups and granting them the ability to earn a high-paying wage in an evolving industry. ■



Empowering Young Mothers

Contributed by Shana Jarvis

Aspire Youth Development has provided workforce development, leadership training and professional development services to young adults and emerging professionals for 15 years. While many of these programs target at-risk populations, this year we received a new grant to develop a unique program aimed specifically at young mothers. *Bridges to Employing Youth* is a program of the New Jersey Department of Labor and has allowed us to conceive the Young Mothers Career Empowerment Program.

The Young Mothers program, as it is often called, provides specific resources, training and support for young mothers, or soon to be mothers, ages 16-24, who are currently not enrolled in school. The goal of the program is for participants to establish independence and self-sufficiency. However, the programmatic elements to help participants achieve that goal are tailored to individual circumstances and needs. For example, if a participant starts the program lacking a high school diploma, we focus on enrolling them in RCBC's Adult Basic Education Program or another local program to first achieve their diploma.

Once they meet that basic high school education benchmark, we begin career exploration and essential skills classes and activities. The goal is to expose young women to a variety of in-demand industries that provide growth potential and opportunities for advancement. Many of our participants come to us with a limited view of their career options. We aim to provide participants with a wider knowledge base, through virtual career exploration activities, interactive videos and discussions and guest speakers representing various industries. In addition, our essential skills training

teaches key topics that are critical to success regardless of industry, such as communication, professionalism, teamwork and attitude. We also provide skills and support around resume development and job search strategies.

Once participants identify a specific career pathway, we work to develop a training plan. By partnering with RCBC's Workforce Development Institute and other local providers, we ensure they have access to the necessary entry-level training needed to begin their careers. The program also helps participants with additional resources that may be standing in the way of their success, such as transportation support, childcare enrollment fees and career wardrobe.

A final unique component of the program is the life skills, mentorship and parenting-focus we infuse in all activities. Our program acknowledges that career and motherhood do not happen in a vacuum. We integrate various topics that are relevant to new mothers, such as child development, stress management and time management to help provide a realistic view and motivate participants to strive for career success, as well as personal fulfillment. ■

If you or someone you know is interested in enrolling in the Young Mothers Career Empowerment Program, please reach out to **Shana Jarvis** at **(609) 353-7833** or shana@aspireyouth.com

The logo for ASPIRE, featuring the word "ASPIRE" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a small orange triangle pointing upwards from its base.

INNOVATION FORUM

Contributed by Michelle Martin

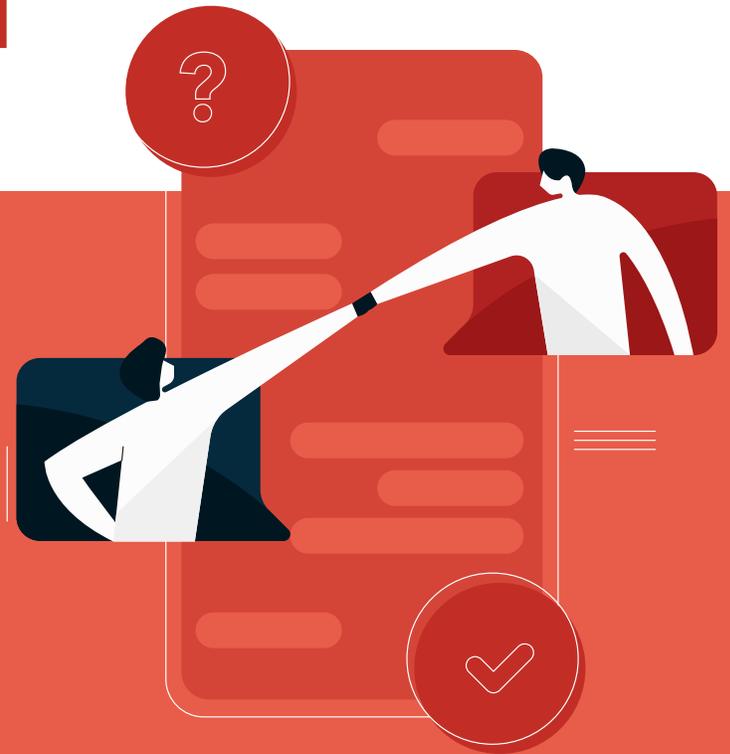
What do you do when you suddenly can't connect with your business partners the way you normally do? That is, meeting them at a breakfast, lunch or a networking event? Or checking in with them at their facility, hosting an advisory board or bringing them out for a tour of the campus?

In mid-March, we were suddenly faced with "no business as usual." Sure, there is email, but it's not the same. Further, businesses were scrambling to, well, let's face it...stay in business. They were distracted by other concerns, to say the least.

Additionally, many of these businesses and industries pivoted to quickly respond to health concerns and the bottom line.

As a result, the Business Engagement team of WDI realized we needed to stay in touch with our partners and find a way to reach out to new businesses. We also wanted a way to highlight some of the more innovative practices out there. And that is how the Innovation Forum was conceived.

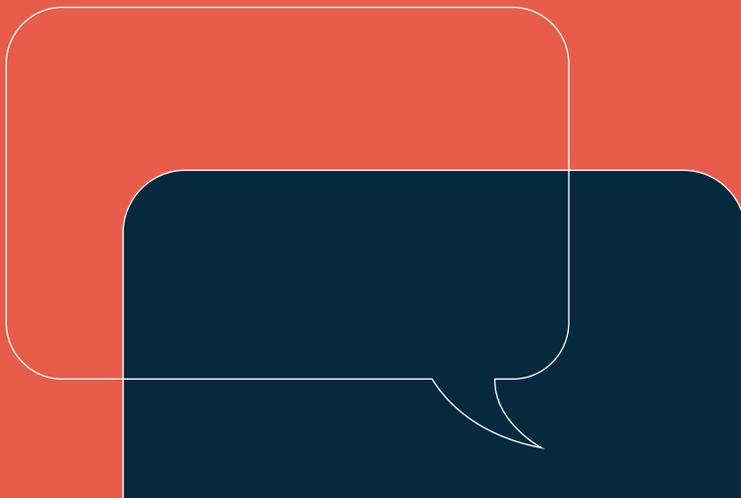
The Forum is an online meeting place where we get businesses together to discuss some of these very real challenges and how to overcome them. The Forum is an idea center where businesses can discuss the necessity for innovation "on the fly" and the pivots they made to stay in business, respond to market forces and to communicate what they are doing effectively.



Our first foray into this virtual world of engagement was to discuss the very real digital divide that the pandemic forced us to reckon with. As we embrace new technology and practices, businesses face training workers on devices and applications with which they had very little experience or knowledge. It also raised a larger question for education and businesses about training the workforce, what makes sense both for the immediate needs and foreseeable future, given economic constraints on businesses and individuals. The forum hosted a panel of faculty, workforce development and community partners to wrestle with these considerations.

Going forward, both **Stacy Hunt** and **Michelle Martin**, of the Business Engagement team at WDI, are exploring diversity, equity and inclusion, safety and focus in healthcare and the food supply chain, internet security issues and military preparedness in the age of COVID-19. ■

Stay tuned!



Diversity Moment

Contributed by June DePonte Sernak

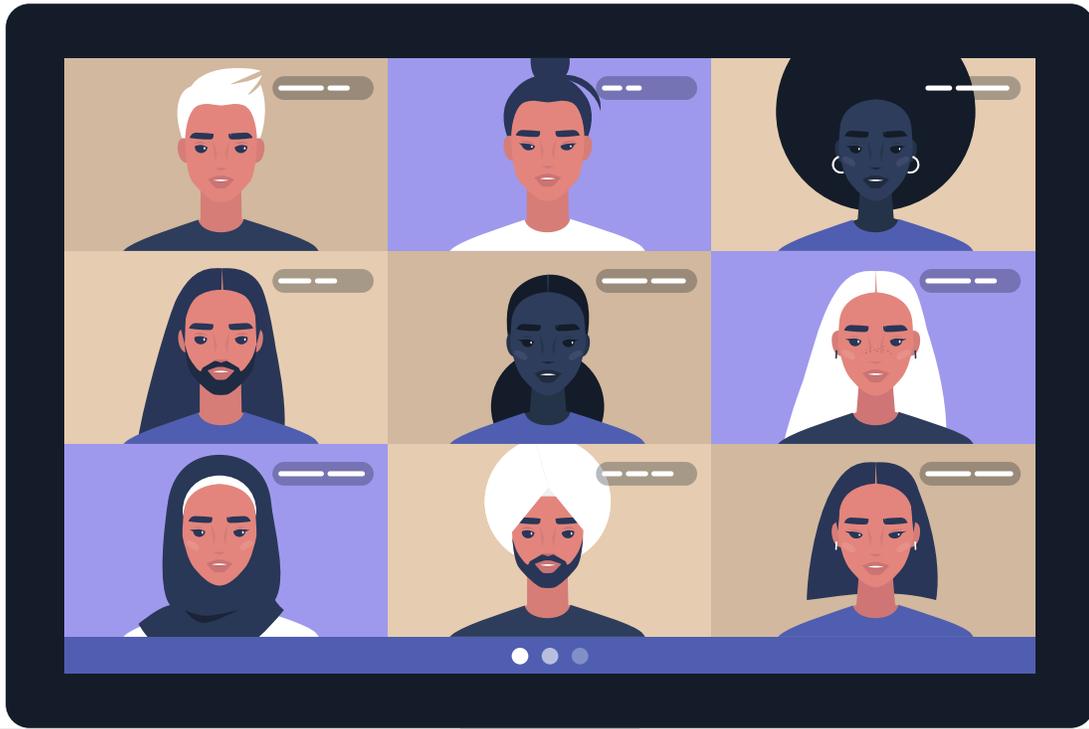
“Diverse and inclusive cultures are providing companies with a competitive edge over their peers.”

This quote summarizes conclusions from [The Wall Street Journal’s](#) first corporate ranking that examined diversity and inclusion among S&P 500 companies.

Employee diversity includes gender, ethnicity, race, generation and sexual orientation. Diversity also is acquired through education and experience defining areas of study, industry background, career paths or veteran status. Managers and teams that have varied levels of diversity appear to be the most productive of all. These cultural differences create an environment for attracting, developing and retaining a diverse workforce. Diverse teams are better prepared for decision-making, strategic planning and accomplishing tasks.

Diversity and inclusion clearly represent a business opportunity in the minds of many leaders. The learning culture begins in educational environments.





“Many two-year colleges are investing in cultivating an on-campus culture focused on inclusion, equity and diversity,” RCBC President Dr. Michael A. Cioce said. “We are dedicated to sharing that culture with our staff and community to be an equity-minded resource for education and training.”

The Rowan College at Burlington County Workforce Development Institute has been providing the business community with training opportunities to engage their employees in a wide range of soft skills, such as customer service and time management. In sharing our culture of diversity, equity and inclusion, we have included courses to guide our corporate and community partners in their journey of incorporating equity into the workforce. Leaders understand that creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive culture increases productivity and enables employees opportunities to grow and develop. Topics such as Millennial Onboarding to Women in Leadership to Team Building are core building blocks to foster an inclusive workplace. For information on our programs, contact us at DEI@RCBC.edu. ■

Converting to Remote Teaching

Schools across the nation have been impacted by the pandemic, with in-person education being suspended. Our Adult Basic Education team is no different, with instructors Joshua Adams and Christina Ippoliti having to adopt a virtual approach. Here are their stories of what this process has been like, as well as the challenges they've faced along the way.

Teaching During a Pandemic

By Joshua Adams

I teach adults without their high school diploma the skills necessary to pass a High School Equivalency test that will earn them that all important piece of paper. The typical student in my class didn't have a very good experience with formal education. One of my strengths as a teacher is creating a classroom that is safe to ask questions. 2020 kind of threw that out the window.

Yes, learning to teach through Google Classroom or GoogleMeet or WebEx or Zoom posed some problems and adjustments. I've talked when my microphone has been on mute and tried to teach students to graph a quadratic equation on a notebook they couldn't see due to poor camera placement. I'm not a techie and would prefer to be in the classroom. I've gotten better over time, but those changes have proved to be minor no matter what my March self has previously stated.

I would say about 1 in 5 students in my typical class feels comfortable asking questions during the first week. That number will increase as the weeks go on and students see other students getting help without judgment and even some lame humor. Even if no one asks a question, I can scan the room and look for that "what the heck is going on" face or body language. I can assign a few practice questions and walk around the room to see who is getting it and who needs help. These are the things that Covid-19 has disrupted the most.

I have found the biggest challenge to be getting that number of students that feel comfortable asking

questions to increase. The vast majority of students that do ask questions from the jump ask in a private conversation, so no one else sees their question or my response. The most effective method I have discovered to combat this thus far has been just checking in on my students with a personal email, but it's still not as effective as creating that safe classroom community.

COVID-19 has changed the way I do business. I will continue to get better and experiment with different ways to build rapport with my students in a virtual setting. The students will continue to learn the material, and the technology, and we will all be more prepared for whatever curveball comes at us next. ■



Working from home experiences during Covid-19

By Christina Ippoliti, Learning Link Instructor

Transitioning to online learning has been a challenge for both myself and Learning Link customers. Prior to COVID-19, the Learning Link operated as any high school or college-level class would. Every morning from 9-12, a group ranging from 8-12 adults would enter the Learning Link for class. The customers and I would gather around the front table by the white board where we would review each skill presented on their CASAS assessment. Packets of notes and exercises were handed out daily. There was a great flow of customers entering the Learning Link for services and exiting once they successfully increased their skill level. Although COVID-19 placed a temporary hold on that flow, my team, our customers and I all adapted quickly.

The Learning Link's services are now offered completely remote through Google Platform. My online classroom is set up with notes, videos, exercises and even math games, similar to those we would have reviewed in class. I feel as though math needs to be as interactive and entertaining as it can be, especially during remote

learning. Video conferencing has become a large part of online learning as well. Per the customer's request, we set up a time to virtually review their work and answer any questions they may be struggling with. Although we are communicating remotely, I feel as if the customers and I have a better student-teacher relationship because of our one-on-one sessions.

The daily routine of the online Learning Link has become more relaxed than that in the classroom. Math or reading units are posted to the site daily for customers to complete at their own pace. Now that school has resumed for customers' children, they are grateful for the freedom to complete assignments when they have the free time. For some, this is late at night or very early in the morning.

Transitioning to virtual CASAS testing has been the greatest challenge experienced so far. There are many technical requirements involved on both the proctor's side and the customer's side. For customers who are not tech savvy, I have tried to make this process as simple as possible. For the time being, virtual CASAS testing is administered on a one-to-one basis. Customers are given a link to join a Google Meets session on their cell phones. Once in this call, we walk through the steps to download the testing application. We remain virtually face-to-face for the entire test session. Some customers have reported they feel more relaxed testing at home in a more comfortable environment.

Remote learning has now begun to feel normal for both myself and the customers. It provides great satisfaction to know how appreciative our customers are for assisting them during this pandemic. ■

