

Inez from Ecuador

Inez has three school-aged children. She works in housekeeping at a hotel and is enrolled in a low-intermediate-level English language acquisition class at a volunteer-run program in her community. The program she attends has a largely life skills curriculum. Inez feels frustrated because people don't understand her. She has a hard time explaining problems because she can't express herself well in English. She has trouble communicating with her boss. Her dream is to get her high school equivalency and then to become a nurse.

What are Inez's personal and professional goals? She states some explicit goals, but what other goals do you imagine she might have, based on the information provided?

Personal Goals:

- Build her confidence when speaking in English (she refers to her frustration in communicating with others)
- Support her children's academic achievement
- Share literacy experiences with her children - read to and with them
- Read documents sent home from her children's school
- Take part in community activities/events that affect the well-being of her family

Professional Goals:

- Immediate:
 - Improve her ability to communicate with others at work (co-workers and supervisors)
 - Move out of a low-wage job in housekeeping
- Long-term:
 - Become a nurse

Academic Goals:

- Move up through English language courses to pre- high school equivalency classes
- Attend high school equivalency classes and take the high school equivalency exam
- Study to become a nurse
- Improve her communication skills so that she is understood better
- Improve her oral communication skills

What language and skills do you think she needs to meet these goals?

The same can be said for Inez that was said for Aadan. Does Inez have any concept of the many steps it takes to reach her academic and professional goals? Can she set short-term goals to meet steps along the way? What kind of program might enhance her current work experience while also preparing her for advancement in her English language acquisition program?

Ultimately, these are the kinds of reading and writing skills she will need to attain a high school equivalency:

- Pre-read and scan academic materials to get a sense of a text's scope and emerging meaning
- Determine the author's purpose, intended audience, and tone, as well as the text's general context
- Recognize and understand a work's thesis or theme and the methods of organization used to support the thesis or develop the theme
- Summarize, paraphrase, and synthesize ideas from what she has read
- Evaluate the evidence presented and state an opinion about what she has read

In her writing, she will need to be able to...

- Use effective word choice, vocabulary, idioms, grammar, and sentence structures
- Brainstorm, draft, and outline ideas for essays and other forms of academic writing
- Develop a thesis and supporting topics and organize evidence using basic rhetorical patterns
- Integrate material from outside sources in her own writing
- Cite sources appropriately and maintain academic integrity in her work

Given her stated frustration with not being understood and not being able to express herself clearly to her boss, Inez needs work in a variety of oral communication skills, such as...

- Seeking and offering clarification (clarifying questions, paraphrasing, restating) appropriately in spoken communication
- Repairing communication breakdowns respectfully and effectively
- Using appropriate intonation (e.g., polite tone, appropriate rise and fall of vocal pitch)

How can instruction in her low-intermediate-level English language acquisition class begin to lay a foundation for these skills?

- She needs practice with reading and listening strategies, note-taking, and classroom expectations/routines that will help her to work on her language skills more independently.
- She needs exposure to and practice reading with a variety of text types, including short prose, charts, and graphs.
- She needs practice with effective communications strategies so that she can more easily ask for clarification, state a problem, and interrupt appropriately in work contexts. Her intelligibility (the ability to be understood by others) seems to be an issue for her, so she could benefit from work on areas of her pronunciation that are causing breakdowns in communication. Because of her interest in nursing, she needs to be working with rich content related to that field.
- She needs practice with listening to authentic speech in a variety of contexts.

What strengths does Inez bring and what challenges does she face in meeting her goals, based on the information provided?

Strengths:

- Resilience: While working and raising a family, Inez is committed to her education.
- Experience in the workplace
- A professional goal she feels passionate about

Challenges:

- Even students with prior formal schooling may not have acquired the academic language skills needed to meet their educational goals. Given her current work situation and enrollment in a program that is focused primarily on life skills, she may not be receiving instruction that is adequately rigorous or challenging for her.
- Demands of work and family
- A sense of frustration in her interactions with others and with her boss
- Managing her expectations: She has a long road ahead of her, but with time and the right supports (**rigorous instruction, career-focused content**), it can be possible for her to attain her goals.

Inez may be a candidate for a **contextualized career pathways program (visit Module 3 to learn all about that model)**, which combines language instruction with job-specific training. For example, the R. M. Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning in St. Paul, Minnesota offers a content-based course called “Introduction to Healthcare Careers,” open to learners in their ELL 2-4 levels (CASAS Reading 191-220). Ultimately, this may prepare Inez for a pre-nursing certificate in a program like Minnesota’s FastTRAC (<http://www.mnfasttrac.org/index.html>). In any case, the volunteer teachers in the program she currently attends could include content on health-related careers and health topics, and integrate instruction that would help Inez attain her goals.

To learn more about **contextualized career pathways programs**, visit the LINCS Career Pathways Group for resources and ongoing discussion: <https://community.lincs.ed.gov/group/career-pathways>