Slide 1: This project was created in close collaboration with Ashlie Busone, an ABE instructor and the Civics Coordinator at Operation Bootstrap. Each month, Ashlie helps the teachers implement a lesson in community engagement. For March, the topic is Adult Education in Massachusetts.

Slide 2: To add a technology component, we decided to record students making brief “elevator pitches” explaining the value of adult education and why it is important for legislators to support and fund programs like ours.

Slide 3: We wrote and recorded the elevator pitches as a lead-in to an optional field trip to the State House for Adult Literacy Awareness Day. The objectives for this lesson are straightforward- students will be able to express their opinions about a topic that impacts them personally. In a nutshell, what will you say if you wind up in an elevator with Barack Obama or Charlie Baker?

Slide 4: In the week previous to the civics lesson, I taught relevant vocabulary to my class. We have been using a method recommended by John Strucker at World Ed- on the first day we create index cards with a definition and example. On the second day the students discuss debatable statements using the words. On the third day, they read an article and answer questions that require them to apply their understanding of the words. The words I chose- “summarize, capable, professional, and objective” are all important to understanding the purpose of an elevator pitch.

Slide 5: To kick off the civics lesson, the level one and two ESOL classes came together to discuss adult education in Massachusetts. We began with a brainstorm.

Slide 6: Next, we did a cloze exercise put together by our fabulous civics coordinator. Students were given statistics with the actual numbers removed. They worked in small groups and used what they already knew to match numbers to the statistic. We discussed the meaning and the impact of the numbers as a large group.

Slide 7: On the following day, students wrote about themselves and their thoughts about adult education. This was a fun activity that also worked as a formative assessment.

Slide 8: We began with a sentence starter provided by MCAE.

Slide 9: Our students were incredibly enthusiastic and proud of their work.

Slide 10: We took photos that reflected our students’ goals.

Slide 11: This is my Samsung expert- he was a great help throughout the project.

Slide 12: The work was displayed in our common room for a day before being sent off to our legislators.

Slide 13: To further prepare for the elevator pitches, we asked students to write out the answers to a few more questions. In the morning classes, we did the writing independently but all in one room. The teachers used the students’ writing to model elevator pitches, and a few students volunteered to do some off the cuff speaking. In the evening, we used samples of the morning classes’ videos to demonstrate the project, and broke out immediately for the writing and rehearsing.

Slide 14: When we created the groups, we took care to put one student with a smart phone and one confident speaker in each group. Each student used the questions differently depending on their comfort with speaking. For some students, it was just a way to organize their thoughts.

Slide 15: For students with low speaking proficiency, a teacher or fellow student asked the questions on camera, turning the elevator pitch into a friendly interview as show in this photo.

Slide 16: One group even used the questions as a teleprompter. The level one teacher and I circulated during the recording time to troubleshoot, encourage, and applaud.

Slide 17: I wish I could show all the videos here, but I will leave you with the wise words of one articulate, powerful woman.

Slide 18: This project was a huge success. All of the students were thrilled with their videos. They eagerly shared them with each other and I will compile them to view next week. It was amazing to hear the students acknowledge their own abilities and support and listen to each other.