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ABSTRACT

This handbook grew out of the experiences of the teachers and students at the Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center, a community-based literacy program in Springfield, Massachusetts. It is both a documentation of the experiences of the program and a guide for teachers. The four sections of the handbook contain a number of modules, each of which indicates type of activity, time estimate, purpose, research notes, and steps or activities. Section 1, Creating a Community of Learners, consists of a series of group activities, each requiring from 30 minutes to 2 hours, that can be used with mixed groups of students and volunteer tutors to set the climate for adult literacy classes. Section 2 includes suggestions for one-to-one goal setting conferences and for using individual learning contracts. Three short group activities for introducing the individual activities and evaluating the progress of the group are also in this section. Section 3 contains group activities to help participants and tutors examine their reading history, activities to acquaint students with what good readers do, and other reading-related activities teachers can use with individuals or groups of students. Section 4 includes activities to introduce students to the writing process and suggestions for writing, publishing, and sharing student work. Each section ends with reference notes. (KC)

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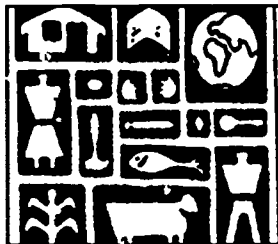
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MANY LITERACIES:
Modules for Training Adult Beginning Readers
and Tutors

By Marilyn Gillespie



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PREFACE

During the summer of 1987 the Springfield City Library received a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners to open the Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center at the Brightwood Branch Library in Springfield's North End. The first group of students were in their twenties, thirties and forties. They came from all over the Springfield area and represented a wide diversity of backgrounds. Many were parents and a few were even grandparents. Everyone in the group spoke English. Some had originally come to this country from Puerto Rico and spoke Spanish as well. Others, who had recently become unemployed with the closing of Springfield garment factories, originally came from Greece, Italy, and Poland. Some had grown up in Springfield and had gone to Springfield schools. Others had grown up in the South and had found jobs in Springfield as young adults.

Although each student was very different, what they all had in common was a need to learn basic reading and writing. Some wanted to study for the high school equivalency test someday. Others found it difficult to perform new jobs without better reading and writing skills. Still others came to realize the dream of reading and writing to children or grandchildren. Whatever their literacy needs, each came with the hope of becoming more independent and self-determining through reading and writing. Because they used word processing to write in our program, many also began to become computer literate as well.

This handbook documents some activities of the Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center that were funded by a Library Services Administration Act, Title One Special Project through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. It was designed to provide future teachers and tutors in our program with: 1) guidelines for creating an environment which allows students to decide their own goals and needs; 2) suggestions for teaching adult literacy which are based on an understanding of current research in reading and writing; and 3) ideas for where to go to get further information. Soon other teachers in the local community began to ask for copies of this handbook.

During the Winter of 1989, it was agreed that the Center for International Education would publish this handbook so that it could be shared by a wider audience. The Center for International Education has a long history of work in the areas of literacy and adult nonformal education. Teachers and trainers from around the world have attended the Center where graduate courses are offered in nonformal education, curriculum development for adult nonformal education, literacy and participatory research. Center for International Education maintains a publications list of over fifty titles that include technical notes, handbooks and texts in the areas of participatory research and practice, nonformal education, materials development and training, literacy, and women in development.

It is our hope that this handbook will generate an interest in creative, innovative ways to involve students in the learning process. We welcome comments, suggestions or questions about this handbook, as well as inquiries about its applications. Please contact us through the – *Publications Coordinator, CIE, 285 Hills House South, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003-USA.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The training modules in this handbook reflect the experiences and contributions of many people. Teachers have played a critical role. As the initial co-teachers and planners for the project, Janet Kelly and Marilyn Gillespie were together responsible for the development and field testing of many of the activities. During the writing of the handbook, Janet's experiences as Project Manager provided essential and valuable insights toward the writing process. Janet also was responsible for researching and writing the initial drafts of Module 3.4. Other teachers with the project – Miriam Lopez, Sondra Muniz, Susie Tavares and Karen Pedersen – also played important roles in developing and field testing the training modules. Kathy Searle, who illustrated the handbook, has also worked as a teacher in the project and helped us to develop our first publications.

Although teachers have been most responsible for the development of the modules, many decisions about what is valid and useful have been made by students. Their collective insights, experiences and critical analysis have influenced every aspect of this handbook. Special thanks go to the first group of students, whose collaborative spirit set the stage for everything that followed. They are: Lidia, Mary, Luther, Linda, Lucy, Mattie, James, Maria, Ramonita, Annette, Carlos, Horace, Gary, Sadie and Pam. Other students whose work is used directly in this manual are Dave, Leandra, Gail, Carmela, George, Evelyn and Barry.

Special thanks for their assistance also go to staff members of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and the Springfield City Library. Shelley Quezada, Program Consultant for the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, was responsible for the initial proposal to develop the Read/Write/Now Learning Center and has provided generous advocacy and encouragement which has allowed for the continuation of the project and for the development of participatory programming. Robert Dugan, Director of Library Development, also supported the project and its decision to produce this handbook. On a local level, Jim Fish, Director of the Springfield City Library, and Jeff Katz, Assistant Director, have provided valuable direction and support. Lee Fogarty, the Supervisor of the Brightwood Branch Library, directed the local administration of the project. Her day-to-day contributions have been integral to the production of this handbook.

Without the support and commitment of the Publications Working Group at the Center for International Education this version of the handbook would not have been published. Specific recognition must be given to Helen Fox and Cliff Meyers for editing this version of the handbook and, Kay Pfeiffer for lay-out and production.

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INTRODUCTION

Creating a Community of Learners

This handbook grew out of the experiences of teachers and students at the Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center, a community-based literacy program in Springfield, Massachusetts. It is both a documentation of the experiences of our program and a guide for teachers.

Over the past two years, students have come to the Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center from many backgrounds and for just as many reasons. Many make the decision to return to school as a result of a change in their life circumstances. Several women entered the program after the closing of the garment factory in which they had worked for the past twenty years. Another man was a truck driver for over thirty years but has injured his back and can no longer drive. Several of the students are parents whose children have reached second or third grade and who have realized they can no longer keep up with their children's school work. Another student told us his grown children urged him to come to school saying, "You pushed us to finish school and we did. Now it's your turn."

For Beginning Readers and Tutors

This handbook was designed to be used by teachers who work with adult beginning readers, and by volunteer tutors at the Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center. Our students are English speakers who do not yet read or write well enough to enter a pre-GED program. Our tutors are volunteers with limited training in teaching literacy. But they are deeply concerned with knowing more about how their students view the world and how they learn. Many of the group activities are designed for mixed groups of students and volunteer tutors. Although their needs are different, we believe that, with modifications, both groups can benefit from learning more about how to learn to read and write. And, both groups will benefit by discussions with each other around these topics.

Although the activities were designed for our learning center, we hope that, with modifications, they can be helpful to other teachers as well. With a bit of imagination, teachers of English as a Second Language or high school equivalency may also find

ways to adapt some of the activities found in this handbook. Some modules may also be useful for the training of new volunteer literacy tutors who are not yet matched with students. Most of the modules are designed to be used with small groups, to supplement the content of existing programs.

For Teachers as Facilitators

As literacy teachers, we need the knowledge of reading and writing necessary to teach skills. But, we also need to know how to create an environment where students gain the confidence to know that they *can* learn. For this, the teacher needs to be able to act as a facilitator – to pose questions for the group, to encourage people to listen to and respect each others opinions, and to guide them through analyzing and acting on what they discover. Facilitating requires that a teacher give his or her own opinion without giving answers or telling people what they should do. It means seeing that the best learning takes place when the students and tutors ask the questions and then act on them. Facilitating leads students toward seeing themselves as the "experts" in making decisions about their own lives; to not just learn literacy, but develop the confidence and experience to use it.

We have found many books that help us learn how to teach skills. We have found few that have provided guidance in the difficult task of facilitating. For this reason, the primary focus of this handbook is on setting the stage for participation in reading, writing and planning rather than on the specific skills which should be taught. The handbook does not stand alone. Rather, its purpose is to enrich the specific skills and objectives of a literacy program.

Our "Many Literacies?"

We call this handbook "Many Literacies" to emphasize our belief that literacy is not just the ability to sound out words or to pass a test, although these may be important. To be truly literate, people need to use literacy to achieve personal, family, and collective goals. Literacy is the *exercised* ability to use reading and writing to get information one needs and to exchange it with others. This implies that learners must connect literacy to its meaning in their everyday lives and find ways to determine for themselves the conditions under which they will use reading and writing. It means there is not just one literacy, decided on by experts, but *many literacies*, defined by each of us, individually and together.



One of the goals of this program is to break down the myth that people who cannot read and write well are unable to be responsible for their own learning; that they are incapable, isolated from others and unable to inform themselves of the political, social or economic conditions around them. We believe that our students benefit by examining what literacy is, the conditions under which they haven't learned to read, and the conditions under which they might learn best.

Students who come to Read/Write/Now do not find the same kind of learning environment they did in school. People walk in, drink some coffee, and then set their own pace for the day. Since they often work in groups, people have gotten to know each other and have come to share their frustrations and successes. Many say that after a time they have begun to feel like a family. Like a family, they have come to acknowledge and respect each other's diversity and to encourage each other.

One of the most important ways that learners in our program express their many versions of literacy is through writing and publishing. During the early stages of the program, the first group of students learned to use the computer for word processing. Many of them began to write their autobiographies and to publish them. One student wrote about growing up in Italy during the Second World War, about having to wash dishes for the German soldiers and about her trip by boat to the United States. Another student dictated stories about growing up with his grandmother in Mississippi. The published book became his first reader. Many of the stories talked about the struggles people had faced to survive in the world without literacy.

All of us were moved and changed by writing and by reading each other's writing. After the first generation of writers had published their books the second generation of students gained the confidence to begin writing as well. Soon we began to publish a newsletter as well. By becoming authors and sharing their work, all students began to realize the importance of sharing their knowledge with others.

Researchers and Teachers: Bringing Our Knowledge Together

In writing this handbook, one of our purposes was to bring together various sources of information about the subject of literacy. We believe we can learn from:

Literacy researchers in adult education, linguistics and psychology, who help us develop our own theories about adult literacy.

Literacy teachers, who draw on the knowledge created by academic researchers, but through their day-to-day contact with students add their own personal experience.

Literacy Volunteers, who come to adult literacy projects with their own perceptions of literacy.

Literacy Students, who know what it feels like to be illiterate or to be a literacy learner. They have developed views of what literacy means – ones that make "common sense" to them.

Our lives are enriched by all these human resources. Each strengthens the others. As teachers, however, we often don't have time to bring these many strands together. Often it is difficult to see the connections between academic research and what we do everyday in the classroom. The Research Notes and Background Notes (shaded in grey) in this handbook try to give teachers a glimpse of some key research that we believe is relevant to our work. We believe putting research knowledge into practice can dramatically improve our success with students.

However, if we are to involve learners and volunteers in decision making, we need to do more than just read the research ourselves. We need to find ways for students and volunteer tutors to understand why we teach the way we do. We need to find ways to make research less technical and easier for them to understand.

As facilitators we have yet another responsibility. As literacy students begin to speak out, we need to find ways for their words to reach researchers and policy makers. Too often, we feel, literacy "experts" have made assumptions about what adult literacy students believe and what they need without consulting them. As facilitators we need to help students to speak up; to write and publish their views, instead of just being written about. We need to help others to see their experience as valuable; to see that, as one literacy student put it, "who feels it, knows it."



What's in this Handbook?

The activities in the handbook fall into four main sections.

Section 1: Creating a Community of Learners consists of a series of group activities, each of which requires from 1/2 hour to 2 hours to complete. The activities can be used with mixed groups of students and volunteer tutors to set the climate for adult literacy classes.

Section 2: Developing a Learning Plan includes suggestions for one-to-one goal setting conferences and for using individual learning contracts. Three short group activities for introducing the individual activities and evaluating the progress of the group are also in this section.

Section 3: Introducing Reading contains group activities to help participants and tutors to examine their reading history, activities to acquaint students with what good readers do and other reading-related activities teachers can use with individuals or groups of students.

Section 4: Writing and Publishing includes activities to introduce students to the writing process and suggestions for writing, publishing and sharing student work.

These sections are *not* meant to be used chronologically. In our program we have never used all the modules within one given semester. It is up to the teachers and students to decide which modules are useful to them.

How We Have Used the Modules

We use these modules differently each semester and with each group of students. How we use the modules also depends on the length of our classes (in our case - two hours a day, three days a week). However, we have found some general patterns.

Starting Out Usually, during the first three weeks or so we focus more attention on activities from Section 1. Since we want people to begin writing right away, we also usually do Module 4.1, *The Writing Workshop*, as soon as possible. Sometime during the second or third week we try to get around to using individual goal setting and learning contracts (Modules 2.2 - 2.4).

Settling In Gradually, as people begin to know each other, we try to introduce them to routine activities. After intermediate students are introduced to reading (Section 4), they usually spend the first 30 minutes of the class time in sustained silent reading. Another hour of our two hours is typically spent writing. The remaining half hour is devoted to group activities or conferences. One day we might have a reading circle. The second day is for spelling conferences; the third for editing workshops. As those of you who are teachers know, there is never enough time for everything we want to do.

Writing Together Toward the end of the semester, people have become more accustomed to sharing their ideas and their writing. At this point, we usually encourage people to do some kind of group writing or collective activity. The culmination of this is often a publication and a celebration (such as a

potluck dinner) which acts as a graduation and a time to meet each other's families.

A Note on Working with Basic Beginners

Except for Module 3.4, *First Reading: Working with Beginners*, most of the modules are directed toward students who already have some basic literacy. These are people who can read very easy books without too much assistance or with a tape, and who can get phrases or short sentences down on paper. Students who cannot read or write without assistance need lots more one-to-one help. We have found it may be a better use of their time to work individually or in very small groups than to participate in the larger group activities. We are still working with very beginning students to find the right balance between individual and group activities. Teachers and tutors should use their judgement to decide which activities are best for their beginning students.



1.1 First Meetings

Purpose

First impressions of a classroom setting are often lasting ones. For this reason, we suggest planning the first class session carefully. It is helpful to have people begin to talk with each other and see one another as resources right from the beginning. This activity suggests some "icebreakers" which give people a chance to get to know each other. It also suggests ways for people to tell each other their reasons for coming to literacy classes, which helps them realize their common experiences. If possible, returning students should be asked to co-facilitate this activity.

Research Notes



Steps

1. Before the first meeting try to think about the students who will be coming. Will there be new and returning students in the group? What do the screening interviews tell you about the backgrounds of the new students? Try to think of the best way to make the group comfortable. Can the chairs be arranged in a circle? Could you provide refreshments? Could returning students be responsible for greeting the new ones?
2. After everyone is seated in the circle, explain that the purpose of this meeting is to get to know something about each other and to share why they came to the program. Ask if there are any questions. Then begin.
3. Pass around a box full of pictures that have been cut in two. You'll need the same number of pieces as there are participants, teachers and volunteers. (You will have to cut one picture in three if there is an odd number of people present.) Have each participant (including teachers or volunteers) choose a paper cut-out from the box. Then, tell everyone to find a partner by matching pictures. When everyone has found their partner, explain that they will have twenty minutes to interview each other. After the interview they will introduce their partners to the entire group. During the interview, they should ask each other the following questions (or questions the group wants to know about and brainstorms together):
 - A) *Tell us a bit about your life? Where are you from? What is your family like? Are you working? What kind of job do you have?*
 - B) *What two things you are good at or like to do?*
 - C) *Why did you decide to come to this program now?*

4. Have the pairs interview each other. Make sure they switch roles after about 10 minutes. Spend about 20 minutes in pairs.
 5. Bring the group back together and go around the circle having partners introduce each other.
 6. Some people may want to talk more about their previous school experiences and why they have come to the program. If so, give people time to do this, also mentioning that we will have more opportunities to discuss our goals and backgrounds later.
- ** Extra Materials Required:** In addition to the materials you need everyday (flip-chart paper and pens, a blackboard and chalk) this activity requires you to have photographs or pictures which can be cut in half and a box or basket in which to pass them out.

OTHER ICEBREAKERS

Nicknames: *Have participants discuss their nicknames - how they got them and what they like or don't like about them. They may also want to discuss their given names in the same way. Who chose the name? Why? Is it a family tradition?*

Hopes and Fears: *Divide participants into pairs. Ask them to discuss what they hope to get out of the program and their fears about coming to class. Later, come back into the large group and share hopes and fears of the group.*

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: *Have each participant interview a partner to find out one thing about her past, one thing she is doing right now, and one thing she hopes she can do in the future. (These answers don't have to be related to learning to read and write -- encourage people to talk about their hobbies, their families or other things that give them a feeling of accomplishment.)*

My Personal Shield: *Each person draws a round shield divided into four parts. In each part they make a picture to represent: 1) The best time I ever had; 2) My greatest accomplishment; 3) My most prized possession; 4) Something I would like to happen. People discuss their drawings in pairs.*²

1.2 Why Susan Can't Read

Purpose

Many adult students believe that their own deficiencies are the sole cause of their illiteracy. This belief contributes to a feeling that they may be unable to learn. This exercise is designed to help participants to better understand the complex factors that lie behind an adult's inability to read. We have found that participating in this activity has been especially useful to volunteer tutors who may not be aware of the obstacles faced by students.

Research Notes

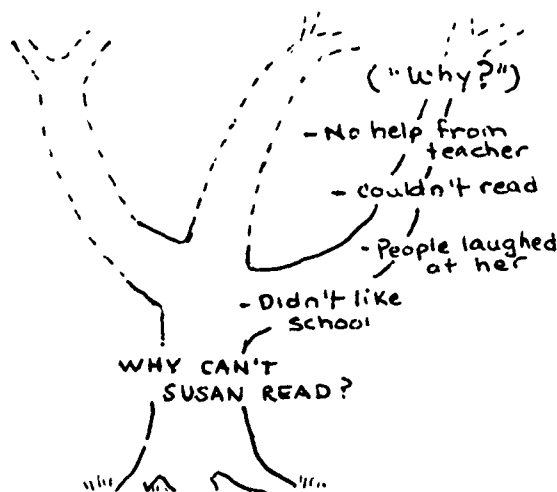


Steps

1. Pass out copies of *Susan's Story* (page 13) or another story that describes the history of someone who has problems with reading and writing. Ask the group to think about reasons why Susan can't read as you are reading the story. Then read the story to the group.

2. Explain to the group how to create a problem tree. A problem tree starts with one problem or question at the trunk. An answer is written down as one branch of the tree. Then another "why" question is asked about the first answer. If that answer leads to another question you continue up that branch of the tree until you have exhausted all the "why" questions you can think of. Then, go back to the trunk of the tree again and find another reason why "x" is a problem and continue to fill in more branches.

3. Begin by putting *Susan's Story* at the trunk of the tree. Try to summarize participant responses into one or two key words, checking back with them to make



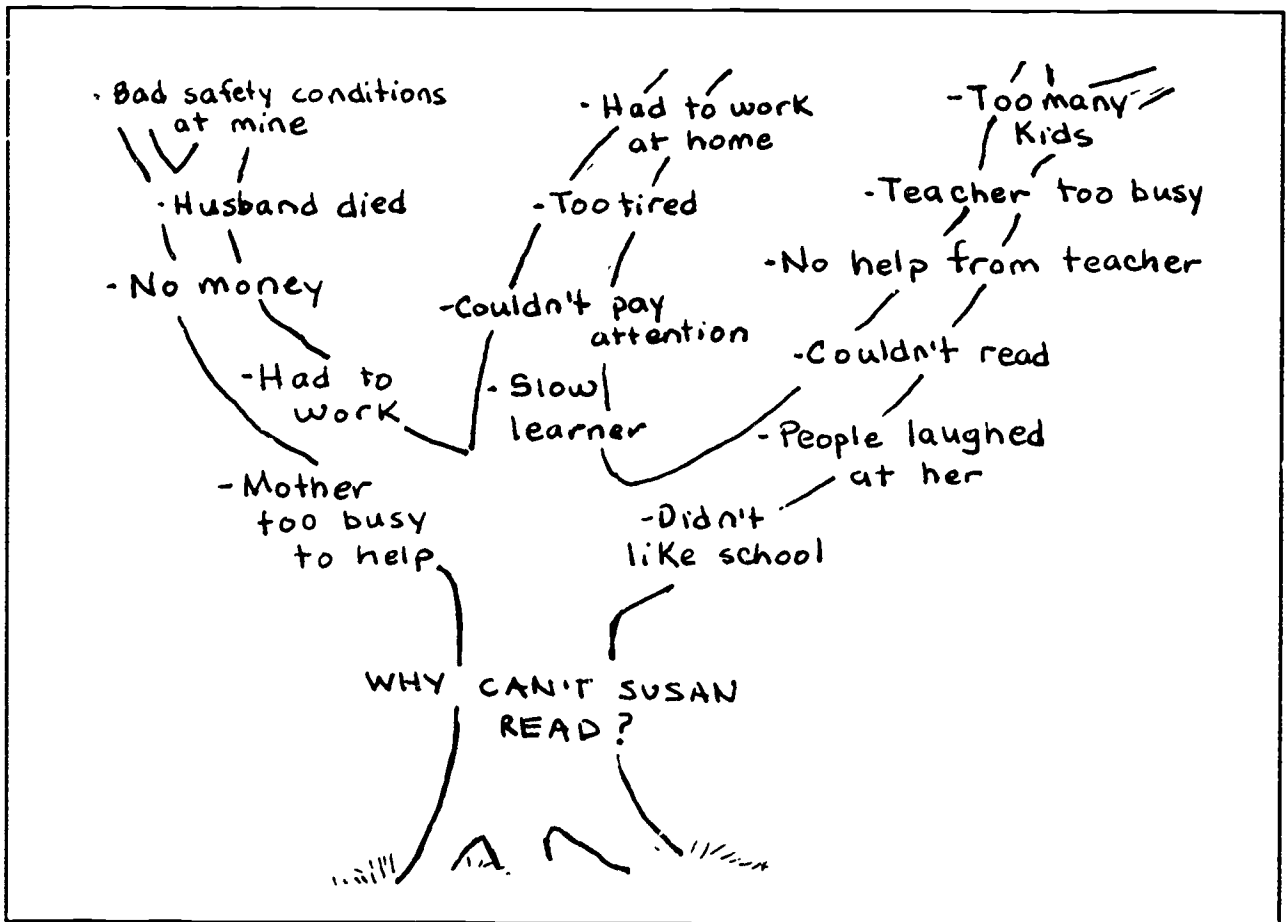
sure you have understood their meaning. Encourage participants at this point to look only at Susan's experience; not their own. You may need to read the story again to help people remember what it said.

4. As a group, summarize some of the main reasons why Susan can't read. Then ask the group what they think Susan might believe to be the reasons why she can't read? Do they think Susan would recognize some of the root causes? Would she blame herself? Others?

5. Ask the group to reflect on how the reasons why they can't read are similar to or different from Susan's. Try to make sure that one or two people don't monopolize the conversation. Everyone who wants to talk should get a chance.

6. Ask the group to think about why some of these conditions (overcrowded schools, parents too busy, not being able to speak English) exist and what would need to happen for these conditions to change. How have the experiences of their own kids in school been different? What do they want to give their kids that they didn't have?

** Extra Materials Required: You'll need copies of the story - *Susan's Story* - or a similar story for each participant, as well an extra large sheet of chart paper.



SUSAN'S STORY

SUSAN WAS BORN IN A MILL TOWN IN MASSACHUSETTS. HER MOTHER WAS 16 YEARS OLD WHEN SHE WAS BORN. HER MOTHER AND HER FATHER WORKED AT THE MILL. HER MOTHER WORKED DAYS. HER FATHER WORKED NIGHTS. SUSAN HAD TWO LITTLE BROTHERS. WHEN SUSAN WAS FIVE HER FATHER DIED. HER MOTHER HAD TO QUIT WORK. SHE HAD TO TAKE CARE OF THE CHILDREN.

SUSAN STARTED SCHOOL THE NEXT YEAR. SHE DIDN'T LIKE SCHOOL. SHE DIDN'T LIKE TO READ OUT LOUD. THE OTHER KIDS LAUGHED AT HER. SHE LIKED TO BE AT HOME. SHE LIKED TO HELP HER MOTHER.

THE CLASSES WERE VERY BIG. SUSAN WAS QUIET. NO ONE KNEW SHE COULDN'T READ. HER TEACHERS DIDN'T KNOW. HER MOTHER DIDN'T KNOW. SHE WAS EMBARRASSED TO SAY ANYTHING. NO ONE HAD TIME TO HELP HER. SHE BEGIN TO THINK SHE WASN'T AS SMART AS SHE SHOULD BE. AS SOON AS SHE COULD SHE QUIT SCHOOL. SHE GOT A JOB. THE MONEY HELPED HER MOTHER.

WHEN SUSAN WAS 16 SHE GOT MARRIED. SOON SHE HAD HER OWN LITTLE GIRL. WHEN HER LITTLE GIRL WAS 8 YEARS OLD SHE FOUND OUT HER MOTHER COULDN'T READ. "MOMMY, WHY CAN'T YOU READ?" SHE ASKED. SUSAN DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

WHY DO YOU THINK SUSAN CAN'T READ?

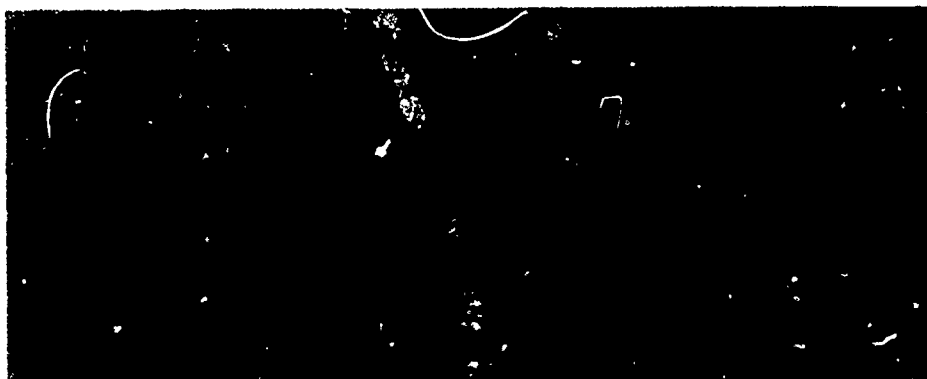


1.3 What is Literacy?

Purpose

Everyone comes to a literacy program with a pre-existing idea of what literacy is. Though our staff agrees that literacy means different things to different people depending on their needs and interests, many students believe it is like a door that is either open or closed. Since the door has been closed for these adults all their lives, opening it now may seem extremely difficult. It is good to broaden people's ideas of what literacy is by letting each person define it in their own way. This exercise begins a dialogue between the program staff, volunteers and learners about what literacy means to them. Facilitators who use this activity need to spend some time beforehand thinking through their own definitions and views.

Research Notes



Steps

Note: Although some students will find this activity interesting, it can also be done just with groups of volunteer tutors and teachers. Then, Module 1.7 *Purposes for Reading and Writing* can be a follow-up activity with mixed groups of students, teachers and volunteers.

1. Ask participants to think their own answers to the following questions:

*How would you define literacy?
How do you decide when someone can be called "literate?"
Is literacy the same for everyone?
What can you do when you're literate?
What can't you do when you're not literate?*

2. Mini-lecture: Paraphrase and/or summarize how policy-makers define literacy. (See the fact sheet just after this activity: *The Changing Definition of Literacy*.)
3. Talk about your own definition of literacy as a facilitator and how you came to it.
4. Discuss how new definitions of literacy have led to an increased emphasis on using participant's own goals as the starting point for work in the literacy classroom.

THE CHANGING DEFINITION OF LITERACY

At first the answer seems simple. Literacy is just the ability to read and write. But when we look at literacy more closely we find many problems and much disagreement about just who can be called literate.

- Some people define literacy by how many grades a person has completed in school. But many adults graduate from high school without being able to read.
- Often standardized tests similar to the ones given school children are given to adults. The scores are reported as a "grade level." But critics question whether or not these tests really measure how well an adult can use reading and writing to do adult tasks.
- Researchers at the University of Texas developed a set of 65 tasks they believed adults needed to be able to do in order to be "functionally literate" in the United States (e.g., reading warnings, writing checks, addressing envelopes). They tested a large number of people and gave them a score to determine how **functionally competent** they were. But this test too has been criticized by people who believe that the tasks needed to "get along" might be very different for people from various economic and social groups.
- Many people feel that measuring literacy simply by tasks that you can do leaves out hard to measure factors such as feeling better about yourself because you can read and write, and developing an ability to use literacy to think about choices and make decisions.
- More recently definitions of literacy, such as the one below, have focused more on the need of the learner to make decisions about what literacy means.

To be literate means to be able to fulfill one's own goals as a family and community members, citizen, worker, and member of churches, clubs and other organizations you choose. This means being able to get information and use it to improve your life, being able to use reading and writing to do the things you decide to do, and being able to use literacy as a tool to solve problems you face in everyday life.

DECLARATION FROM THE TORONTO SEMINAR: LITERACY IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES

In 1987 people from around the globe met to discuss the problems of literacy in industrialized countries. Based on recommendations from workshops held in community-based centers, they adopted the following declaration:

1. Literacy is a basic human right for the advancement of people around the world.
2. Illiteracy is a major problem, not only in developing countries, but in industrialized countries as well. It is a sign and effect, of poverty, unemployment, alienation and oppressive social structures. It affects both individuals and communities.
3. Literacy is more than the ability to read, write and compute. The demands created by advancing technology require increased levels of knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve basic literacy. Literacy is a means of acquiring the understanding and ability necessary to improve living and working conditions.
4. Literacy is a way of building community. It promotes social and individual change, equality of opportunity and global understanding.
5. Justice demands that the problem of illiteracy must be attacked in a world that possesses all the means and resources to do so.

Gayfer, M., Ed. (1987) *Literacy in Industrialized Countries: A Focus on Practice*. Toronto, Ontario: International Council for Adult Education.

LITERACY IN A BROADER SOCIAL CONTEXT

"Programs which define literacy as a set of skills or as the ability to use skills within work, community or cultural setting, face a danger of placing the whole burden for change on the individual adult learner. The people with limited skills become the focus of the needed change. A yet broader definition of literacy sees it in the context of social realities. Illiteracy, like other disadvantages such as unemployment, poverty and social discrimination is also a result of social, political and economic structures that perpetuate inequality. According to this model, literacy is not just acquiring personal skills but also having access to knowledge and power to create change in the structures that keep people illiterate and make it difficult for them to achieve other human rights." ⁶

Questions for Facilitators to Ask Themselves

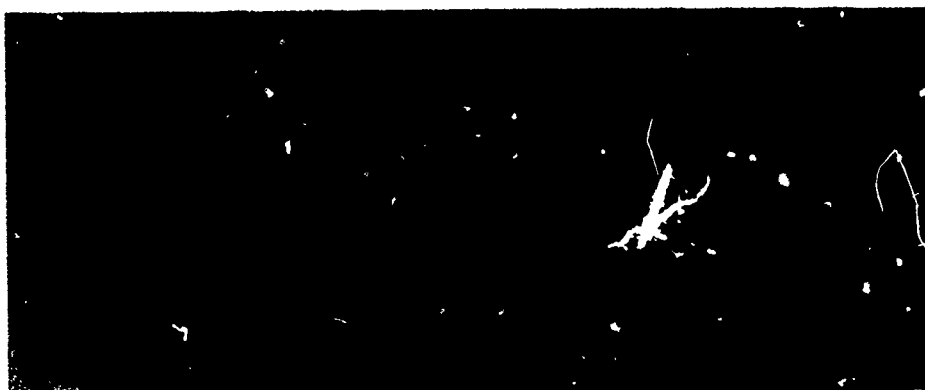
- 1) How do I define literacy?
- 2) How do my underlying assumptions about what literacy is influence my teaching?
- 3) What can I do to make my work as a facilitator more consistent with my own beliefs?
- 4) How can I share my perspectives with others without expecting them to assume my beliefs?

1.4 Illiteracy: Myths and Facts

Purpose

Myths related to illiteracy abound. For example, it is commonly assumed that almost everyone in the U.S. can read. Thinking they are alone with their problem, many adults hide their illiteracy, even from close family members. At the same time, the media has proclaimed a literacy "crisis," painting a picture of illiterate adults who are incapable of taking medicare, of caring for their kids, and of observing safety rules on the job. This stereotype, in turn, makes it even harder for adults to admit their illiteracy. This activity encourages participants to examine these and other prevalent myths and hidden assumptions.

Research Notes



Steps

Note: This activity is especially effective with mixed groups of people, such as volunteer tutors, teachers and students. Often it can be a chance for literacy students to inform teachers and tutors about problems they face due to misunderstandings related to literacy. Before using the activity, the teacher will need to do some preparation. Using the literacy fact sheets on the next pages as a guide, gather literacy rates and information about the numbers of programs and numbers of students served in your area from your local or regional Department of Education. Use this to prepare a short presentation of each literacy "fact" during this activity.

1. Below are five statements related to adult literacy which many people believe to be true. Read each statement to the group and let them know that today the group will be investigating myths and facts related to literacy and literacy learners.

- I. ALMOST EVERY ADULT IN SPRINGFIELD CAN READ AND WRITE WELL ENOUGH TO GET ALONG.
- II. ALMOST EVERY ADULT IN THE U.S. CAN READ AND WRITE WELL ENOUGH TO GET ALONG.
- III. THERE ARE PLENTY OF PROGRAMS TO TEACH PEOPLE HOW TO READ.
- IV. MOST PEOPLE WHO CAN'T READ JUST DON'T BOTHER GOING TO LITERACY PROGRAMS.
- V. PEOPLE WHO CAN'T READ AND WRITE ARE LESS CAPABLE IN GENERAL THAN PEOPLE WHO CAN READ.

2. Prepare a chart similar to the one illustrated below, one big enough so everyone can see it. Read the first statement. Then discuss each of the questions below in light of that statement, filling in a few words on the chart to serve as a reminder. After you have fully discussed the first statement, move on to the second one, and so on.

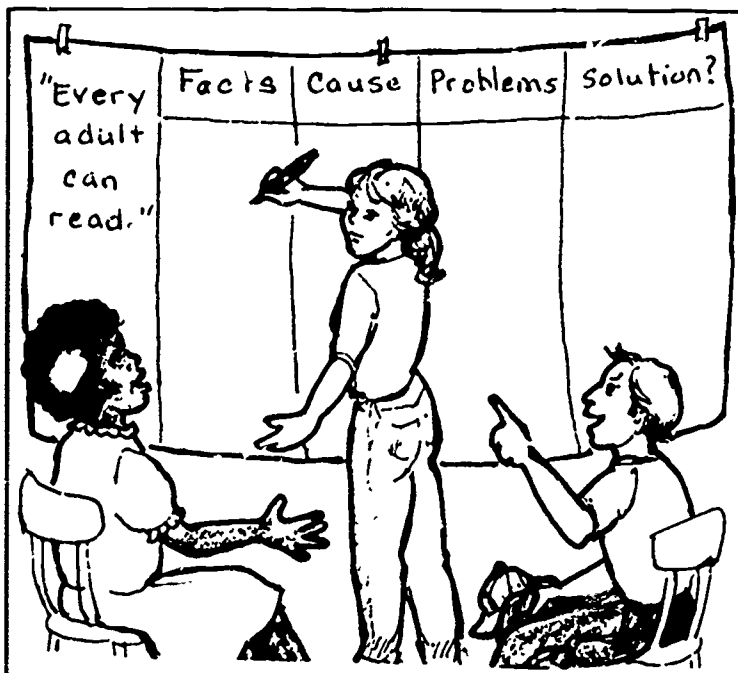
A. *What is your opinion about this statement? Is it true or false? How do you know? Give everyone plenty of time to voice their opinions. Use the quotes from literacy students on the next page to generate ideas.*

B. *What are some "facts" related to this question? Use the literacy fact sheets and other information you have to cite statistics related to the statement. The amount of detail you want to go into will depend on the interests and background of the group.*

C. *Who is responsible for lack of information about this fact? Possible responses might be groups such as: the media (television, advertising, newspapers, etc.), employers, teachers/schools, government, people who can't read (for example, by hiding the fact), friends and family members.*

D. *What problems does this lack of information cause? For example, believing that almost everyone can read and write leads us to communicate lots of important information (warning signs, job-related information, voting information) using very difficult language, instead of writing the same information in simpler, easy-to-read language. Believing the people who can't read are incapable in general may cause employees to hide their inability to read (which may in turn perpetuate the myth that almost everyone can read). People who can't possibly get to literacy classes but do want to learn to read may have barriers such as lack of transportation, child care or the need to work. People may get discouraged by having to be on a waiting list for months or years before getting into a literacy program.*

E. *What are some possible long-term solutions? Ask participants to think of some possible solutions, such as publicizing information about the real barriers to attending literacy classes, urging organizations such as the Driver's License Bureau to write information in simpler English, or writing letters to government officials or employers, and working with schools to lower drop-out rates and improve education for at-risk children.*



HIDING NOT BEING ABLE TO READ AND WRITE

Well, right off the bat, if somebody can't read, people instinctually figure that he's stupid, or that he's dumb or that there's something wrong with him mentally. And the major reason why I don't want to be called by my regular name is, I guess you'd call it "fear." Not being able to read is 20th century leprosy, that is what it is, because people treat you different. Like if my boss would find out, I'd lose a lot of credit in his eyes. I've told friends. After I tell my friends, the next thing I know, they go out of their way to explain things to me, they start pointing this and that out to me that they didn't used to point out to me. Maybe you won't understand this. Let me explain it to you. Before you know it, you're being treated as a kid, as half what you used to be treated. That's why I'm staying as Mr. X.

Mr. X.⁷

I never let on to anyone interviewing me that I couldn't read or write. Maybe it would have been better if I had, I'd have got some help sooner. But I just couldn't bring myself to admit it. I was embarrassed. I felt I was the only person in this whole great metropolis who ever had this great problem. Everybody else I knew went to school. So I attacked all the time. When I went for an interview if I was handed a paper to fill in for a job I'd say, "Before I fill in anything, what's the wages here?" It may have been on the bloody paper. I'd say, "Never mind what it says on the paper, I want you to tell me of the conditions." What I was looking for then was a loophole to get out of the reading and writing.

Gerry.⁸

Another thing I used to do from leaving school and getting a job, I always used to buy a paper to fool people. The other people would sit for maybe half an hour and read the paper, and they would turn to the back of the paper and read the horses. So I would have to sit for at least fifteen minutes and do the same.

Doug

My first wife never knew for seven years of marriage. I completely fooled her. If there was any forms or anything that came through the post, I would say, "Oh, do them. I've not time to do them." and she'd automatically do them without questioning.

Jean

The menu. I'm glad you brought that one up. You know what it's like...okay, imagine, if you will. You're taking a girl out to the restaurant. You sit down, and they throw the menu in front of you. Where do you go from there if you can't read the menu? Nine times out of ten you say, "Go ahead, here, pick out something for the both of us." I've eaten some weird things, let me tell you.

Mr. X

You find so many people who are out of work and don't go looking for a job. They seem to be able to work but never go. And everybody think, well, they're just lazy. They don't want to work. They don't understand this fear that hold 'em back from being with the public, when they got a problem.

Lou.⁹

If you're not working and you got to go out and try to find a job, well, what I do is go down and get an application. "Can I make these out later and drop them back?" And if they say, "No, you have to make them out here," well, I say, "I have a problem reading and I can't make it out." He says, "You can't make the application out." I say, "No." "Well," he says, "well, we aren't hiring right now," or "I don't have time to make out the application with you," or something like this. And that was the story most of the time.

Ernie.¹⁰

ILLITERACY FACT SHEET

Keeping in mind the difficulty of making accurate measurements of literacy, the figures on these two pages represent some counts of illiteracy in our local area and throughout the United States. These figures were obtained from the Massachusetts and the U.S. Department of Education. ¹¹

SPRINGFIELD (1980 Census)

In Greater Springfield, 20,000 are considered to be "functionally illiterate."

37,472 adults over age 18 in Springfield have not completed high school. That is 34% of the total adult population.

In 1987 4,128 adults in Hampden County were served in all adult education programs (job training, English as a Second Language, GED, and literacy).

State adult education specialists estimate only about 2-3% of the city's non-reading population is being served in programs.

A small number of those serve adult beginning readers. Most Springfield programs report waiting lists and have difficulty accepting people with special needs.

MASSACHUSETTS (1980 Census)

1.1 million adults over age 18 have not completed high school (about 26% of the adult population).

About 500,000 (13%) haven't finished 8th grade.

102,000 left school before 4th grade.

45,000 people in our state were served by adult education programs, including job skills training, GED, English as a second language in 1987.

About 3.5% of the target population was being served in 1987.

About \$20 million state dollars was spent on adult literacy in 1987.

THE UNITED STATES (1980 U.S. Census)

The Division of Education estimates 23-28 million (or about 20%) of adults are functionally illiterate.

52 million adults over 16 have not completed high school.

Every year between 700,000 and 1 million teenagers drop out of school.

In 1986 3 million adults were served by adult education programs.

In 1989 the federal government spent \$155 million on adult education.

MEASURING FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY

The U.S. Census defines as literate anyone who reports being able to read and write a simple message. By this definition, in 1880, 20 percent of our population was totally illiterate. By the 1970's this figure had dropped down to about 1%. However, in the U.S., as in all developed countries, more demands are made on individuals to be functional. Various attempts have been made to figure out just how many people are "functionally" illiterate, but there is much disagreement. Without a widely accepted measure of literacy it is difficult to document, or refute, media reports of widespread illiteracy. For the same reasons there is no way to know whether illiteracy is increasing or decreasing.

The Adult Performance Level study (APL) in 1975 used sophisticated sampling techniques to survey thousands of adults to determine their ability to undertake everyday functional tasks and grouped their "functional competence" into three levels. Researchers estimate that one out of every 5 or 27 million adults are functionally illiterate. Another 40 million can function, but not proficiently:

14% when asked to fill a check to a bank made an error so serious it wouldn't have cleared the bank.

13% could not address an envelope well enough to ensure it would reach its destination.

24% did not place a return address on the same envelope.

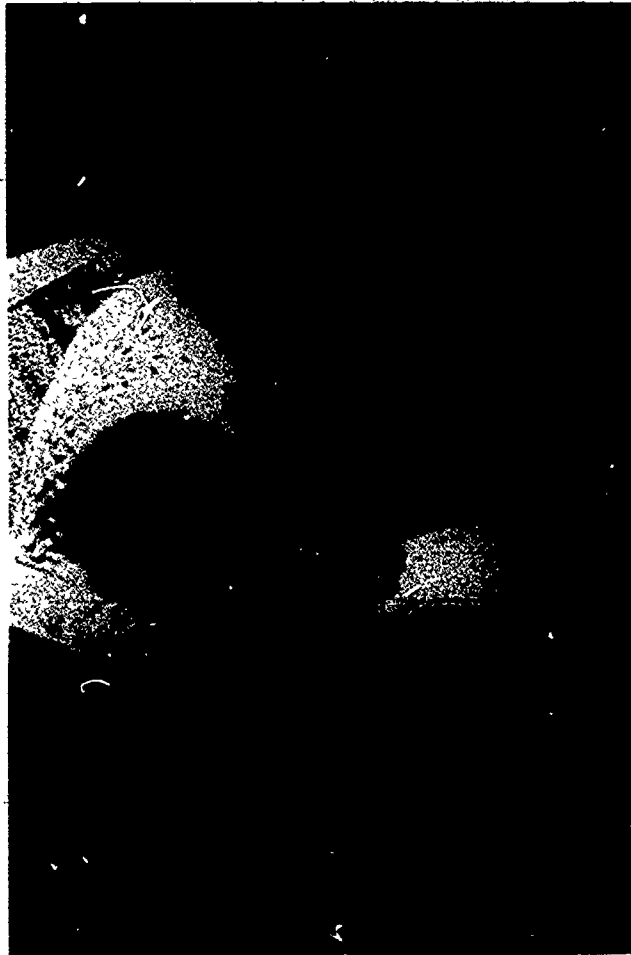
20% are unable to read a notice like one on the cashier's desk in a store describing the check cashing policy.

26%, when given a paycheck and the stub that lists the usual deductions, cannot determine if their paycheck is correct.

44% when given a series of help wanted ads, cannot match their qualifications to the job requirements.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), conducted by the Educational Testing Service, surveyed 3,600 young adults aged 21 to 25 years. They found the overwhelming majority could perform basic tasks, but many could not problem-solve or perform more difficult tasks using literacy.

The English Language Proficiency Test (ELPS), conducted by the U.S. Department of Education during 1982, gave a conservative estimate of 17-21 million adults or 13% of the population as functionally illiterate.



Family, what a beautiful word if it is interpreted the right way. The way it is supposed to be, a group of people with some roots, with some blood. They should feel lots of love and respect for one another and support when it be needed. To have family means to be morally rich and secure and have help when life is tough with you, giving you the strength you need to fight back. That's what the word family means to me.

Carmela

1.5 Inner Networks

Purpose

Arlene Fingeret created this activity as a way for literacy teachers, volunteers, and students to learn more about how the close friends and families of adult literacy students influence their learning. Students are asked to draw a picture depicting those closest to them, to think of ways they help one another, and to imagine how those relationships might change if they were to become more independent in their ability to read and write.

Research Notes

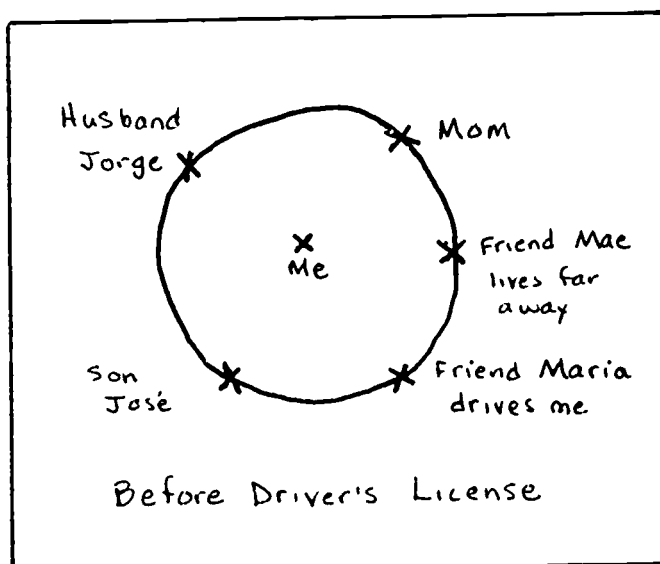


Steps

1. Ask participants to take out a piece of paper and draw an "X" in the middle. Then have them draw a circle around it and put another "X" on the circle for each member of their "inner network." For most people this is a relatively small group of family members or friends with whom they interact on a regular basis.

2. Ask participants to think back to some fairly major change in their lives over the past few years such as a marriage, a job change, moving, etc. anything that required learning new skills and using new knowledge. Chart the "inner network" that existed before this change took place.

3. Break into small groups. Discuss how each person moved from the relationships on the first chart to those on the second. How did the change come about? How did it feel?

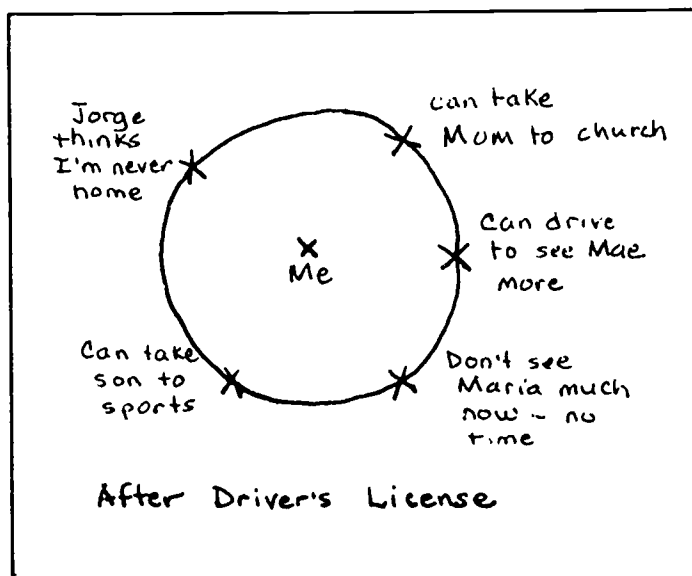


What kinds of skills did you use? How did other members of your social network respond?

4. Next ask the small groups to think about someone in their inner network (or someone who once was) and who has undergone some major change that has affected the participant. How did they feel about this change? How do they feel now?

5. Then, encourage participants to think about how learning to read and write affects (or might affect) their inner network. Who in their inner network helps them with reading and writing now? Could they continue to help as the participant becomes a better reader? Who else might be affected by their ability to read and write better? In what ways might this influence their relationships? In what ways might members of their inner network encourage or discourage participation in the literacy program?

6. Allow time for the large group to meet again together. Ask the groups to summarize their discussions. Help the group chart some of the responses they had in common. Ask the group to evaluate this activity. What did they learn? Can they recommend any other, follow-up activities which would be useful?

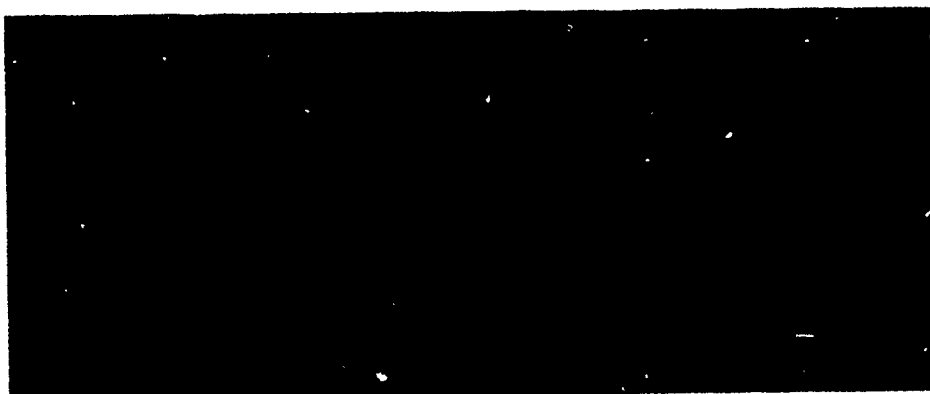


1.6 Learning as an Adult

Purpose

Within the field of adult education increasing attention has been given to the need to relate the learning of adults to their immediate life needs, to draw on their previous experience and learning styles and to involve them as much as possible in decision-making. Many adult students, on the other hand, expect the teachers to "fill" their student's heads with the answers. This activity is designed to help students understand some key principles of adult education and why it is important for them to participate actively in their own learning.

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: Everyone is an Expert

1. Write the word *EXPERT* on the board or on paper. Ask the group to define the word, then ask them to name people they consider to be experts.

2. Point out to the group that even if they haven't gone to school since they were quite young, they haven't stopped learning. Describe some examples of things people learn that don't require reading and writing. (The chart at the end of this activity, *Ways of Learning* may give you some ideas.)

3. Ask participants to find a partner and to describe something they taught themselves (cooking a certain food, repairing cars, driving a car, learning to dance, learning to take care of children, learning a new job.) How did they learn it? Who helped?



4. Come back together as a group. Discuss the different ways of learning reflected in the experiences of the participants.

Part B: Banking Education



1. Draw a picture similar to the one shown here. Use it to describe the banking model of education. The banking model of education, as described by Paulo Freire¹⁴, assumes that the student is an empty vessel waiting to be filled. The role of the teacher is to pour information into the student, to "deposit" the student with information. The more deposits you get, the more you know and the smarter you are. Freire and others believe this is not how learning happens. Learning takes place when you integrate new information with what you already know from your personal experience. It involves asking questions to get information you need, naming problems and discussing how to solve those problems.

2. Ask the group to think again about the learning experience in Part A. How did they get the information they needed? Were there any problems they had to solve? How did they combine what they already knew with new information?

Part C: Conditions for Learning

1. Ask the group to name some of the conditions that make it easy or difficult to learn.

2. Describe some of the conditions for learning suggested in the chart at the end of this activity. Which of these conditions do group members feel are most important?

WAYS OF LEARNING

Learning is a lifelong process. It takes place in and out of classrooms. Below are a few ways of learning we have thought of. Can you think of other ways you have learned something new in the past?

By listening to a teacher

By watching an "expert"

By listening to TV or radio or music.

By trial and error

By following instructions

By teaching someone else

By making mistakes

By discussions with friends or family

By asking someone

By reading a book or newspaper

By responding to an emergency

By using your imagination

KNOWLES' CONDITIONS OF ADULT EDUCATION ¹⁵

Conditions of Learning

The learners feel the need to learn.

The learning environment is characterized by physical comfort, mutual respect and trust, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences.

The learners perceive the goals of the learning experience to be their goals.

The learners accept a share of the responsibility for planning and operating the learning experience.

The learners participate actively in the learning process.

The learning process is related to and makes use of the experience of the learners

The learners have a sense of progress toward their goals.

Principles of Teaching

1. The facilitators expose the learners to new possibilities for self-fulfillment.
2. The facilitators help the learners clarify their own aspirations for improved performance.
3. The facilitators help the learners diagnose the gaps between their present level of performance and their desired level.
4. The facilitators provide physical conditions that are comfortable (as to seating, temperature, ventilation, lighting, decoration) and conducive to interaction (clusters or small groups at tables).
5. The facilitators accept the learners as persons of worth and respect their feelings and ideas.
6. The facilitators build relationships of mutual trust and helpfulness with and among the learners by encouraging cooperative activities and refraining from inducing competitiveness and judgmentalness.
7. The facilitators expose their own feelings and contribute their resources in the spirit of mutual inquiry.
8. The facilitators involve the students in a mutual process of formulating learning objectives in which the needs of the learners, of the facilitators, of the institution, of the subject matter, and of society are taken into account.
9. The facilitators shape their thinking about the options available in designing learning experiences and the selection of methods and materials and involve the learners in deciding among these options jointly.
10. The facilitators help the students organize themselves (project, teams, field projects, and so on) to share responsibility in the process of mutual inquiry.
11. The facilitators help the learners exploit their own experiences as resources for learning through such techniques as group discussion, case method, and projects.
12. The facilitators gear the presentation of their own resources to the levels of experience of the learners.
13. The facilitators help the learners to apply new learnings to their personal experiences and thus to make the learnings more relevant and integrated.
14. The facilitators involve the learners in developing mutually acceptable progress toward the learning objectives.
15. The facilitators help the learners develop and apply procedures for self-evaluation according to these criteria.

1.7 Purposes for Reading and Writing

Purpose

Statistics tell us little about people's purposes for reading and writing, or where, when and why they need literacy. Students who enter a program with the same scores on a standardized reading tests may have vastly different purposes and uses for literacy. This group activity encourages participants to begin a process of thinking about how they will use reading and writing in their everyday lives. It also sets the stage for individual one-to-one goal-setting activities described in Section 2.

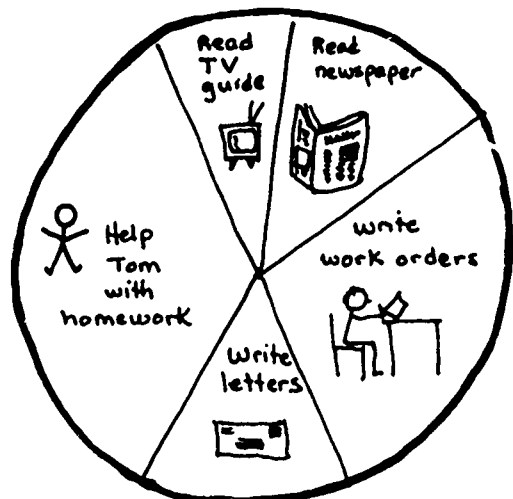
Research Notes



Steps

1. Ask students to name as many purposes for reading and writing as they can think of. Encourage them to be as specific as possible. Write their list on chart paper, using simple language. (If you can, draw symbols such as a stick figure family, a telephone, a house, next to the item so non-readers can remember it.)

2. Ask participants to write down their most important purposes for literacy. If participants have difficulty writing, they may want to use drawings or pictures cut out of magazines to symbolize each purpose.



3. As the facilitator, draw a circle on chart paper and then divide the circle into sections – like pieces of a pie. In each section write down one of your purposes for reading and writing. Make the "slices" of the pie bigger or smaller depending on their importance to you. Describe why you made those choices.

4. Next ask participants to each draw a pie that describes their own purposes for reading and writing. Encourage them to use picture symbols if they can't write the words they need, or have magazine pictures they can find symbols in.

5. Have each participant describe his or her pie to a partner.

6. As a large group write down the purposes that were mentioned most often. Why were they mentioned so often? Why are they so important? What purposes do members of the group have in common? (Exercise caution in talking about differences among members of the group if they might cause people to compare and judge each other based on their reading abilities.)

7. Discuss possible ways the group might work together to meet goals they have in common.

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I WANT To Read and ^{rite} WRITE better
So When I Pick UP A book I can Read
and When I Want To Write some
Thing down I ^{I can} do it with Hopefully
No PROBLEM.

I want to read better because I want
to be able to help my 'sister' with
there Homework also to be able
to read books also to be able
to read applications just to make
live a little easier because when
a person don't know how to read
it's very hard sometime to
get jobs just to explain
something to another person



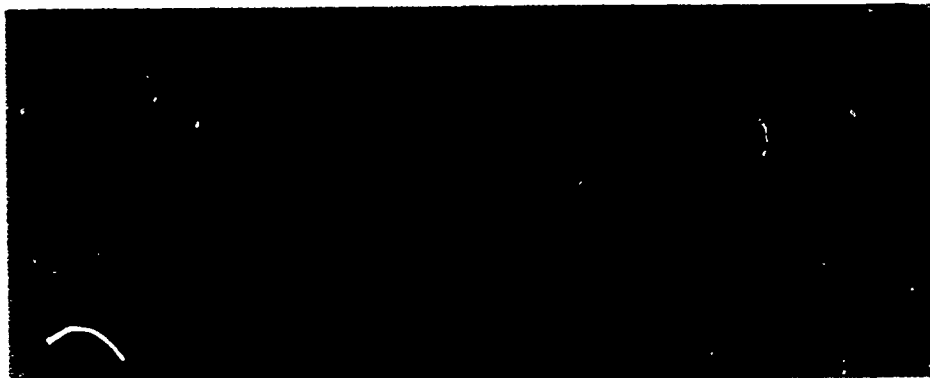
i want to better my life
by learning how to read and
write I can get me a job
I can get me piece of the
thing I all ways want it
in life. It will make
me happy and also my
family

2.1 The Planning/Learning Cycle

Purpose

In previous activities we have established the need for participants to be involved in planning and evaluating their own learning. In this exercise participants are introduced to a process to help them plan self-directed learning called the planning/learning cycle. This activity shows how learning is a cyclical process of naming a goal or need, deciding on a plan to meet it, studying according to the plan, evaluating whether one has learned or not, and then beginning to plan all over again. The activity sets the stage for individualized activities which will follow.

Research Notes

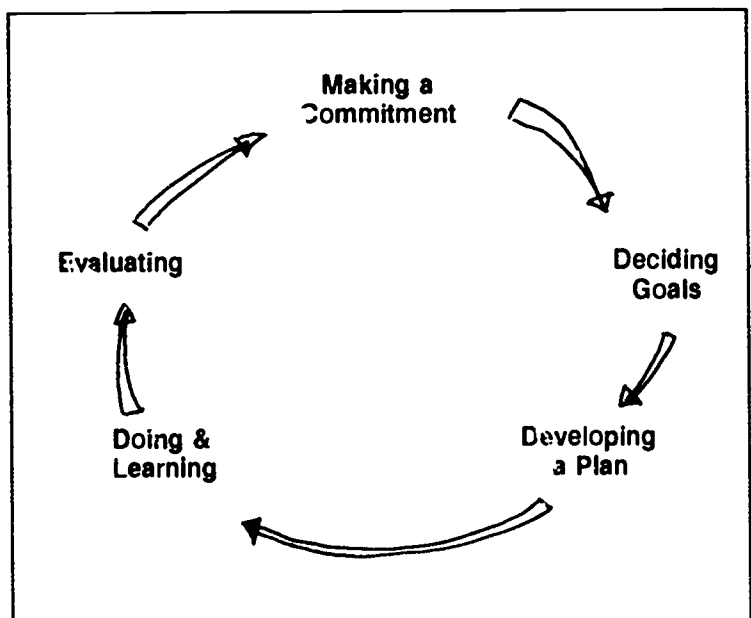


Steps

1. Draw a chart similar to the one shown here describing the Planning/Learning Cycle. Point out that the planning cycle is a process. Describe each stage, emphasizing the cyclical process.

Stage 1: Making a Commitment

As adults there are many competing things we would like to do. Often we don't have the time or energy to do all of them. Before deciding to undertake a goal like learning to read or becoming a tutor, you need to think about the time and energy required. Learning to read takes a long time. You may have to give up some other things in order to achieve the goal. Sometimes, after a hard look at your obligations, you may have to decide to put the goal off until a better time. But, if you decide to consciously commit to the goal, then all the other stages become easier.



THE PLANNING/LEARNING CYCLE

Stage 2: Deciding Goals

A learning plan begins by assessing your own needs. What life goals are important to you right now? What would you like your life to be like in the future? In what ways do you need reading and writing to meet those life goals? By filling out a **Goals List** with a teacher you can begin to look at what you already can do with reading and writing and what, specifically, you'd like to be able to do (use the phone book, write a letter, read the TV guide).

Stage 3: Planning a Learning Contract

Next it's time to be even more specific and decide on exactly which of your goals you will work on, how you can learn what you need to know, who will help you, and how you will decide when you have accomplished your goal. Sometimes you will have to do other things on the way to achieving the goal. For example, you might have to learn to write out numbers before you can learn to fill out checks. You and a teacher or tutor will fill out a **Learning Contract**, making decisions together about what you need to learn and how to do it.

Stage 4: Learning and Doing

The learning you do to meet your goals can take place inside and outside the classroom. It involves not just learning to read and write inside the classroom, but using reading and writing at home everyday. During class hours you may work alone, with a teacher or tutor alone, with other class members, or in a group with everyone sharing. Outside of class you may contract to read books and do writing from class, or to do other things such as reading to your children, writing letters, using flashcards to practice how to read words or writing shopping lists.

Stage 5: Evaluating

Evaluation goes on all the time in our program as we think about what we have done, how our needs and goals may have changed, and what we want to do next. But, about half-way through each cycle and at the end of the cycle we try to take time out to evaluate our progress. We talk about questions such as: What did we learn as a group? What did I learn myself? Did I accomplish my goals? How do I know? What went well? What would I like to change? Where do we want to go next? Some of this evaluation takes place as a group and some, such as evaluating a learning contract, is done one-to-one with a teacher or tutor.

During the process of describing the planning cycle stop frequently to elicit the comments of participants and to answer questions if they are not clear about the stages. One way to make the stages more clear is to use an example from the real life of a student you know. With permission of the student, show samples of his or her goals list and learning contract and discuss his/her experience. Afterwards, ask the group to discuss the value of using the planning cycle. Do they have any suggestions or recommendations?

**** Extra Materials Required:** A Chart of the Planning/Learning Cycle, samples of goals lists and learning contracts.

2.2 Life Goals: Maria's Story

Purpose

Some adults have very little experience naming their goals. In this activity students can learn more about goal-setting by thinking about the goals of a typical literacy student named Maria. Using Maria as a case study, they will learn how she learned what she wanted to do in her life, who she wanted to be, and what she wanted to have as short term goals for her literacy studies. Then, students have a chance to do the same thing with their own *doing, being, and having* goals.

Research Notes



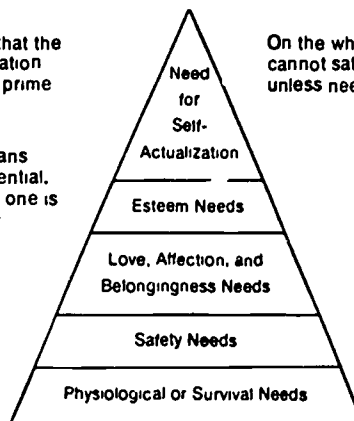
Steps

1. Discuss with the group what a *need* is. Do some needs have to be met before others can be possible? What kind of needs are there? You may want to simplify Abraham Maslow's hierarchy (or tree) of needs. Explain the theory that "basic" needs such as food, shelter, and a sense of belonging have to be met in order to allow us to respond to "higher" needs - for self-esteem and achieving our full potential. Ask the group's opinion of Maslow's theory. Do they agree? Disagree?

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF HUMAN NEEDS

Maslow emphasizes that the need for self-actualization is a healthy person's prime motivation.

Self-actualization means actualizing one's potential, becoming everything one is capable of becoming



On the whole an individual cannot satisfy any level unless needs below are satisfied.

Most basic needs have to do with survival physically and psychologically

2. One way to learn more about goals is to divide them into three categories: **Doing**, **Being**, and **Having** goals. Discuss examples from each kind of goal with students.

Doing

*get a GED
learn to drive
move to California
learn to swim*

Having

*a better job
a new house
a car*

Being

*an educated person
a good parent
self-confident*

3. Pass out copies of the story on the next page and read it to the group. Ask the participants if they can name Maria's needs. What does she want to do, to be and to have?

4. Divide into small groups. Ask group members to see if they can name two or three goals they have from each category. Encourage people not only to think of things related to class but to their lives as a whole -- family, work, personal interests.

5. Ask each participant in the small groups to reflect on whether reading and writing would help them meet their goal. If it would, how?

Materials Required: Copies of Maria's Story for each participant



MARIA'S STORY

MARIA CAME TO THE U.S. FROM PUERTO RICO WHEN SHE WAS 16. SHE CAME WITH HER MOTHER AND FATHER AND FIVE BROTHERS AND SISTERS. THEY WORKED IN THE FIELDS IN PUERTO RICO. THEY WANTED A BETTER LIFE IN THE U.S.

MARIA WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL. BUT SHE DIDN'T SPEAK ENGLISH VERY WELL. HER TEACHERS TOLD HER SHE WAS SMART BUT IT WAS HARD TO KEEP UP. WHEN SHE WAS LITTLE MARIA HAD BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL. WHILE SHE WAS THERE SHE MET MANY NURSES. SHE DREAMED THAT SOMEDAY SHE COULD BE A NURSE. SHE TALKED TO HER TEACHER ABOUT HER DREAM. HER TEACHER TRIED TO HELP HER READ ABOUT NURSING.

THEN A PROBLEM CAME UP. MARIA'S FATHER LOST HIS JOB. SINCE MARIA SPOKE ENGLISH BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE IN HER FAMILY, SHE HAD TO HELP HER FATHER FIND A NEW JOB. SHE GOT MORE AND MORE BEHIND IN SCHOOL. FINALLY SHE DROPPED OUT. SOON AFTER THAT MARIA MARRIED JOSE. MARIA GOT A JOB AT A CLOTHES STORE, BUT PROMISED HERSELF THAT SOMEDAY SHE WOULD GO BACK TO SCHOOL.

MARIA AND JOSE HAD TWO KIDS. THEY WANTED THEIR KIDS TO HAVE A BETTER LIFE THAN THEY DID. THEY WANTED TO MOVE TO A DIFFERENT NEIGHBORHOOD. THEY WANTED TO HELP THE KIDS GROW UP RIGHT. THEY WANTED THEM TO SPEAK ENGLISH AND TO DO WELL IN SCHOOL. BUT TO GET THOSE THINGS MARIA AND JOSE WORKED LONG HOURS. MARIA GOT OFFERED A BETTER JOB WITH MORE PAY BUT IT WAS TOO FAR AWAY AND IT TOOK TOO LONG TO GET THERE ON THE BUS.

FINALLY, MARIA DECIDED THAT EVEN IF IT WAS HARD, SHE WAS GOING TO DO SOMETHING FOR HERSELF AND HER FAMILY. SHE WAS GOING TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL. SHE GOT HER NAME ON THE WAITING LIST. SIX MONTHS LATER SHE STARTED AT AN ADULT SCHOOL.

WHAT DO YOU THINK MARIA'S GOALS COULD BE?

DAVE'S GOALS

GOALS LIST

Name: Dave

Date: 1/16 Interviewer: ng

Part I: In your own words, can you tell me your reasons for coming to school now?
 I want to read: write better in general - just to feel better. Also I want to be able to read books to fix my car better

Part II. Here are some goals other students in this something you already can do, something you would interest in. (Write yes or no and/or comments after each)

Personal

- Read/write your name and address - can do
- Read signs (which ones) - yes, most -
- Read labels/instructions - yes
- Read/write notes to/from family - don't - we
- Read and write shopping lists - no
- Read a calendar, bus schedules, TV guides - TV re
- Use a phone book - OK
- Read menus or recipes - no
- Read bills - OK
- Write checks - OK - maybe prac
- Read maps - yes!
- Read information related to health - no
- Fill out forms - yes, for v
- Read/write personal letters - yes
- Read the newspaper (which section)
- Read magazines (which ones)
- Use a dictionary - SW

Children

- Read to your children/grandchildren - no kids
- Ages
- Help children with
- Read/write with
- Take part in

Personal - Br Re P

Community

- Register to vote - already
- Apply for citizenship - no
- Read leases/contracts - not too much
- Apply for a library card - yes
- Take the driving test - no
- Participate in community meetings/clubs/religious meetings - yes!
- Join a group to work on a problem - yes - reading group
- Publish a newsletter or other writing - one

Education

- Attend a job training program - yes, but later
- Attend classes to learn something new (hobbies, self-improvement) - yes - restoring cars
- Pass a work-related test - maybe later
- Get a GED - have diploma

Part III. Can you think of any other goals you have which we have not mentioned?
 At work - write down repair orders
 Mark codes for vehicle damage
 Read reference sheets

Part IV. Of all the goals we have mentioned, name two or three which are most important to you right now.

- #1 Reading books + magazines in general
- #2 Writing to friends
- #3 Reading maps
- #4 Practice handwriting

2.3 Using the Individual Goals List

Purpose

Our project is grateful for the idea of using a goals list, which was borrowed from one developed as part of the Adult Literacy Evaluation Project, a joint research project between the Center for Literacy in Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania. In our project we adapted the checklist to fit curriculum topics we were able to offer students, leaving an "Other" category for goals we might have missed. After students complete the checklist with the help of their teachers, they meet with them again for individual conferences during which they use the goals information to fill out learning contracts (Module 2.4).

Research Notes



Steps

Stage 1: Review Screening Information

1. Before meeting with the students, get to know more about them by reviewing information collected from screening interviews, tests and writing samples. Review the writing folders and other files of returning students.
2. Locate a quiet and private place to complete the Goals List. Allow about 20-30 minutes for each interview.
3. Make sure you have blank copies of the Goals List. (And – the Learning Contract if you are doing both at the same time.)

Stage 2: Getting Started

1. Greet the student and spend a few minutes chatting.
2. Make sure the student sits next to you so you can both see the checklist. Even if the student can't read what is written, convey the message that completing the checklist is a shared, joint activity. Tell the student you'll both be using the checklist to plan future activities.

Stage 3: Completing Part I

1. Ask the student to tell in his or her own words the reason for coming to school now. Ask if there are any reasons the person didn't want to share with the group, but which the teacher should know. Some students may be very specific about their goals; others may just say they "want to be able to read and write better in general." Accept any answers the student gives, without prompting at this point.

Stage 4: Completing Part II

1. Explain to the student that you are going to read a list of things people who come to literacy classes typically can do or want to be able to do. Tell the student to let you know if this is something they already can do, something they want to do or something they have no interest in. Write a word or two after each item to indicate the student's response. Give students encouragement for the things they already can do.

Stage 5: Completing Part III and IV

1. Sometimes reading the list of alternative responses will help students remember a more specific goal they have. Ask if the student can think of other things they can do or other interests that have not been mentioned. List them under Part III.
2. Ask the student to think about all the goals that have been mentioned. Which ones are most important right now? Ask them to identify the 2 or 3 most important reading goals and 2 or 3 priority writing goals. Circle these goals on the checklist or write them under Part IV. If the goal is a long term one, such as getting a GED, briefly discuss the fact that there may be many short-term goals that will have to be met before the long-term one is achieved. At this point you may want to make some preliminary suggestions.

Stage 6: Finishing Up

1. Repeat back to the student a summary of what you understand to be his or her most important goals. Ask the student to clarify if you have misunderstood anything.
2. Review the reading and writing skills the student already has. Point out that they already know a good deal about reading and writing, and that the program will build on that prior knowledge.
3. At this point you may want to begin the Learning Contract or set a time to do so.

**** Materials Required:** Previous student records, blank copies of the Goals List.

GOALS LIST

Name: _____ Date: _____ Interviewer: _____

Part I: In your own words, can you tell me your reasons for coming to school now?

Part II: Here are some goals other students in this program have mentioned. Tell me if this is something you already can do, something you would like to do, or something you really have no interest in. (Write YES or NO and/or Comments after each item.)

Personal

Read write your name and address

Read signs (which ones):

Read labels/instructions

Read/write notes to/from family

Read and write shopping lists

Read a calendar, bus schedules, TV guides

Use a phone book

Read menus or recipes

Read bills

Write checks

Read maps

Read information related to health

Fill out forms

Read/write personal letters

Read the newspaper (which sections):

Read magazines (which ones)

Use a dictionary

Improve handwriting

Children

Read to your children/grandchildren

Ages:

Help children with homework

Read/write notes from school

Take part in school related meetings and events

Personal - Books and Writing

Read books for enjoyment (what kind – adventure, mystery, romance, historical, books about people):

Read books to get information (what kind – personal research, current events, jobs, children, health, religious, hobbies, entertainment):

Write for yourself (what kinds – journal or diary, experiences you've had, advice for others, your opinions, reports about something you've read, your life story or autobiography, other stories, poems, words to songs):

Work

Fill out a job application

Use reading to find out about jobs

Use reading to learn to do your job better or open a business

Read and write notes from and to co-workers

Read or write work reports, logs, announcements

Fill out order forms/lists

Participate in work-related meetings; take notes.

Community

Register to vote

Apply for citizenship

Read leases/contracts

Apply for a library card

Take the driving test

Participate in community meetings/clubs/religious meetings

Join a group to work on a problem

Publish a newsletter or other writing

Education

Attend a job training program

Attend classes to learn something new (hobbies, self-improvement)

Pass a work-related test

Get a GED

Part III: Can you think of any other goals you have which we have not mentioned?

Part IV: Of all the goals we have mentioned, name two or three which are most important to you right now.

Dave's Learning Contract

LEARNING CONTRACT

WHAT?	HOW?
<p>READING:</p> <p>A) Improve reading in general.</p>	<p>1) Read + report on 3 books. 2) Read autobody book - 1 1/2 hours per week. 3) Come to strategy lessons.</p>
<p>WRITING:</p> <p>B) Write letters to friends.</p>	<p>1) Write and <u>mail</u> 1 letter a week - 4 total.</p>
<p>PERSONAL GOALS:</p> <p>C) Fill out applications</p>	<p>1) Fill out applications from our file - do 1 a week, each one with more info</p>
<p>D) Read maps</p>	<p>1) Do exercises in map workbook, pages 1-20.</p>
<p>COMPUTER</p> <p>not now</p>	
<p>CONTRACT ENDING DATE <u>11/15</u></p> <p>COMMENTS</p> <p>D. will try to read more books. Can't work at home. Will come earlier so he can read here.</p>	

Dave
LEARNER'S NAME

[Signature]
TEACHER'S NAME

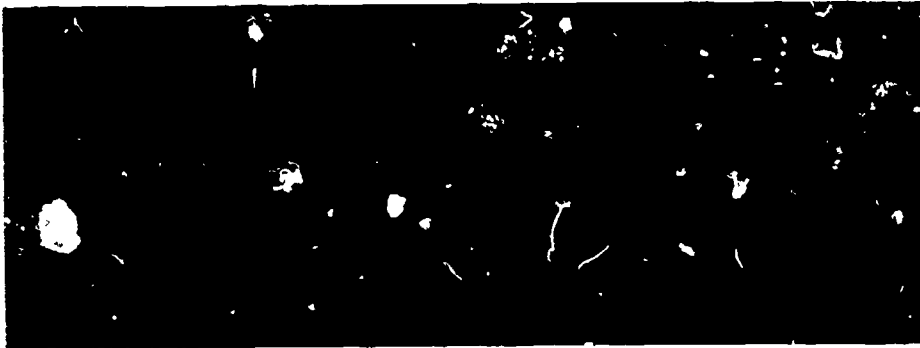
11/15/88
DATE

2.4 Using the Learning Contract

Purpose

A learning contract is an agreement between a teacher or tutor and the student. Together they decide what the student will work on, how he or she will go about achieving this objective, and how they will know when the learner has met the objectives. The learning contract is a negotiation between the student, who has needs, and the teacher, who has knowledge the student may not have about how to achieve the goal. We generally write learning contracts which will take about four to six weeks to complete. At the end of that time we meet with the student again, discuss whether or not the goal has been met and renegotiate a new contract.

Research Notes



Steps

Stage 1: Getting Ready

1. Find a quiet space and set aside about 10-20 minutes to finish the contract. (First contracts usually take less time to fill out if they are done at the same time as the goals checklist.)
2. Decide on how long you and the student will work on the learning contract. In our program, a learning contract is re-evaluated about once a month. This gives people a chance to be fairly specific in their goals and to achieve a sense of accomplishment. However, we often have time constraints that make it necessary to hold contract meetings less frequently.
3. Quickly review the individual's goals list.

Stage 2: Completing the Interview

1. Make sure you sit next to the student with the contract between the two of you. Let the student know that you both will get a copy of the learning contract. Explain what the contract is and why you are doing it.
2. Look back at the goals checklist you and the student filled out. Review with him or her the most important goals listed. Ask the student which ones are most important.

3. Decide on one or two goals for each category on the contract: reading, writing and functional goals. (In our case, we also ask students if they want to complete computer-related goals.) Steer the student toward specific, tangible goals. In our programs we try to have the following:

Reading Goals: For beginners these would involve reading with a tutor or reading books on tape. For more advanced students this might involve sustained silent reading in class or at home, of fiction or non-fiction. For both categories of students, talking about books in small groups might be a goal.

Writing Goals: Writing goals for us means writing whole pieces of text, whether in writing workshops or as part of a language experience activity with a tutor. Writing skills activities are drawn from the student-written texts.

Personal Goals: These are often functional goals such as learning to write checks, learning to fill out applications or studying for the driver's test. Personal goals could also involve working on a collective group activity.

4. Write each goal you decide on together in the left column under WHAT.

5. Now take one goal at a time. Think together about what the student will do to accomplish the goal. How much time is available? Does the student have any time to work on the goal outside of class? Who can help? Does the task need to be broken down into parts? Be as specific as possible. For example, a student might set a goal of writing and sending one letter to a friend. This would involve learning the parts of a letter, writing a first draft, revising it, editing the letter for spelling, punctuation, etc., and making a final copy to send. In order to improve the student's writing skills, the learning contract might also suggest that he attend group mini-lessons on writing and spelling. His teacher might agree to match him with a tutor to help him with the letter-writing one day a week.

6. Discuss with the student how you will know if the goal is accomplished. Will the finished letter be mailed? Will the student give oral or written reports of the books he or she has read? Will the teacher "quiz" the student on map reading skills by a certain date? If so, write the date on the contract.

7 Sign the contract. Make sure both the student and the teacher or tutor have a copy.

Stage 5: Planning a Follow-Up Meeting

1 Agree on a time the student and teacher will meet again to discuss whether the goals have been met and to plan a new learning contract. At the follow-up meeting, ask questions such as:

*Did you meet your goal?
How do you know?
What did you learn?
Do you need to do more work in this area? What?
How will you use this knowledge outside of class?
What do you want to do next?*

**** Extra Materials Required:** The student's goals list and a blank learning contract

LEARNING CONTRACT

WHAT?

HOW?

READING

WRITING

PERSONAL GOALS

COMPUTER

CONTRACT ENDING DATE:

COMMENTS

LEARNER'S NAME

TEACHER'S NAME

DATE



2.5 Group Assessment

Purpose

We feel it's important to assess how the group is doing at various times during the semester. Assessing the strengths and the problems that need to be solved can create a structure through which students can have input into planning and will give the teacher ideas about where to go next. This activity suggests a process for doing group assessments and gives a sample of some of the questions we have asked during group assessments in our program.

Research Notes



Steps

Note: This is an informal assessment process which helps groups plan future activities. It can be done mid-way through a program as well as at the end. The program may do other kinds of diagnostic or evaluative testing, as well.

1. Tell the group ahead of time that they will be evaluating the project, so they can be thinking about what they want to say.
2. Remember together themes that have been discussed, topics of mini-lessons, and other group and special events that have taken place. Ask students to describe (and celebrate) their most important achievements.
3. Use the questionnaire following this lesson (or another one designed for the group) to evaluate your activities. Use a brainstorm technique to elicit as many responses as possible to questions 1-8. Write them on newsprint. You may want to have someone act as a scribe to write down the main points so the group can refer to them later.
4. Discuss together ways to make improvements in the program a reality.

READING AND WRITING EVALUATION

1. What do you see as your most important accomplishment; this time?

2. What, specifically, have you learned about reading and writing that you didn't know before? Has your view of reading and writing changed?

3. How have you used reading in new ways? What kinds of things are you reading now?

4. How have you used writing in new ways? What kinds of things are you writing now?

5. Which kinds of activities do you feel you benefited from the most:
 - working in groups to discuss something or solve a problem
 - working in groups on mini-lessons
 - working with one other student
 - working with a teacher/tutor
 - working on the computer
 - publishing our writing
 - having a chance to read or write by yourself
 - other _____

6. Which topics or skills activities were most helpful?

7. What things got in the way of learning or of coming to class?

8. What would you like to do next time?

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VERSIONS

CELEBRATE!

MILK RIVER

NEW YEAR'S 1960

NEVER IN A LOVING WAY

Another Monday Evening

Josie Byrnes

Guindon

COND EDITION

3.1 Your Reading History

Purpose

Everyone has a picture in their heads of what learning to read is all about. Often these pictures are shaped by how a person was taught to read as a child. This exercise asks participants to remember how they were taught to read. Then, they examine how this has shaped what they think reading is today. This helps to set the stage for students to learn about more recent findings related to how people really do learn to read, and for the next activity, which describes what good readers do.

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: Remembering

1. Most people have trouble remembering as far back as the time they were first learning to read. This exercise helps participants (teachers, students and volunteers) search their memories and visualize what school was like for them. First make sure everyone is relaxed. Let people know they won't be remembering out loud, only remembering silently to themselves. First, have them remember where they lived when they first went to school and who lived with them: parents, aunts, brothers, cousins. Have them think about where the school was and what the first classrooms were like. Then, have the learners think silently as you ask the following questions. Make sure to pause briefly after each.

How were you taught how to read?

What kinds of books did you have? Readers? Workbooks? Books for fun?

What kind of writing did you do?

If you stayed in school longer, how were you taught to read during your later years of school?

What was the worst thing about not being able to read in school?

How did you cope with reading problems?

What did you like the most about school? What were you best at?

2. After the silent activity give people a chance to reflect on what they remembered. If they choose, they can talk in pairs or as a group. Or, they can go straight into writing about what they remember or dictating it for a language experience.

Part B: What is Reading?

1 Everyone has some kind of picture in their head of what reading is. Ask members of the group to name what they think reading is. Go over a list of some ways people can see reading. Do people agree or disagree with these statements?

Reading is sounding out letters to make words. You have to learn all the sounds of the letters and how to pronounce them before you can read.

It's best to read words slowly, one at a time.

You have to know every word you are reading or you shouldn't go on.

It doesn't matter whether what you read makes sense to you or not as long as you can pronounce the words.

You need to do skills exercises in workbooks before you will be ready to read whole books.

It's important to learn a lot of rules that will help you read and write better.

If you guess at the word, and guess it right, you're really "cheating."

You really can't practice reading without a teacher.

When you come to a word you don't know, the best thing to do is look it up in the dictionary.

If you get to something hard to read, the best thing to do is slow down.

2 Formulate your own personal definition of reading. Discuss what you believe, and how it influences the way you teach reading. If you have more than one teacher participating, you may want to discuss ways each of you teaches reading differently.

3 Explain to the group that we will be looking more at how people learn to read and what good readers do in future lessons.

PRINCIPLES OF THE READING PROCESS

In their work with children, Yotta and Kenneth Goodman have developed some key principles related to the reading process which may also be relevant to work with adults:²

1. **Meaning is constructed during listening and reading. The reader builds meaning drawing on prior learning and experience while interacting with the text.**
2. **Reading is a process of prediction, selection, confirmation and self-corrections. Effective reading produces coherent meaning. Efficient reading uses the least amount of energy and input necessary.**
3. **Three systems interact in language: graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic. These cannot usefully be separated for instruction without creating non-linguistic abstractions and nonsense.**
4. **Comprehension of meaning is always the goal of reading and listening.**
5. **Expression of meaning is always the goal of writing and speaking.**
6. **What the reader/listener understands beforehand strongly influences what is comprehended during reading/listening.**
7. **Learning in school and out of school are not different. School programs must expand on existing learning and utilize intrinsic motivations. This means learning must be functional, it means literacy is an extension of natural language learning.**
8. **Development of function precedes and motivates development of form.**
9. **Language development builds expression and comprehension strategies during functional, meaningful and relevant language use. This means, among other things, that (a) there is no sequence in which "skills" develop and (b) there is no hierarchy of language skills.**
10. **Children develop abilities in response to personal-social needs. Therefore, they've already made strong beginnings in developing literacy before they have any contact with schools.**
11. **There is no one-to-one correspondence between teaching and learning. The teacher motivates, arranges the environment, monitors development, provides relevant appropriate materials, and provides timely experiences to facilitate learning. Ultimately, it is the learner's decision to extract what is most meaningful to be learned from the environment.**

12. Though the teacher may monitor the development of strategies, learners need to focus on communication of meaning. That means there is a double agenda in the classroom: the learners focus on use, the teachers focus on use and development.

13. Risk-taking is a necessary part of all language learning. Developing readers must be encouraged to predict and guess as they move toward meaning. An atmosphere must be created in which mistakes are seen as a necessary part of development.

Principles of Instructional Materials:

14. Materials to be read in school must, from the very beginning, have all the characteristics of real functional language. They must be whole texts that are meaningful and relevant.

15. Fragmented exercises which turn real language into abstract bits and pieces have no place in this program.

16. Materials will be hard or easy in relationship to how predictable they are.

17. During instruction, attention must shift away from words and toward a comprehension of meaning.

3.2 What Good Readers Do

Purpose

Reading the research about what good readers do, one is often surprised how different these practices are from commonly held assumptions about reading. For example, most people might think one reads better if one reads more slowly. In fact, good readers often read fast and skip over words. This activity asks participants to talk about what they think good readers do and contrast it to recent research findings. It prepares the learners to read for meaning and to realize that predicting, guessing and using context cues aren't "cheating."

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: Giving Your Opinion

Ask participants to brainstorm what they think good readers do. You may want to use these questions which are part of the Burke Reading Interview (Modified for Older Readers)⁴

1. *When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do? Do you ever do anything else?*
2. *Who is a good reader you know?*
3. *What makes _____ a good reader?*
4. *Do you think _____ (the reader mentioned above) ever comes to something he or she doesn't know when reading?*
5. *When _____ comes to something he or she doesn't know, what do you think he or she does about it?*
6. *If you know that someone is having difficulty reading, how would you help that person?*
7. *What would a teacher do to help that person?*

Part B: Mini-lecture

1. Prepare a short mini-lecture that gives an overview of the research about what proficient readers do. The information on the next few pages, written in ordinary language, may help. Use what you know about participants' prior knowledge and backgrounds to gauge how little or how much to cover.

2. After you have described some of the things research has shown, ask for comments from the group. How does this compare to the information collected in the brainstorm earlier? Were there any things that surprised people?

To assume that reading means "getting" words, assumes that words have constant meanings. Students might enjoy this exercise, first developed by Mary Trabasco.⁵ She shows how words like *Mary*, *lamb*, *had* and *little* derive meaning from the clauses that follow them.

- 1) Mary had a little lamb. Its fleece was white as snow.
- 2) Mary had a little lamb. She spilled mint jelly on her dress.
- 3) Mary had a little lamb. It was such a difficult delivery the vet needed a drink.

WHAT RESEARCH SAYS GOOD READERS DO

Researchers and teachers in education are continually trying to find new and better ways to teach reading. To find out what is going on in the brain when people read and how they learn how to read, researchers have studied what good or effective readers do.

Good readers:

READ FOR A PURPOSE

They read to get meaning. People read to learn. You read to know something about the world, whether you're reading a phone number in a phone book, a doctor's prescription, a romance story or a street sign.

They create meaning. Meaning is created both by the writer and by you, the reader, when you bring what you already know to what you read. Think of a simple word — "house." The writer probably had something in mind when he or she wrote the word house. But each person who reads the word brings his or her own picture of what that word means, based on prior knowledge and experience with "houses." They are using what they know about the world to interpret the word.

They ask and answer questions. People read because they want to know something. They have a question. As they read they ask questions, such as:

*What does this mean?
Why is the author saying this?
What can I learn?
Do I agree?
Do I disagree?*

DON'T READ EVERY WORD

Good readers read only what they need to answer their questions. You don't have to read the whole phone book when you are looking for just one number. You only need to read to get the information you need. Good readers skip over words a lot, it's not "cheating," it's reading efficiently.

Good readers skim. They look quickly through a piece to get a rough idea of what it is about. If they pick up a book on auto mechanics, for example, they might skim the book by looking at the cover, reading the title and flipping through the pages to see if it is the one they want to buy. They may skim the front page of the newspaper just to see if anything important happened that day.

Good readers scan. If they are looking for a certain piece of information, how to fix the brakes, for example, good readers may ignore everything else in the book but the section on the brakes. They'll jump over the parts that aren't necessary. If they are looking for a sale on roasting chickens at the grocery, they'll scan the store flyer with their eyes until they see a picture of a chicken, or the word chicken and then zero in on that section.

Good readers speed up and slow down. Depending on their purpose, good readers will slow down or speed up while reading. If they are reading something they know about they may be able to speed up. If they're reading for fun or just for themselves there may be no reason to get every word. They can leave out some words and still get the meaning. In fact, that's sometimes a good way to deal with words they don't know. On the other hand if they're reading to study and memorize something - let's say the driver's test manual - they may need to read very slowly and read the same words over and over again and look up the words they don't know.

Good readers skip words. Try to make sense of the following paragraph. Could you get the meaning without all the words? You don't really need to read every word to understand what you read. You can allow your eyes to just pass over them and concentrate on the words that carry the message.

Tina climbed _____ stairs _____ her apartment. She took out _____ keys and opened _____ door.

Good readers focus on ideas not words. Beginning readers have to read slowly. They have to stop their eyes and focus on every word. Like this:

Tina was cold and tired.
It took over an hour
to get home on the bus.

Beginning adult readers often complain that by the time they have gotten the word they have lost the idea of what they are reading. As they get more efficient they will be able to read in *idea phrases*. Their eyes will be able to take in a few words at a time. They read for the ideas, not the words.

*Tina climbed
the stairs
to her apartment.
She took out
her key
and opened
the door.
She was cold
and tired.*

MAKE GUESSES OR PREDICTIONS

Good readers guess. Good readers are always guessing. When they decide on a purpose for reading a certain book or article, they have predicted or guessed what will be in the book. They read the book to confirm their predictions. If they come to words they don't understand, they often use what is already known about the topic to guess what the word might be. Sometimes they can use the meaning of the words around the unknown word to confirm their prediction. If they still can't get the word they have to try predicting again using a different strategy. As a last resort, they may try breaking the word down into parts or sounding out individual letters.

If they guess wrong they try again. Good readers know there is more than one way to figure out what a word means. Making mistakes and trying again is a good way to get better at guessing. Good readers use what they already know to make informed guesses and take risks to fill in the rest.

READ TO UNDERSTAND

You can't read what you don't understand. Where does the meaning for what you read come from? Does it come from the words themselves? In fact, without any meaning attached to a word, it doesn't make sense. Take for example the word felony. If you know what this word means can you read it? You may be able to sound the word out, but without understanding its meaning the word is just nonsense. Although it's possible to recite a lot of words without understanding what they mean – "barking at print"⁶ – many people question whether this can be called reading.

We create and recreate the world through reading.⁹ We never stop learning about the world. Reading depends on our knowledge of the world and helps us develop new ways to see the world and to live in it.



3.3 Strategies for Reading

Purpose

Reading strategy lessons, popularized by researchers such as Yetta and Kenneth Goodman, increase students' awareness of the language and thought cues available to them while they read. Reading strategy lessons help readers focus on ways to more effectively process what they read. They also help readers to strengthen the strategies they already use. This group activity introduces students to the concept of reading strategies. Along with the activity are brief descriptions of other strategy lesson ideas which can be used as needed with individuals or groups of students.

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: A Group Introduction to Strategy Lessons

1. Write the word STRATEGY so everyone can see it. Come up with a description of the word which is appropriate for your group. For example, you may describe strategies as clues people use to help them figure out the meaning of words they don't know. Try to brainstorm as many strategies as you can, such as:

- *using what you know about the topic*
- *using illustrations, titles, photos*
- *using what you have already read to guess what comes next*
- *using the words around a word you don't know to make guesses*
- *sounding out the word*

2. Explain to the group that good readers rely on a many different strategies. When one doesn't work they try another. Part of becoming a better reader is learning to use more strategies more effectively. Explain that this will just be an introduction to strategies; most of work with reading strategies will be done later in reading conferences with individuals or small groups of people who all have similar needs.

Part B: A Sample Lesson

1. Chose one of the strategy lessons from among those on the following pages.
2. Find a piece of text that is (a) appropriate for the strategy lesson; (b) at a level of difficulty within reach of students; (c) a topic interesting to the group of students.
3. Follow the instructions described by the strategy lesson.
4. Be sure to save time for the group to process the activity. Ask them:

What kind of "clue" did you learn about in this strategy lesson?

Did you use any other strategies too?

How can you keep on using this strategy when you read on your own?

Do you have any more questions about strategies?

STRATEGY LESSON IDEAS

Below are a few ideas for strategy lessons which have been borrowed from those developed by several reading teachers. Consult the References at the end of this section to find out where to go to learn more. For each strategy lesson, the teacher needs to select a sample reading. The reading should use language similar to the kind of language students use, be related to their experiences and be predictable.

Context Clues ¹¹

This lesson relies on students' use of grammatical and meaning clues. Ask students to look at the story. Some of the words have been left out. Ask them: What could go in the blank spots? Why do you think so? Did some people guess different ones than others? If you substitute the word for one that means almost the same thing, does it affect the meaning? How did you decide on your guess?

Tina knew she could get _____ car. She _____ saving for one already. But it wasn't easy _____ get a license. You had to _____ a written test. Tina wasn't sure _____ could do it. She _____ afraid to try.

Using Context to Develop Meaning ¹²

Choose a story, like the one below, that contains an unknown word/concept. Write the story on the blackboard (or overhead projector). Cover the sentences so you can reveal one sentence at a time. Tell participants they will be reading a story they know nothing about. There is going to be an unknown word in the story. Reveal the first sentence. Then, ask students to write down what they guess the word will be about. Uncover the second sentence. Ask if anyone would like to revise their prediction. Cross out predictions that no longer make sense. Continue uncovering

sentences one at a time and revising predictions until the whole story can be read. Discuss the process of guessing the meaning of the word. When were you sure you knew what the word meant? Can you now guess various ways this word might be pronounced?

Tina rode the elevator up to her apartment. It had taken over an hour to get home. The flitter was late as usual. That had slowed them down to Warp 7 speed. The flitter had also been crowded today, filled with immigrants from the planet Heron. But, at least, she thought, the space transporter is better than the old buses of her grandmother's day.

Survey Technique ¹³

Pick a book with a title, subtitles or chapter headings, pictures and other visual clues. Ask students to skim the book. Ask them: What do you know about the book by skimming the cover? By reading the title? What do you already know about this topic? Now read the title of each chapter and look at the pictures. What more do you now know? Read the first paragraph. Read the last paragraph. How much more can you predict about this book? In one or two sentences tell what the book is about. Do you think you want to continue reading this book? Why or why not?

Scanning

Distribute copies of a local discount store flyer or other kinds of advertising. Ask people to look for just one item, e.g., to see if automatic coffee makers are on sale. After everyone has found the item, ask them to describe the process they went through. Did they read every word in the flyer? If not, how did they find the coffeemakers? Once they found the coffeemakers, what did they read first? The price? The brand name? Ask people how they could use scanning to get other kinds of information, such as in reading the newspaper, looking at a TV guide, or reviewing a work order.

Predictable Titles ¹⁴

Choose an article, such as a newspaper article, with predictable titles. Cut the title off the article. Have students predict a title for the article, using photographs, subtitles or other clues to help. Then have people read the story. Did their title predict what was in the article? A variation of this activity is give half the participants articles with no titles. Give each of the remaining participants a title that goes with one of the stories. Ask people to match the titles with the stories.

Group Courage ¹⁵

This lesson emphasizes the social nature of reading, and the fact that every individual or group creates its own interpretation of the author's meaning. Divide the participants into small groups. Distribute just one chapter of a book to each small group. Each small group will read the chapter and then retell it to the rest of the group later. After they read the chapter, give them time to decide the best way to present it to the group. Ask them to predict what might have happened before and after their part of the story. Once the large group gets back together, ask the

small groups to guess which of their chapters came first. Have that group retell their part of the story. Then ask the groups to predict which chapter came second and retell their part. Continue until all the groups have told about their chapters. Discuss in what ways people predicted correctly and in what ways they had to change their predictions as the story unfolded. (For this example, try to pick a story that has a predictable plot and timing sequence.)

Contextual Redefinition ¹⁶

This strategy lesson helps students to compare words in and out of context, to make informed guesses and to learn a general decoding strategy. Select a few words that are unfamiliar to the students. Ask them to read the words. Now write the words in sentences. Can the students now make guesses about what the words mean? Use a dictionary to check the meanings.

Words inside Words ¹⁷

Sometimes if you haven't been able to guess the word from the context, you can break the word down into parts. For example, by breaking the word **informed** down into

in | form | ed

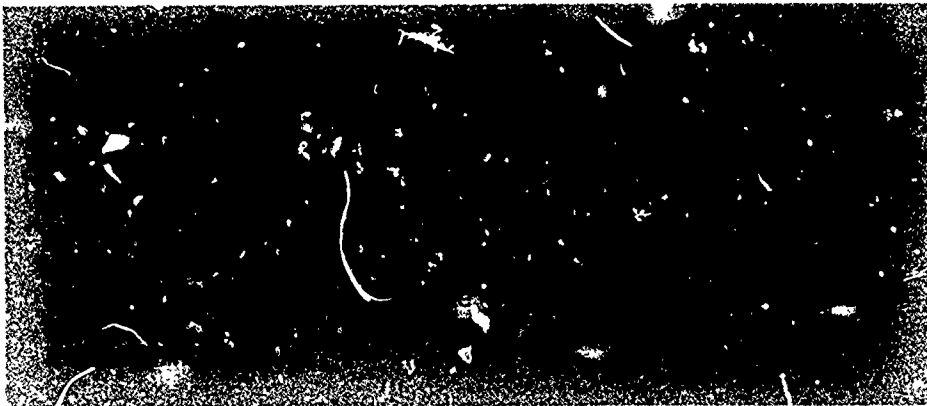
you may be able to guess the word. What did you use to make the guesses? How did you guess what **ed** means? Where have you seen it before? Develop a list of other words which students might be able to read if they were broken down. Have students examine the smaller words within the larger ones. How did they figure out the word? By finding "sight" words inside the bigger word? By sounding out the letters? By rhyming the word with another one they know?

3.4 First Reading: Using Language Experience

Purpose

Students who come to our literacy program with little or no reading skills at all need special assistance. In recent years, many adult literacy teachers have begun to use an approach called Language Experience in work with very beginning readers. This activity has students dictate a short story which then becomes the context for the other basic reading activities. Following the activity is a description of how language experience can be used for word study activities.

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: Steps for Language Experience ¹⁹

1. Ask the student to choose a topic to write about. (See *Choosing a Topic* in Chapter 4 for some ideas about picking a topic)
2. Have the student tell you about the topic. If necessary, ask questions to get more details.
3. Write down the story exactly as the student tells it. Even if she does not use standard English when she speaks, it is important that she sees her words written as they were spoken. (An option at this stage is to have the student speak her story into the tape recorder for later transcribing by a teacher or by the student and the teacher together.)
4. Read the story back to the student to make sure it is what he or she said. Ask the student if there are things about the story he or she wants to add or change.
5. Ask the student to read along or to read some of the words as you read it again.

6. Ask the student to read the story to you. If the student gets stuck help him or her with the unknown words.
7. Have the student rewrite the story in his or her own handwriting. Make sure the student identifies each word that is written.
8. Help the student select words to pull out of the story for word recognition exercises.

Part B: Using Language Experience for Discussion and Reflection

1. After you and the student read something together (a language experience story or other reading – make sure you first spend some time talking about the content of the story. (Module 3.6 *Talking About Books* might give you some ideas.) Make sure the story is clear to the student. You might discuss such things as:

What happened in story?

Who were the main characters?

Has anything like it ever happened to either the teacher, tutor or student?

Why did it happen?

2. Although the language experience approach is primarily an activity to develop reading skills, the process can easily be used to develop writing activities. Talk with each student about what they want to do with the writing. Do they want to refine it later, and "publish" it? Will this be one in a series of interrelated stories? See the next section for ideas on helping students choose topics, on refining and editing their work, and on publishing collections of student writing.

Part C: Word Recognition Activities

1. Together, pick some words that the student needs more practice with. It's usually a good idea to practice only six or seven words at a time. Try to choose the words based on their importance to the student or on the ability to use them to teach patterns. The words should be a mixture of the following:

- Phonically regular (words that sound the way they are spelled):

cat get sit ball look

- Often there are other words that fit the same spelling patterns so you can help the learner see the pattern:

cat - fat get - wet sit - pit

- Phonically irregular (words that don't sound the way they are spelled):

light ould write

- Sometimes there are other words that fit these spelling patterns. It can be helpful for students to see that although these words are not easy to figure out from their spellings, learning them can help when encountering other words with similar patterns.

light - right

could - would

write - kite

- **Sight words** (words that are phonically irregular and are easiest to learn by sight):

poison

phone

quiet

2. Work with the student to practice the words. Use the techniques on the following pages, or consult other resources for teaching word recognition to beginning readers.²⁰

DIAGNOSING NEEDS

Does the beginning student you are working with:

- see reading as a process of getting meaning from print
- see writing as a process of communicating meaning
- know basic "survival" sight words
- write basic personal information (name, address, age, etc.)
- know how to use several reading strategies
- know that written letters stand for sounds
- know how to use consonant sounds, ^h and ending blends and digraphs to get the meaning of words
- make use of knowledge of word patterns, and syllables within the context of reading and writing whole words and texts
- understand the concept of alphabetical order
- set personal goals for reading and writing and begin to meet them

TECHNIQUES FOR WORD STUDY

Glass Word Analysis Technique ²¹

This exercise helps learners to make connections between certain clusters of letters and the sounds that can be associated with them.

- Follow the steps for the Glass technique that are summarized below:

1. Start with a word the learner knows the meaning of or can read. Ask the learner to tell you the word.

*This is the word – **happen**. What is the word? (learner says the word)*

2. Point to the letters that go with a particular sound in the word (don't say the letters) and tell the student the sound that goes with the letters.

*These letters go with the sound **hap**. (pointing to 'hap')
These letters go with the sound **pen**. (pointing to 'pen')*

3. Ask the student to point to the letters that go with the particular sound. (The student shouldn't say the names of the letters.)

*What letters go with the sound **hap**?
What letters go with the sound **pen**?"*

4. Point to the group or cluster of letters and ask student to say the sounds that go with them again.

5. Ask the student to read the whole word.

6. Ask the student to write the word.

7. Review again if the student cannot read/write the word.

8. Go on to next word in the pattern if the student seems to understand the first one.

9. See lists for word patterns. Don't try to do too many in one session.

- In using the Glass Word Analysis, be sure to:

- Start with a word the learner knows the meaning of or can read.
- Start with the whole word and be sure to have the student repeat the whole word.
- Don't separate double consonants (like **st** in **stop**)
- Don't cover up parts of the word while taking the learner through the word analysis. Point to the cluster of letters within the whole word.
- In clusters ending in **e**, (like **ake** in **rake** and **ike** in **like**), don't separate the **e**, teach the cluster as one sound.

Modified Glass Technique

- Using simple word patterns and mostly shorter words, start with a word the learner has read in a story or used in his or her language experience story; show learner that she or he can figure out other words that follow the same pattern.
- For example: start with the word **dark**. Show the learner the **d** sound, then the sound that goes with the letters **ark** in this word.
- Write the word **bark**. Explain that the letters **ark** sound the same in both words. Ask the learner to read the word **bark**. Then say, "If this is the word **dark**, what is this word?" (Show the learner the word **bark**.)
- Try other words in the same pattern (**mark, lark, park**).
- Another variation is to show the learner a few words in a pattern and then ask him or her to write the other words in the pattern or fill in letters to complete words in the pattern.

bark dark _ark

Tips For Using Word Patterns

- Start with a word the learner knows the meaning of or can read.

and

- Show the learner other words that follow the same pattern. Write one word at a time and be sure each one is understood. If needed, talk about the differences in the beginning consonant sounds. Ask the learner to point out what is the same and what is different in the words, both in the sounds and in the way the words look.

and band land sand stand

- Word patterns can be useful in helping learners to see that they can use what they know about one word to help them learn other words.
- Sometimes it helps to see that there are patterns in English words, and that the patterns can help us read as well as spell many words.
- The learner can read the words as you write them or you can ask the learner to complete words in the pattern once he or she understands what the pattern is.
- Don't overdo it or use too many words that are part of a pattern which is rarely used by the learner.
- Word patterns can be reinforced in a number of ways, such as crossword puzzles, word Bingo, and card games such as Concentration.

Sight Words

- Choose sight words important to the learners. These might be family names, parts of an address, words from his jobs, or other words of interest to learners.
- You may want to refer students to a basic word list, such as the one below, which cites the most common words found in written English.

Word Lists

Give students a copy of the Frye Instant Word List or another list of the most common words found in English. They can use it to choose words to study or as an easy-to-use spelling dictionary.²²

New Instant Word List by Edward Frye²³

The first 10 words make up about 24% of all written material.
The first 100 words make up about 50%.

<u>Group 1a</u>	<u>Group 1b</u>	<u>Group 1c</u>	<u>Group 1d</u>
the	or	will	number
of	one	up	no
and	had	other	way
a	by	about	could
to	word	out	people
in	but	many	by
is	not	the	than
you	want	them	first
that	all	these	water
it	were	so	been
he	we	some	call
was	when	her	who
for	your	would	oil
on	can	make	now
are	said	like	find
as	there	him	long
with	use	into	down
his	an	time	day
they	each	has	did
I	which	look	get
at	she	two	come
be	do	more	made
this	their	go	part
have	if	see	over

Common suffixes: s, ing, ed

Flashcards

- Pick words from reading or writing that the learner needs to practice or wants to learn.
- Use 3 x 5 or smaller cards.
- Write the word on a card. Ask learner to read it. Help as needed.
- Ask learner to find the word in the reading.
- Ask him or her to copy it on another blank card.
- Ask the learner to think about how he or she would use the word in a sentence, in talking.
- If needed, ask him or her to think of a way to remember the word — an association, or whatever helps.
- When all the words are on cards (two sets — the one the tutor writes and the one the learner writes), go over them again.
- Help the learner to discover any patterns there may be in the words — words that begin with the same letter(s), have the same root words or have similar meaning.

(shop, sharp) (go, goes, going) (sad, unhappy)

- For many, it helps if they use the words in short sentences. This gives them more ways to remember the new words and a chance to practice using them.
- The learner should have one set of flashcards to take home, and a copy of the language experience piece or sentences written during the lesson to read and practice at home.
- If the learner keeps a word list of words they are working on, remind them to add these to the list.
- Tutors need to make a note on the lesson log of which words are studied each day.
- Keep one set of flashcards to use in class to review words next time.

Language Master

The language master is a modified tape recorder that can be used to practice word recognition as well as pronunciation. Prerecorded cards are available for basic sight word and consonant sound practice. Students can also make cards and record them to work on words from their own reading and writing.

- Write the word to be recorded on a scrap of paper. The learner can then copy the word onto the blank language master card (in pencil) above the strip of cassette tape.
- The learner may say the word only, or the word used in a phrase, or the word and its spelling, depending on the purpose.
- Review the cards with the learner before they are used for practice. If needed, they can be recorded over to correct any mistakes.
- Once the cards have been recorded correctly, learners can use them to practice independently.

ASSISTED READING

During the beginning stages of reading, students need to begin to gradually approximate what good readers do by being helped with the words so they can read for ideas and get to the meanings being read. It's a good idea in the beginning to choose material at a level slightly lower than the persons can handle, using material with which the reader has already experienced success. Some methods seem to work better for some groups and individuals than others. If you try one and it doesn't work after a few hours of instruction, you may want to switch to another, discussing the different assisted reading options available. Below is a description of a few kinds of assisted reading.

ECHO READING

Echo reading, sometimes known as the "neurological impress method," exposes readers to accurate, fluid reading patterns. After a certain length of time the correct reading patterns will, it is hoped, become "impressed" and will replace previously learned patterns which are less effective.²⁴ This method is usually associated with a one-to-one learning situation. The reader sits slightly in front of the teacher and both hold the book. Both read in unison. The voice of the teacher is directed into the reader's ear at close range. At first the teacher reads a little louder and faster than the student. Later, as the student gets more experience, the teacher may lower his or her voice and even lag behind the student. If the student stumbles, the teacher increases the loudness and slows down. The teacher moves her finger simultaneously along the line of print - directly under the word as it is spoken. Once the student is accustomed to this he/she can begin to take over, with the teacher guiding the student's finger at first. In this way the student is employing yet another sensory mode - tactile, as well as the visual, aural and oral ones. This method is useful for increasing reading fluency.

PAIRED READING

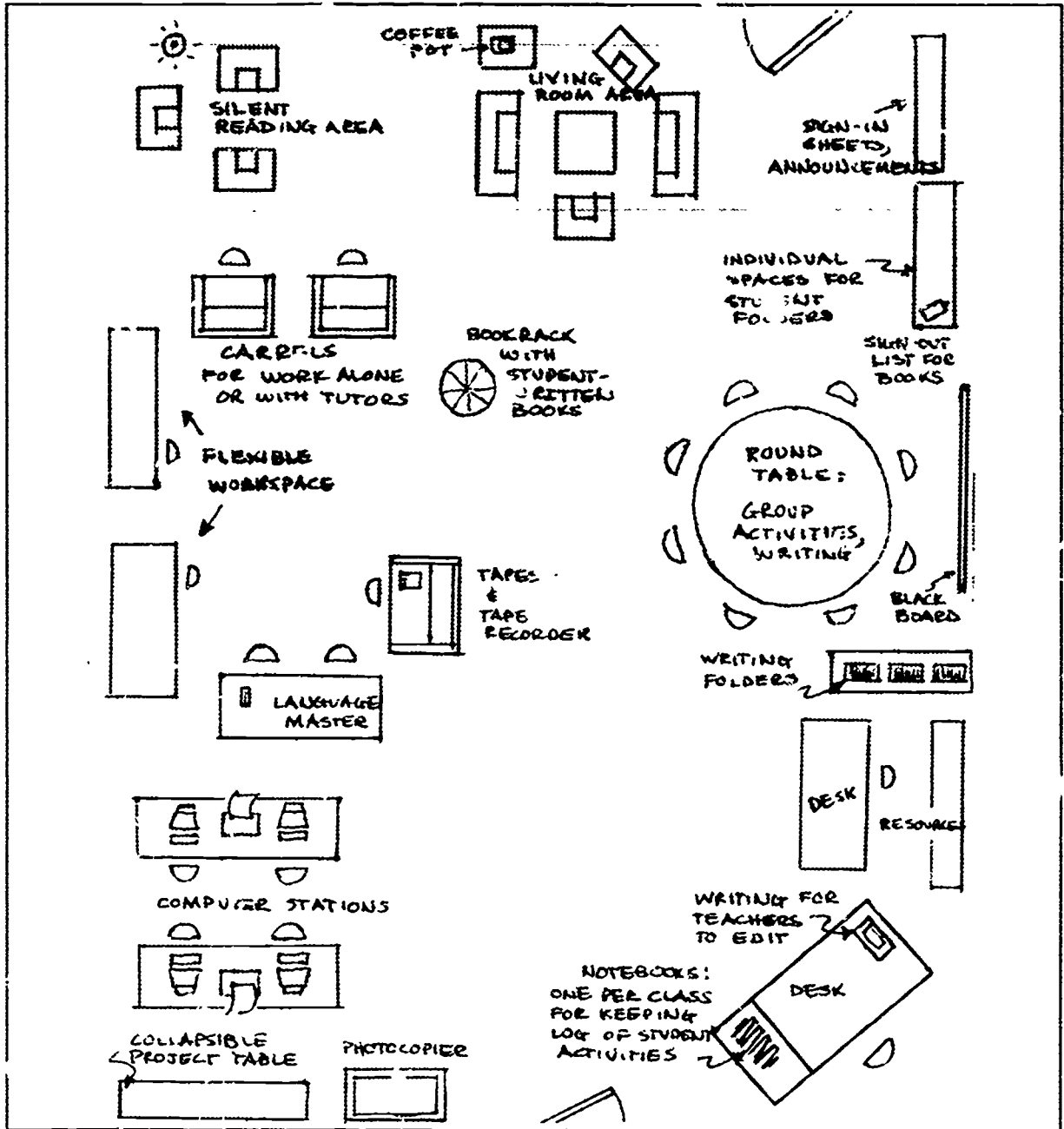
Paired reading involves pairing two students of differing reading abilities to read orally.²⁵ Each student in the pair reads something that he or she has chosen, at a level of difficulty which is most suited to his or her ability. The two should sit beside one another so they can both see what is being read. After the first student reads, he or she should retell the story in his or her own words and comment on the content. Then, the second reader reads his or her piece of writing, retells it and makes comments. The more experienced reader, in this process, is able to model for the less experienced one their reading strategies and the rhythm of reading. By following along with the more experienced reader, the less experienced reader is also exposed to new words and to the way written text sounds. In planning for this activity it's important to match the pairs carefully, making sure the more experienced reader is willing to work with the less experienced one and that both feel comfortable with each other. The experienced reader may need some coaching about how to be the "teacher," how to make sure that the less experienced reader is valued and respected. The more experienced reader also needs to be cautioned not to read for his partner - to prompt or correct - unless the partner asks for help.

CHORAL AND REPEATED READING

As has been mentioned before, many adults have had painful experiences with reading aloud in a group. One way to allow people to have the opportunity to read aloud without the embarrassment of being singled out is choral and repeated reading. Students gain more self-confidence as readers when they read along with the teacher and others in the group. This method also can help students develop an interest in poetry, song lyrics, and other expressive writing. The teacher may want to read the piece of writing first so students can get a sense of the meaning and the rhythm. It's helpful in the beginning to choose pieces with a distinct rhythm.²⁶



Our Learning Center



Generally, when people in our program first arrive, after signing in, they head for the coffee pots. After they sit and talk for a while, they begin some kind of sustained reading. If they can read alone they choose a book and go to the reading corner where they won't be interrupted. If they need help reading they either work with a tutor or teacher or read along with a tape. We try to create an environment where written language is everywhere - in books and student generated materials, on bulletin boards where student writing and announcements are shared, on sign-in sheets, book lists, labels for storage and instructions on computers and other equipment.

3.5 Sustained Silent Reading

Purpose

We expect students to read silently at home, but we often never give them a chance to practice silent reading at the adult learning center. We have found the establishment of a daily sustained silent reading ritual to be one of the most fruitful practices we have tried. Often people first begin to take books home to read when they "have to find out what happens" in a story they start during our sustained silent reading time. Gradually people begin to realize they are selecting more difficult books, reading them with greater ease, and enjoying it. This group activity introduces the process.

Research Notes



Steps

1. Before beginning sustained silent reading, plan a short orientation where you can explain the "rules," such as those listed below, which were developed by McCracken.²⁹

- A. **Each student must read silently.** In our program, we only ask those whom we know can read silently to engage in this activity. Others use this time for assisted reading on a one-to-one basis with a tutor.
- B. **The teacher reads.** Some students may rarely have seen an adult reading for a sustained period of time. The teacher permits no interruptions of the reading and ideally selects reading for pleasure rather than reading reports or class records. Teacher modeling is an essential part, especially in the beginning.
- C. **Each student selects a single book** (or magazine or newspaper). We encourage students to stick with one book; we help students select books that are not too difficult and that reflect their interests.
- D. **A timer is used.** McCracken suggests using an alarm clock or timer in a place where it cannot be "watched." When the alarm rings the sustained reading time is finished. We have found that

most people can quickly build up to 20 minutes or a half hour and, in fact, don't want to stop when the time is up.

E. **There are no reports or records kept.** McCracken emphasizes that students should know they will not be "tested" on the information they read in order to encourage reading for pleasure. While we do not "test" our students, we do ask them to keep a log of the books they read. If they choose, they can talk or write about the books.

F. **Begin with whole classes or larger groups of students.** McCracken has noticed that the larger the group, the easier it is to begin, since the size of the group may inhibit people from getting into conversations or asking for help.

2. After explaining the rules, help each person to choose a book. During this first day keep the reading time shorter, perhaps beginning with a 10 minute sustained reading time.

3. After the habit of sustained reading has been established, usually after a couple of weeks, you may want to engage students in various kinds of activities that allow them to talk about the books they are reading and reflect on the ideas they have read. The next module provides some suggestions for talking about books.

3.6 Talking About Books

Purpose

This activity provides a short introduction to the notion of a reading conference. Reading conferences are means by which readers can talk about what they have read, reflect on its meaning for them, and then refine and clarify their reading strategies and behaviors. There is no set prescription for reading conferences. They have a variety of purposes. Conferences can take place individually, in pairs, or groups. Listed after this activity description are some suggestions for involving groups in talking about the books they have read and some suggestions for finding books written by adult literacy learners.

Research Notes



Steps

Introduction to Reading Conferences

1. Explain to students the purpose of the reading conference and talk about different ways conferences can happen: between students, with a teacher, in large or small groups. Talk a little about the importance of talking about books.
2. Have students brainstorm some general questions that they might ask each other about the books which they have read. (Below are some examples developed by F. Reynolds):³¹

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BOOK IN GENERAL

- What was the story about?*
- What were the problems (conflicts) in the story?*
- Why were they problems (conflicts)?*
- Has anything like this ever happened to you?*
- What was your opinion of the book?*
- Do you have any opinions about the topic?*
- What were the qualities of the book that made it good?*
- How could you have made the book better?*
- Was there anything you didn't understand?*
- If you could meet the author, what would you talk about or what advice could you give?*
- Can you compare this book to another book or article you have read?*

3. Read a short sample piece of writing together; then try some of the following:
- a. Ask the student to try to summarize the main ideas of the book in one sentence.
 - b. Have students practice asking each other some of the questions about books they brainstormed earlier.
 - c. Pick out one word or a few words to talk about - you may talk about the meaning of the word, look it up in dictionary, discuss words with similar spelling patterns, etc.
 - d. If appropriate, discuss other activities the group could work on, based on the topic of the reading. For example: they might write a pamphlet about diabetes after reading about the problem in a book; they might write short stories after reading a children's book, or they might write letters to government officials after reading about a local community issue.

STRATEGIES FOR TALKING ABOUT BOOKS

Written Response/Reactions ³²

Have students think of a phrase or word that describes their reactions to a book or article they have read. They can react to any part of the reading — the topic, the characters, one event, etc. They put this word in the center of a circle on their paper. Students then try to write down other words or phrases that are connected to the word in the center, making as many free associations as quickly as possible. Students can either talk about their associations or write a short vignette about them.

Active Reading ³³

Active reading is looking for answers by reading. It is based on the assumption that you understand more of what you read when you think about the questions you want answered by the reading, **before** beginning to read. Before reading a book together have students think about these questions:

- A. *What is the book (or article) about as a whole?*
- B. *What is being said in detail and how? What are the author's main points?*
- C. *Does the book ring true in whole or part with your own experience?*
- D. *What is the importance of the topic to you?*

Re-Quest: Reciprocal Questioning ³⁴

This technique encourages students to question as they read and to share their understanding with others. If possible, students should be involved in choosing the topics and the text for this activity. Ask students to read the first paragraph silently; tell them they will be asking each other questions about what they read.

Then ask one person to ask a question of another group member related to what they predict will happen next. The person who answered the first question, can then ask a question of another group member. Reciprocal questions continue until the students have enough information to predict what might happen next. At this point the students read the story, independently to check the prediction.

Prove It ³⁵

This activity often works well in pairs and helps students to establish their purpose for reading and to make predictions. First, find a text both partners want to read. Each partner should predict what the important points in the text will be and if possible, write them down. After the reading talk about whether they had confirmed, rejected or changed their predictions. Together edit their original written predictions.

Schema Stories ³⁶

The purpose of this activity is to help students learn story structures and develop a sense of story by reconstructing the original structure or schema of a story. Help students select a narrative with an identifiable story line; one with clear divisions between the beginning, middle and end. Cut the story into sections (usually 3-6 are best). Make sure each section is long enough to build an idea. Divide students into small groups. Each student in the group reads his/her section and predicts what might have happened before and after his/her section. Predict which part might be the beginning. Read that section and decide as a group if you think it is a beginning. Then decide on who has the next section, etc. continuing until you have all the story together. Read the entire text. Talk about the structure of the story and how it was developed. Have people write their own endings to the story.

PREP ³⁷

Developed by Judith Langer (1981) to help students to generate what they know about a topic and to use their prior knowledge in reading, PREP stands for Pre-Reading Plan. It has two parts:

1) During the first part, engage students in group discussion about the topic, identify key concepts, and make initial associations:

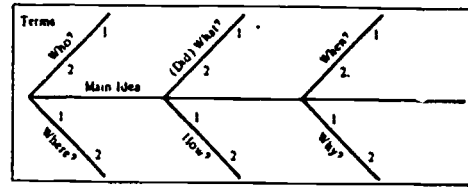
What comes to mind when....?

What do you think of....?

What might you see, hear, feel....?

Students may want to jot their responses down. Reflections with students on their initial associations help them become aware of the previous knowledge they bring to the reading.

2) After the students finish the reading, ask them to participate in the second part of this activity: to discuss anything new they have learned, any ideas they wish to revise or change, and any opinions they have about what they have read. This activity is especially useful for finding out how much students know about a topic. If students have a good deal of prior knowledge about a topic they may be able to read something that they would otherwise have difficulty understanding.



Herringbone Procedure ³⁸

The Herringbone Procedure is a structured outlining system that helps students organize information, especially factual information that is very long and complicated. The Herringbone form can be reproduced on regular sized paper. Students can read to answer the questions, writing their answers down as they read. It may be necessary to walk through this strategy with one or two examples until students understand how it works.

Story map ³⁹

A story map is based on idea that stories have a somewhat predictable "grammar" that readers can sense and use for comprehension. As a story is being read try to graphically draw a picture of how the story is organized. This could be in the form of an outline, a chart, or a cluster.

A SAMPLER OF LIFE STORIES FROM CANADA AND ENGLAND

New Year's 1960. This photonovella, from East End Press is about the experience of Hank Guindon on New Year's 1960. He was coming home from a party when he saw two men attacking a woman. He fought with the men and chased them until the police came. Guindon got a citation from the city for his actions.⁴⁰

Eleventh Child. This is the story of Louise Tunstead. Through everything, life was not easy. She was born with health problems, her father drank too much, her mother hit her. The author is very honest in her portrayal of the good things and bad things that happened in her life: the joys of raising her kids; the struggles with not having enough money.⁴¹

Three Minutes to Five. This book, by Betty Hammond, is published through the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU). The story is written like a daydream, in first person and tells the story in the present tense. It's about a mother who attempts to reach her children when a nuclear war threatens.⁴²

Market Life. By William Bebington, tells the ins and outs of working in East Street Market in South London.

The Scars that Marked. Marie Nowland writes: "I am unemployed and live in South London. I wrote my poems in my spare time. They are about my feelings and things that have happened to me. I hope that everyone gets something out of them, not just women."

Caught Out. Cline Davis tells the true story of his arrest for attempted burglary when he has forgotten his house keys.⁴³

Roses are Nicer Than Tomatoes. Bethelina Joseph tells about a Caribbean family and how they share a garden.

Mick's Day. Susan Dennis tells the story of a three year old's day while his mother is out at work.

I Got it Right. Karen Smith describes her first attempt at writing her own checks and her pride at her success.

Taken for a Ride. Ruth Parsons, a woman bus conductor, describes her work in a lively and often amusing way, illustrated with cartoons.⁴⁴

More books produced in England and Canada by and for new readers can be found by contacting:

AVANTI Books

(a clearinghouse for many small presses)
1 Wellington Road, Stevenage
Herts, U.K. SG2 9HR

Booknews

(a newsletter for adult educators)
The Consortium of London Publishing Groups
35 Nursery Road
London, UK SW9 8BS

Voices: New Writers for New Readers

(a quarterly newsletter)
Lower Mainland Society for Literacy and
Empowerment
14525 110A Avenue
Surrey, B.C.
Canada V3R 2B4

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6. Much of the information in this mini-lecture is adapted from ideas found in: Harrison, D. and Little, B. (1984) *Assessing English skills: Reading*. British Columbia: Ministry of Education. (ED 241 916). And Smith, F. (1982) *Writing and the writer*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
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9. See Freire, P. and Macedo, D. (1987) *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Press.
10. Goodman, Y. and Burke, C. (1972) *Reading miscue inventory*. New York: MacMillan.
11. Goodman, Y. and Burke, C. (1980) *Reading strategies: Focus on comprehension*. New York: Richard C. Owen.
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13. This technique was developed by Aukerman (1972) as found in Tierney, R., Readence, J. and Dishner, E. (1985) *Reading strategies and practices: A compendium*. Boston: Allen and Bacon. (page 207)
14. This strategy lesson was developed by M. Henrichs. For more details see C. Giles, et al., *Whole language strategies for secondary students*, p. 107.
15. This lesson was developed by D. Pyle, and is described in more detail on page 116 of *Whole language strategies for secondary students*.
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18. Allen, R. (1976) *Language experiences in communication*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (page 13)
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20. See, for example: Rosenthal, N. (1987) *Teach Someone to Read: A Step-by Step Guide for Literacy Tutors*. Belmont, CA: David Lake Publishers.
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22. Other basic word lists are found in: *Pacemaker Core Vocabularies*. (1980) Belmont, CA: Fearon Pitman Publications; and Rosenthal, N. (1987) *Teach Someone to Read*. Belmont, CA: David S. Lake Publishers.
23. As found in: *Literacy trainer handbook: Laubach literacy action*. (1981) Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press.
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31. The ideas for many of these questions came from *Reading Conferences* developed by F. Reynolds in Giles, C. et al., *Ibid.* p. 138.
32. Adapted form "Clustering;" by G. Rico found in Tierney, R. *Ibid.* p. 36.
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35. By M. Bixby, in Giles, C. et al., *Ibid.* p. 50.
36. Adapted form D. Watson in Giles, et al., *Ibid.* p. 65.
37. By Langer, in Tierney, R. *Ibid.* p. 37
38. In Tierney, R. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
39. In Tierney, R. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-154.
40. Available from: East End Press, 64 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, Ontario.
41. Also available from East End Press.

42. Available through AVANTI Books, 1 Wellington Road, Stevenage, Herts SG2 9HR.

43. Available through CAVE Publications, 3A Rectory Grove, London W6 8AU.

44. Available through AVANTI Books.



4.1 A Writing Workshop

Purpose

A writing workshop is a regular time to write together, share writing, and learn to write better. In our program we try to begin the writing workshop the first day of class. Everyone writes, including the teachers and tutors. (Very beginning students work one-to-one with a tutor.) Having a successful experience with writing, right from the beginning, helps dispel the fears and anxiety everyone has about being unable to write. This activity provides a "hands-on" introduction to the writing process and sets the stage for the routines of the writing workshop.

Research Notes



Steps

Note: A Writing Sample

During our screening process we ask each student who can to give us a writing sample (writing down why they want to be in the program, for example). We encourage those who can write even the most basic sentences or phrases to participate independently in the writing workshop. Those who cannot write independently work with tutors on a one-to-one basis or in small groups and use the language experience approach.

Part A: Writing

1. Ask everyone to get a pencil and paper and to gather together. Explain that group will begin a writing workshop that will be continued everyday. Many of the ideas in this section have been drawn from the work of Donald Graves, Nancy Atwell and Lucy Calkins, who have refined the process as it is used with school children.³ According to this model, in a writing workshop people:

write every day
choose their own topics
write about things they care about
focus on what they want to say
draw lines for words they can't spell
get help and ideas from other students, teachers and tutors during short writing conferences
save all their work in writing folders.

Explain that today most of the time will be spent writing. They'll learn more about how a writing workshop works later.

2. Let everyone know they can begin writing, then begin to write yourself. Write for about 10 minutes. During that first 10 minutes don't allow anyone to interrupt your writing.⁴

3. After 10 minutes, begin to circulate around the room, conferring with people who need help. If there are some students who still are unable to begin writing, pair them up and have them interview and write about each other. This gives them a chance to help each other and to talk about their fears about writing. (During this activity time, pair very beginning students with a tutor, who can "write" their words for them, making sure the tutor also gets some time to write as well, while the beginner is copying their own words.)

Part B: Sharing

1. After about twenty minutes ask everyone to come back together as a group. Explain that a few minutes of most days will be spent sharing writing. Explain that the purposes of sharing is:

To help other writers get ideas about what to write or to get ideas for how to add or change what they have already written, not to tell each other how to write.

2 Explain that usually there's only time for one or two people to share their work on any one day. Reassure students that no one ever has to share anything if they don't choose to.

3. Read your own writing and talk a little bit about why you choose your topic, what you like about the writing, and what you'd like to do with it next.

4. Then, ask one or two people to volunteer to talk about their writing.

Part C: Writing Folders

1. Give each person (including tutors) a writing folder and have them label it with their name. Explain the purposes of the writing folder:

*to have a "written history" of your ideas
to get ideas for future writing
to watch your progress in writing skills
to help teachers and tutors see your progress and plan conferences to help you.*

2. Go over a few procedures that make keeping track of writing easier, such as:

Writing on one side of the paper (in case you have to "cut and paste").

Crossing out instead of erasing things you want to change (we can learn from them).

Saving everything, even short lists and things you start but don't finish. All of them are part of your writing history.

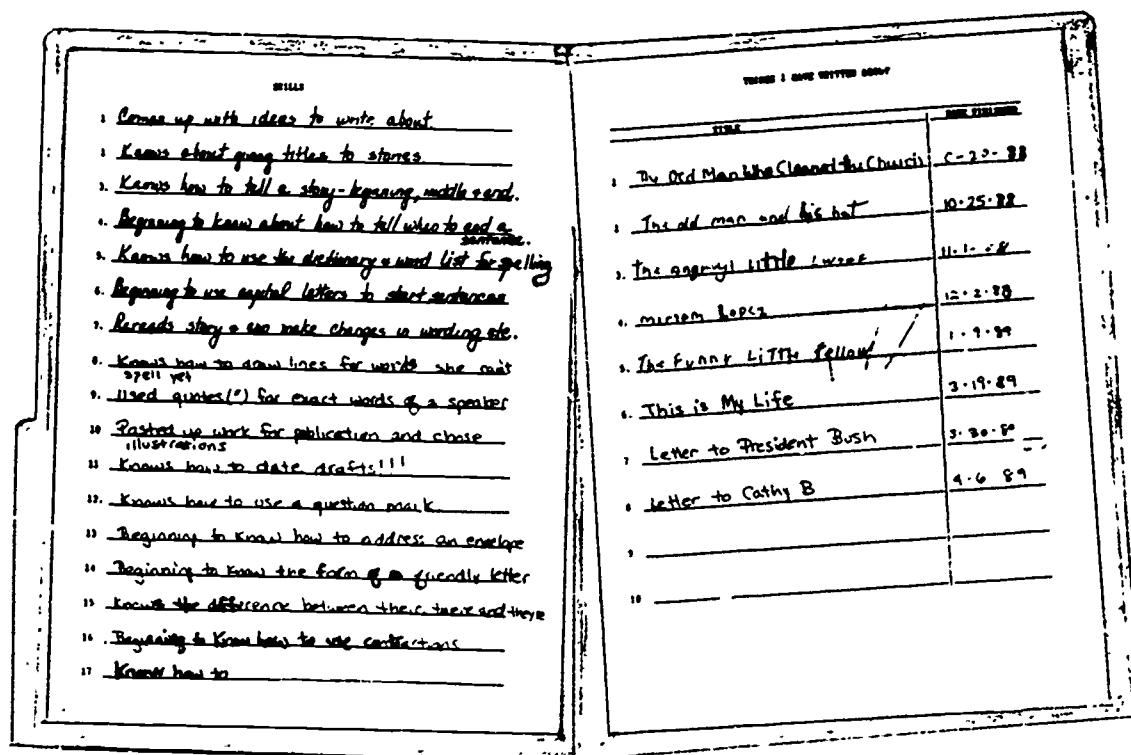
Putting your name and the date on everything.

3. Each folder should have two forms already stapled on them. One provides space for students to write the titles of their finished work and the date it was completed. The other is a blank form used to record writing skills. (The illustration below gives an example.) Briefly tell students the purpose of each form. Or, have a returning student share his or her folder and discuss it with the group.

4. Show students where they will store their folders. (Some possible ways of storing folders include a cardboard file box or a shelf divided into "mail slots" labeled with the name of each participant.)

Note: Remember that writing for the first time may have been a very scary or frustrating experience. Give people lots of encouragement for their successes. Make sure there is some time for refreshments and informal talking afterwards so people can begin to give each other support.

Writing Folders



Some Suggestions for a Writing Workshop

Make sure everyone has time to write, including the teachers and tutors, so that everyone is sharing equally in the process of being a writer.

Set aside time each day for those who choose to share their writing, get advice and if they want to, read their work aloud.

Establish and maintain a predictable structure for the workshop - e.g., where to keep finished work, where to put work that needs to be edited, how to request a conference with teacher. This frees the teacher up to work with students.

Remember that many adults have painful memories of reading aloud and should not be put in a position where they have to read out loud if it's not their choice. Offer to read their work for them if you think this might be the case.

Hold short five minute individual writing conferences with a few students each day. Focus on just one or two skills. The focus of conferences will change depending on the immediate needs of the students. If they are beginning a piece, the conference may be about choosing a topic, later it may be about paragraphing or the use of capital letters. Choose problems that are likely to come up again for the student.

Encourage people to get help from each other, informally or by scheduling conferences with another student.

Publish people's writing....publishing is an important way for students to feel a sense of authorship and feel what it is like to have others read their writing.

Encourage people to think of ideas for writing and to write them down so they can write about them later.

Talk to people about how published authors write. Have students who have published talk about how they came up with their ideas for writing. Invite published authors.

Show students writing by other adult literacy students whose programs publish their work. Encourage your students to read them, or even to send them copies of their work.

Set aside some time to read together with students about themes of interest to them. Provide time for uninterrupted silent reading.

Allow people to stop working on a piece of writing and begin another.

Provide plenty of time for people to plan and think as they write.

Show an interest in people's topics, bring them pictures or things to read related to their topics, write them short notes or tell them about what you were reminded of when you read their writing.

Model an effective listening style and encourage students to listen actively to one another.

4.2 The Writing Process

Purpose

By observing what good writers do, researchers have found that most writers go through a predictable process. (Some have called this process a series of stages, although the various stages tend to loop back and forth rather than follow a linear step by step pattern.) Writers spend time rehearsing what they will write before putting pen to paper. They write several drafts, focusing first on the content and only later on editing, spelling and punctuation. This activity gives participants an overview of some of the things we know about what makes a good writer.

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: What Good Writers Do

1. Ask students to think about what writing is. Is writing the same as handwriting? Is writing the same as spelling? What is the purpose of writing?
2. Using the Background Notes, *What Good Writers Do*, for ideas, prepare a brief summary of what has been learned recently about what good writers do. For example, you may want to discuss the fact that most writers do not know exactly what they will say before they begin writing, that writers think of their audience, and that most writers go through several drafts before they finish writing.
3. Tell the group a bit about your own experience as a writer. How do you rehearse what you'll write? Do you write the first draft in pencil? What is the worst writing experience you've had? How much do you rewrite?

Part B: A Sample of the Writing Process

1. Find an example of a piece of writing which went through several drafts before it was finished. You could ask a returning student to share one of his or her pieces of writing, or share a piece of your own writing, or create a piece of writing similar students in the class might produce. Choose an example that includes the following: an idea-generation or rehearsal stage, several drafts, and a finished or "published" final copy.

2. Using the descriptions below as a guide, show how your sample writing progressed through the various stages of the writing process.

Rehearsal Most writers spend a good deal of time rehearsing what they will write before they put anything down on paper. Some things require more rehearsal time than others. A short note (unless it's a love note) may take only a moment of thinking. A novelist, on the other hand, might spend years dreaming up a story before ever writing anything down.

Drafting Drafting is where people begin to put their writing down on paper. During this stage the important thing is getting the ideas down on paper. Usually it's easier if the writer doesn't try to worry too much about spelling, punctuation or handwriting.

Revision Once a draft is finished, most writers do a lot of revision. Re-vision means re-seeing. Good writers first read the piece again. Sometimes it helps to read it out loud. Then, they add things they forgot, take things out and make other changes that make it easier for the reader to understand what they mean.

Editing Once a writer is sure the content is how he or she wants it, the focus shifts to editing. Usually a writer begins by being a self-editor. He or she reads the piece over several times. The first time the writer might concentrate on making sure there are complete sentences with capital letters at the beginning, and periods or question marks at the end. The second reading looks for other kinds of punctuation. During a third reading, the writer might focus mostly on making sure all the words are spelled correctly.

Publishing In a writing process approach, publishing means "going public" with your writing. Publishing may mean a finished product like a newsletter or a short book, complete with illustrations. Or, it may mean sending a letter one has written or reading a poem out loud.

Part C: The Conference Approach to Helping Writers

1. After hearing about the writing process, students will probably have many doubts about whether they can use the writing process themselves. This might be a good time to explain that they will receive lots of help through individual or group activities called conferences.

A conference is a very short lesson to help you work on just one problem you are having right now in your writing. Sometimes a conference is just between you and a teacher or tutor. Other times a small group will have a conference together. And, other times you may have a conference with another student.

2. Briefly mention that the group will be introduced to different kinds of conferences -- for choosing a topic, for spelling and for editing -- as they progress through their first pieces of writing. Then, once they know how each kind of conference works, they will be able to ask for conferences when they need them, or the teacher will plan them when he or she thinks they are needed.

What Good Writers Do

Before he wrote *A Writer Teaches Writing*, Donald Murray interviewed hundreds of successful writers and writing teachers. During this process he identified several skills all writers practice one way or another.

- **The writer discovers a subject.** *Content and form are both important, but content, says Murray, comes first. "Form is not an empty jug into which the writer pours meaning, form grows out of meaning..." (p. 2). In fact, most writing time is spent thinking of ideas and finding an order or pattern in which to communicate them.*
- **The writer senses the audience.** *The writer does not exist without a reader. To get the message across the writer has to speak in a way the reader will understand. The writer has to have an idea of what the reader already knows, doesn't know and wants to know. One way or another the writer forms a picture of the audience.*
- **The writer searches for specifics.** *Good writers know that specific, concrete details enrich writing. They make it authentic and true to the reader. Most experienced writers "throw out" much of the information they collect and use only what expresses what they really want to say.*
- **The writer creates a design.** *Good writers create a design before they write. It may be a written chart or outline or just in the writer's head, but in all cases there is some kind of structure for writing.*
- **The writer writes.** *Writing itself, most experienced writers admit, is hard work. Most writers go through draft after draft before they are satisfied with the writing. Often writers find ideas that are not yet clear, holes where things are missing, words that don't quite express the meaning intended. But at this stage the writer cannot become critical. The writer needs to push through to complete a first draft.*
- **The writer develops a critical eye.** *This is the point where a beginning writer may feel the work of writing has finished. For the experienced writer it has just begun. Once the first draft is done the writer turns into a critical reader. Does the writing make sense? Does it say what I want it to say? How can I improve it? Often the whole work may be thrown out and redesigned.*
- **The writer rewrites.** *According to Murray, all effective writers know writing is rewriting. A beginning writer may believe that most professional writers just sit down at the typewriter and produce a finished piece of writing. Professional writers know better. The writer may look to see if the order is right, if one paragraph leads into the next. Next the writer (editor) may begin to look at sentences to see if they are clear and true to the meaning he or she wants to convey. Finally the writer begins to narrow the focus to individual words.*

As people become more proficient writers, they learn to use each of these skills to develop their writing. Writing is both an art and a craft. Turning an idea into writing involves rewriting, reseeing and rethinking: the work of a craftsman. Most of all, writing as a craft requires hard work and commitment, whether someone is a beginning writer or very experienced. Murray says, "The writer dreams of art, but he works at craft." (Murray, 1968, p. 3)

From: Murray, Donald. (1968) *The writer teaches writing*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Where to Go For More Information on the Writing Process

As yet, little published information exists about using the writing process with adult beginning readers. Luckily, however, the numbers of practical and useful studies related to using the writing process with school aged children and with college students has grown dramatically over the past decade. Many of these can be very useful to teachers of adult beginning readers. Here are descriptions of a few of these books.

Atwell, N. (1987) *In the middle: Writing, reading and learning with adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Nancy Atwell, a middle school teacher from Boothbay Harbor, Maine, writes about her own process of organizing a writing workshop and collaborating with her students. It contains lots of very practical ideas relevant to helping adults.

Calkins, L. (1986) *The art of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Lucy Calkins' book contains many writing samples and anecdotal stories about using the writing process with school age children as well as sound advice for managing writing workshops.

Elbow, P. (1981) *Writing with power*. New York: Oxford University Press. Elbow advises more proficient adult writers on how to use freewriting and other techniques as ways to release writers' blocks and to discover what they want to say.

Gardner, S. (1985) *Conversations with strangers*. London: Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU). Growing out of the work of an ALBSU sponsored Writing Development Project in England, this book focuses on work by and with adult beginning readers. There are many examples of writing produced by beginners, as well as by more experienced writers, and black and white photographs.

Good, M. (1986) *Write on*. London: Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU). This book, which was published to complement the a British television series by the same name, has tips for adult beginning readers on how to improve their writing, how to deal with spelling and how to evaluate progress in writing. It offers practical advice using simple language.

Graves, D. (1983) *Writing: Teachers and children at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Donald Graves is one of the most well known researchers in the use of the writing process with children, which he continues to develop with colleagues at the University of New Hampshire. This book has become a basic text in the field.

Morehouse, C. (1988) *Helping adults to spell*. London: Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU). This handbook describes different spelling strategies and techniques with adults in mind.

Murray, D. (1971) *A writer teaches writing*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. Donald Murray was one of the pioneers of the use of the process approach to teaching writing and was a teacher to many of the authors mentioned here. During the sixties he studied the writing behavior of proficient writers and developed the idea of the writing conference.

4.3 Choosing a Topic

Purpose

This activity helps students choose a topic and introduces students to the idea of the topic conference. One good time to use this activity is just before students begin their first extended writing project. Later, as they need, students can learn about other techniques such as interviewing, mapping, outlining, and using problem trees during short 15 or 20 minute topic conferences.

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: Your Purpose for Writing

1. We have found that for many students, the idea of being able to choose what they write about is a new one. Or, they think they should write about "school" topics. You may want to remind students that the best way to learn to write is by writing, but that in a writing workshop the choice of topic is up to them. Encourage them to use the writing time in the classroom to write things they need in their everyday lives such as notes to their kid's school, reports for work, or letters to friends. The topics our students have written about, at the bottom of the next page, may give them some ideas.

2. Many beginning writers may be unaware of the different kinds of writing they could do. Ask them to think about the purposes they have for writing. For example, if their purpose is to express their feelings, they might write a letter, a diary, a dialogue journal or poems. If their purpose is to describe something that has happened, they might write an autobiography. They might write a newspaper article or a letter to the boss (real or imaginary) to give their opinion; they might write a children's story or words to a song to use their imagination.

Part B: Who is Your Audience?

1. In school, kids are used to writing for just one audience -- the teacher. Encourage students to write to varied audiences and to make a "mental picture" of their audience. They may find this makes writing a lot easier. People can write for and to -- themselves, a friend, a family member, or a general audience.

2. Some people may find that it's easier to begin by picking a "safe" audience – someone who won't be too critical if everything isn't perfect. Writers who find it hard to visualize an audience or have trouble thinking of what to say may want to try dialogue journals, which are described in Module 4.7.

Part C: Topic Conferences

1. Explain that in the future, when a student or a group of students have trouble thinking of a topic, they can ask a teacher, a tutor or another student for a topic conference. Have students pair up and hold a short topic conference with each other. They can ask each other questions such as:

- Do you have a purpose in mind for your writing?*
- Who is your audience?*
- What do you want to include in the writing?*
- When will you start?*

Writing Our Students' Lives

<p>Classroom Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Classroom JournalClassroom NewsletterClassroom YearbookClassroom Calendar and MessagesProgram for the graduation ceremonyRecords of all kinds	<p>Personal Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">MyselfMy FamilyMy FriendMy PetMy TeacherMy HobbyMy DreamMy FutureMyself as a HeroMyself as a VillainMyself as a ChildMyself as an AdultMyself as a ParentMyself as a StudentMyself as a WorkerMyself as a CitizenMyself as a LeaderMyself as a FollowerMyself as a FriendMyself as a NeighborMyself as a Community MemberMyself as a Member of a GroupMyself as a Member of a TeamMyself as a Member of a SocietyMyself as a Member of a CultureMyself as a Member of a ReligionMyself as a Member of a NationMyself as a Member of a WorldMyself as a Member of a Universe
<p>Short Personal Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">My DaughterEmotionsRespectMy FamilySpringLife at Kneier Coat FactoryPicking Cotton	<p>Autobiographies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">MyselfMy FamilyMy FriendMy PetMy TeacherMy HobbyMy DreamMy FutureMyself as a HeroMyself as a VillainMyself as a ChildMyself as an AdultMyself as a ParentMyself as a StudentMyself as a WorkerMyself as a CitizenMyself as a LeaderMyself as a FollowerMyself as a FriendMyself as a NeighborMyself as a Community MemberMyself as a Member of a GroupMyself as a Member of a TeamMyself as a Member of a SocietyMyself as a Member of a CultureMyself as a Member of a ReligionMyself as a Member of a NationMyself as a Member of a WorldMyself as a Member of a Universe <p>Newsletters</p>

TECHNIQUES FOR EXPANDING A TOPIC

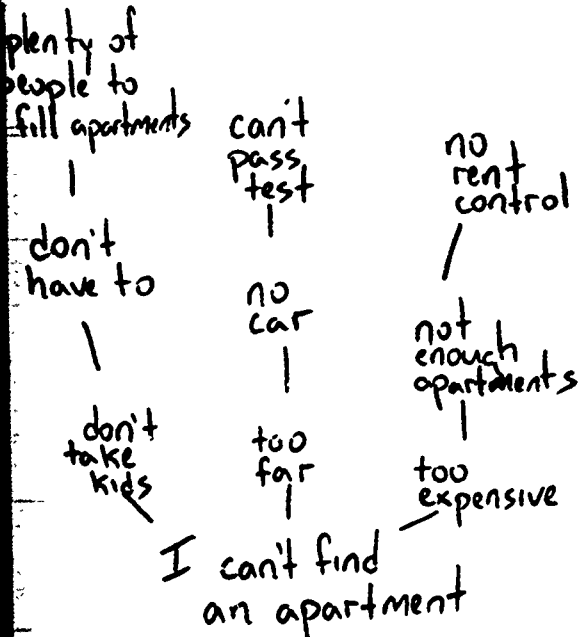
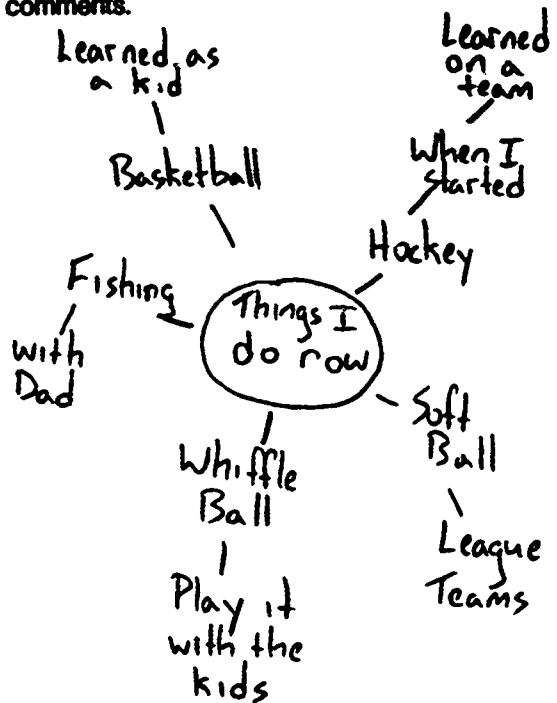
Making an Outline Outlines can be as formal or informal as the writer wants them to be, as long as they serve his or her purpose of expanding and discovering the topic.

Brainstorm - The Coat Factory

- people
- fun we had
- holidays
- the last day
- the day the machines broke
- John

Brainstorming In a brainstorm people usually think of one topic. Then they try to mention as many things related to the topic as possible as quickly as possible. Whatever ideas come to mind are written down, without judgments or comments.

Mapping Sometimes called clustering, mapping helps people to find links between many different ideas. Usually a writer starts with one topic in the middle of the page. Then topics that "spin off" of the first topic are written in a circle around the first topic; the writer can visually lay out subsequent subtopics.



Problem Tree A problem tree starts with one problem or question. An answer is written down as one branch of the tree. If that answer leads to another question, you continue up that branch of the tree until you have exhausted all the "why" questions you can think of. Then, you can go back to the root of the tree again and find another reason why "X" is a problem and continue to fill in the branches. This exercise is very helpful for discovering the root causes of problems.

October 17

Dear Mom,
 Hi how are you? I hope that you
 are fine. As for me I'm doing well.
 Mom happy birthday. We will see you
 soon. I will be there with you on
 December 22, 1988 and we are going to
 get there and he is going to
 be doing work with us. I'm going
 to see you, he is going to read and write
 we are going to read and write
 I'm going to miss you and
 but I'm not going to miss you and
 the family. I miss you and
 to Mom. you love much

October 19, 1988

Dear Mom,

Hi how are you? I hope you are doing
 well, and the family too. As for me and
 June we are doing well. Mom, J and I
 are going to Puerto Rico. We will be there
 in December 22. June and I are very happy.
 Well I going to school to read and write
 and June he is working so don't worry
 please. OK?

Mom happy birthday. I miss You .

4.4 Coping with Spelling

Purpose

Frank Smith points out that "We are not normally aware of the spellings of words if we can read them, or of those we write if we know how to spell them. Conscious awareness seems to arise only when we run into difficulties." For many adult beginning readers being "consciously aware" of spelling is a fact of life. No matter how much we as teachers stress the fact that writing is not "spelling," adult students who have experienced the embarrassment and confusion associated with misspelling words, find spelling of primary importance to them. This module suggests ways to help students put their need to learn to spell into perspective and describes some strategies for guessing the spellings of unknown words.

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: What Is Spelling?

1. **Is Spelling Writing?** Think about and discuss the following questions:

*Is spelling writing? Why? Why not?
Are all good writers good spellers?
Do you have to spell everything perfectly the first time you write it down?*

2. **The Purpose of Spelling** In fact, most experts in writing agree that writing isn't spelling. Writing is getting your ideas down on paper. Ask students to write a one sentence purpose for spelling. Here are some given by people who do research about writing.

*Standard spelling allows a reader to know what a writer means.
Spelling is a polite way to make things easier for the reader. It is a "face you show to the audience."
Spelling is for recording meaning.*

3. **Good Writing and Good Spelling**

Good Ideas and Good Spelling Many of our students have the impression that everyone who can write is a good speller. You may want to point out that not all good writers, even famous writers, were good spellers. Once they have a good draft, many famous writers, like Ernest Hemingway, hired editors to correct

their spelling and punctuation. Many very intelligent people, presidents, doctors, professors, have difficulty spelling.

Spelling Blocks Many people who might be good writers never get the chance. They are too afraid of making spelling mistakes to even begin to write. Do you recognize these people?

WORRIERS: *Before these people begin to write they worry about making spelling mistakes. Usually, they find excuses never to write at all.*

PERFECTIONISTS: *These people won't write down a word unless it's spelled perfectly. If they don't know the spelling of a word, they will stop everything to ask someone or to look up the word. By the time these people get back to writing they have forgotten what they were going to write about. If too many words are spelled wrong they throw the writing away!*

SAFE GUYS: *These people have found a solution to the spelling problem. They will only use words they're sure they know how to spell. Sometimes they think of wonderful, interesting things to say, but they only use small, easy-to-spell words in their writing.*

Part B: How Do You Spell? ¹⁰

1. Ask students to think of five words they don't know how to spell, but would like to learn. Encourage them to include some words with several syllables and words with prefixes or suffixes.
2. The students have two jobs - to try to spell all the words right and to explain how they learned to spell them. Give students until the next day to have learned the words.
3. The following day, give each person an individual "test" on the words.
4. Next, bring the group together. Brainstorm ways people found to learn the words. Some responses might include -- I...

*"memorized" the word
said it over and over
closed my eyes and pictured the word
sounded out the word
broke the word down (into syllables)
found little words inside the big one
broke the word down and sounded the pieces out
found pieces of the word that rhymed with other words I know*

5. Go over some of the spelling strategies mentioned on the next page, and add them to the list.

Part C: Kinds of Words

Point out that the spelling cannot always be "sounded out." Some words have non-phonetic spelling because they come from another language (chili pepper); others because the spelling of that word has been passed down historically (thyme). See if students can find other examples for the categories mentioned below:

Words that can be sounded out have letters which correspond more or less to sounds made by the letters. Sometimes only part of the word can be sounded out. Some words you can sound out even if you don't know -- for example, "crematistic" or "myrmidon."

"Sight" words are words that have to be memorized or learned by sight. People have to rely on their visual memory. Write a few of these words on the board, e.g., Ayatollah, fuchsia, diarrhoea, and talk about how you might remember how to spell the word.

Words that have pieces you might know. Some words have units of meaning within them, such as:

re	port	s
im		er
ex		ed
trans		ing
de		ation

Words that sound the same but are spelled differently. Homonyms such as *too, two* and *to, they're, there* and *their, hear* and *here, bare* and *bear* are especially confusing, but do illustrate the fact that not all words are spelled as they sound.

Point out to the group that during short spelling conferences, they can work on topics such as use of syllables, prefixes, suffixes and homonyms.

Part D: When is Spelling Important?

1. Martin Good, a British adult education specialist, suggests asking students to consider when spelling is really important to them. Have the group generate their own responses, similar to the chart below.

When is spelling important?		
Kind of Writing	Who is it for?	Spelling and Editing Important
journal	me	no
fill in calendar	me	no
grocery list	me	no
grocery list	husband	a little
note of things to do	me	no
notes to family	kids	yes, a little (to me)
notes to boss	boss	yes
letter to kids' school	teacher	yes
writing checks	bank	yes
job applications	employers	yes

2. Discuss the idea that sometimes it is important to write without being overly concerned with spelling and that writing a lot will naturally lead to better spelling.

Part E: Using Invented Spelling

1. One way to allow people to write even when their spelling is not so good is to use "invented" spelling. In invented spelling you write as much of the word as you can. You:

guess as much of the word as you can...

write it to see if it "looks" right...

draw a line for letters you don't know...

guess words based on how it would be if it were written as it sounds

g ----- or
gro ----- e
grocere

2. Show students some examples of invented spelling. If possible, have returning students talk about their experiences using invented spelling. Point out how difficult it is to stop to spell words correctly during the "idea" stage of writing and that people will be able to go back later to correct their spelling.

Observing a Student's Spelling Behavior

Alan Dawe, an adult basic education evaluator from Canada, mentions some common error patterns to look for in a piece of writing with misspelled words: omissions, additions, reversals, phonetic substitution, non-phonetic substitution and confusion caused by mispronunciation.¹¹ He suggests observing the following about how a student approaches spelling as a means of complementing their strengths and needs. Does the student:

- seem to have a workable system of spelling a word
- know when the word looks right
- produce words of about the same length as the test word
- spell at least some words automatically
- use a method of breaking down a word into parts
- use "visualizing" as an aid (closing the eyes to recall spelling)
- use writing and rewriting as an aid to recall
- write illegibly to cover up spelling uncertainty
- recognize and use spelling patterns
- seem to associate a pattern of letters with sound
- spell better "out loud" than in writing
- pronounce words correctly
- have difficulty remembering things
- show anxiety about spelling

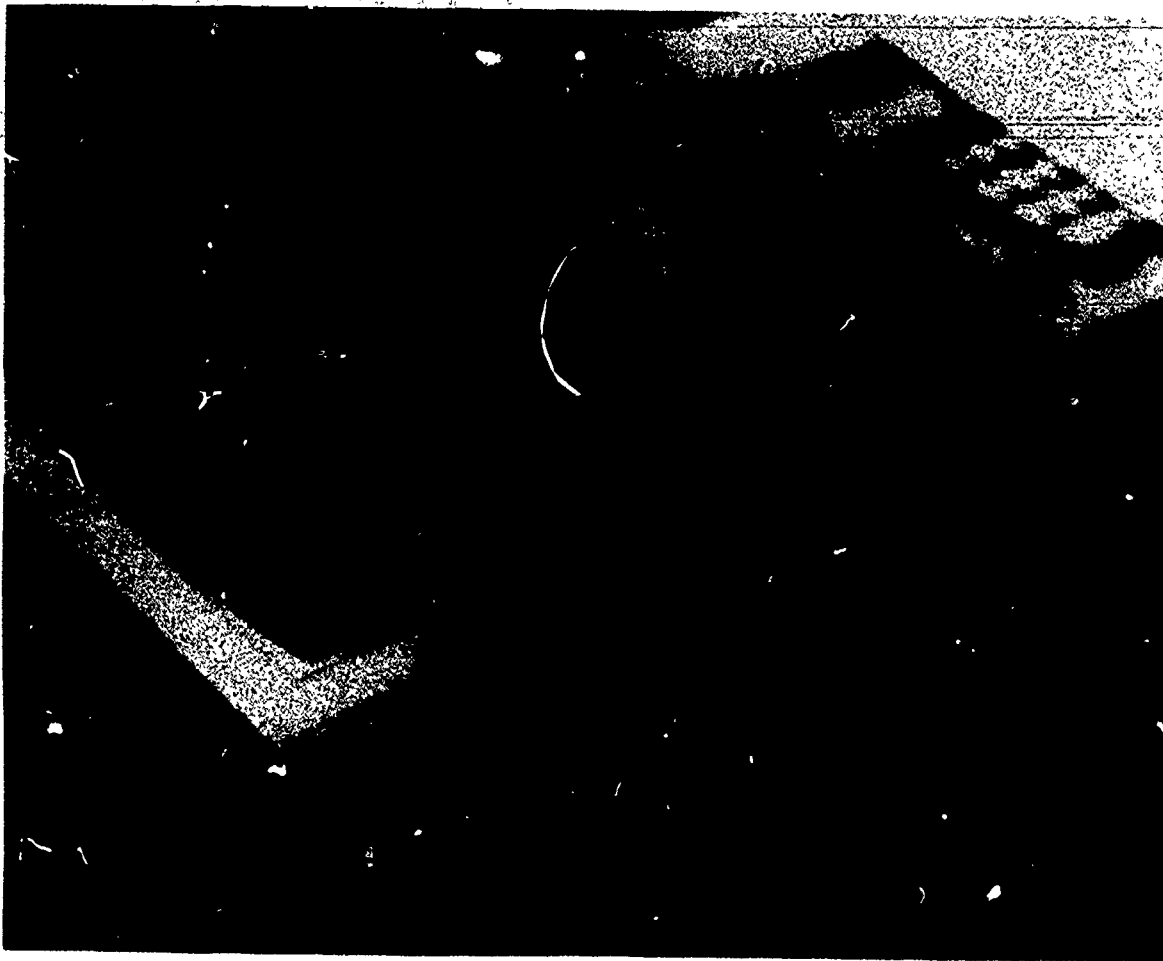
SPELLING STRATEGIES

Most people are willing to settle for using invented spelling, but they also need to learn how to spell words the conventional way. To practice spelling you need to be able to do two things -- find the right spelling of the word and then remember it. The best way is to know as many different strategies as you can, different ones for different situations. Here are some suggestions.

1. Don't be afraid to guess how to spell a word. Remember, you can get the correct spelling later.
2. Keep writing. If you come to a word you can't spell, don't spend too long on it. Draw a line and move on with your ideas.
3. Write a lot. People have a natural way of getting better at spelling by writing more.
4. When you finish getting your words down try to find the spelling of the word by any strategy or combination of them that works for you.

CHECKING AGAIN TO SEE IF IT "LOOKS" RIGHT
SAYING THE WORD OR LETTERS OUT LOUD
LOOKING THE WORD UP IN A BOOK YOU SAW IT IN
LOOKING THE WORD UP IN A DICTIONARY
LOOKING THE WORD UP ON THE COMPUTER SPELL CHECKER
LOOKING FOR THE WORD ON A LIST OF COMMON WORDS
ASKING SOMEONE

5. Find a good way of memorizing words. Here is one:
 - a. *Look at the word and say it softly.*
 - b. *Cover it and try to 'see' it in your mind.*
 - c. *Write it from memory.*
 - d. *Check it.*
6. Notice words as you are reading. Look for patterns. Read a lot.
7. Learn a little about the sounds of letters. The teachers will help you with this if you need it.
8. Learn about some word patterns -- groups of letters that sound the same.
9. Learn how to break words down into smaller parts called syllables.
10. Learn about pieces of words that have meaning (prefixes, suffixes, root words, etc.).
11. Learn about words that sound the same but are spelled differently (homonyms)
12. If you have a "block" about spelling, try to unlearn the block. For example, every time you look at a word you need to learn to spell and say, "I can't," try to change the message to "one at a time, I can learn to spell these words."



The last year I was working nobody know about the destiny of the factory. We heard lots of talk, but nothing serious. Plus, nobody wants to believe the worst. So, when one week before they closed down, some people from the union came to tell about the news, it's all we had, one more week. I couldn't believe my ears. It was for me like a pill you can't swallow, no matter what you do, it don't want to go down. The shop was my second home. After so many years, how can they do it to me?

Carmela (from: "Part of My Life")

4.5 Revising a Draft

Purpose

Most inexperienced writers expect to get everything right on the first draft. This exercise guides them through the process of revising, or re-seeing, what they have written and making changes. It suggests ways writers can revise alone, as well as working with a teacher, a tutor, another student or a group. The module also contains some ideas about listening that teachers might reflect upon and share with their students.

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: Revision with Yourself

What many beginning writers don't know is that experienced writers read their work over and over again. They read it out loud. They pace up and down the floor reading it, they cross out words, they put them back. They want the words to convey just the meaning they have in mind. When revising, ask yourself some questions:

- Does this make sense?*
- Will what I mean be clear to the reader?*
- Do I need to add anything or take anything out?*

Part B: Revision with Others

Sometimes you want to share ideas with other people. Hearing your writing, they may ask you questions that will make you think about what you meant to say or think of new ideas. A revision conference can be with one other person or a group of people. Each of you has a specific role and steps to follow:

1. *The writer reads the piece out loud.*
2. *The listener asks questions to understand the story and then repeats the story back in his/her own words.*
3. *The listener tells what he/she likes about the story.*
4. *The listener asks the writer: What he/she liked the most about this story. What the writer wants to add or change. What he/she is going to do next.*

Part C: Finding Themes for Dialogue

People write to understand the world. Brazilian literacy educator Paulo Freire suggests that truly "naming" words is to engage in authentic "dialogue" about the words and what they mean to the people involved. This dialogue involves examining the words, the way of viewing the world inherent in their use and the relation of the individual using the word to existing power structures. By reflecting on these words through dialogue, people create and recreate the world. One of the key elements of Freire's work was to develop themes for discussion that touched on crucial issues in people's lives. There are strong connections between dialogue and writing. Talking about themes that have power in people's lives can also bring power to their writing and help them to find what writers call their voice. When writing has meaning, the authentic, personal character of each individual shines through the writing.

In our writing programs students sometimes can use their own writing as a source of themes. Peter Elbow suggests one way to find themes.¹³

1. *Read the work aloud.*
2. *Try to summarize the work in one sentence.*
3. *Try to summarize the work in one word by brainstorming possible KEY words.*
4. *Have the author reflect on why this was a key word for him/her.*
5. *Other members of the group may want to discuss what key word came to mind for them and why.*
6. *Discuss the key words further. What problems do the key words allude to? Why do these problems exist? How do they affect people personally? How can things be changed?*

Part D: Modeling a Revision Conference

Students need to see revision conferences in action to understand how to use them in pairs. In our program we try to have the first revision conferences in small groups. The teacher models the conference process with students. Nancy Atwell suggests first showing a "good" conference that models good listening behavior. This can be followed by a model of a "bad" conference where the listener doesn't listen, doesn't look at the writer, says the story is wonderful and won't offer suggestions, wants to tell his or her own story instead of interviewing the writer, or tells the writer exactly what to do.¹⁴

A lot of listening is asking the right questions. Here are some questions suggested by Donald Graves.¹⁵ Which of these questions you ask depends on the person, the place and the situation. One of the best ways for students to learn about how to use these questions is by observing teachers using them and then developing their own style. Of course, many students already have their own, very well developed style of listening and asking questions.

Opening Questions

*What's the piece about?
Why are you writing about it?
How did you get started?
What's your favorite part?*

Following Questions

These are often not really questions but restatements — "You say you moved to Springfield when you were seven?" The restatement is designed to help the writer fill in more details about the topic.

Process Questions

*What do you think you'll do next?
I noticed you changed your lead sentence. Why did you do that?
How do you feel about your story?
Are you happy with the beginning and ending?
Explain how your title fits your story.
What do you need help on?*

Has anyone else given you advice on this story?
Can you think of a different way to say this?
Does the beginning of your piece grab the reader's imagination?
Do you have any questions for me?

The person in the role of the listener should always respond to the general content of the writing first rather than focusing on details. Since few people believe their writing is good especially at the drafting stage, try to focus on the things you like about the writing and give the writer lots of encouragement. Frame the parts you don't understand in terms of "problems to be solved" instead of mistakes. Clarify the content by asking for more information or suggesting different ways to say things. Get the writer to think about the audience for the writing. Demonstrate your interest in what the writer has to say.

Part E: Modeling Revising on Paper

Often, students don't revise because they don't know what revising is. The teacher may want to plan some short conferences to demonstrate techniques for revision. One recommended way to do this is for a teacher to revise a piece of his/her own work while the students watch and ask questions. An overhead projector is ideal for this, but teachers can revise on paper with the students gathered around, or use a blackboard. Here are some revision skills you may want to address: ¹⁸

- ^ carets: to add new words or phrases
- ↑ ↓ arrows: to change the order of words or sentences
- * asterisks or numbers: to add chunks of writing
- spider legs strips of paper: to write things to be added and staple it to the page at the right point on the page
- cutting and gluing with gluestick: to change the order of paragraphs
- circling: to signal words with poor spelling or which need to be changed
- ~~word~~ crossing out: to delete words or phrases
- g --- r drawing lines: to signal words whose spelling isn't correct

LISTENING

People say there are four "language arts." Reading, writing, speaking...and listening. Some people say listening is the neglected language art. "After all," an African proverb goes, "why did God give us two ears and only one mouth?" People learn how to write, read and speak but seldom how to listen. Listening helps us understand and remember what we learn. Becoming a better listener is central to participating fully in a writer's workshop.

In her book, *Sharing Writing: Peer Response Groups in English Classes*, Karen Spear suggests asking yourself these questions about your own views on listening:¹⁷

1. *What do people do when they listen to one another?*
2. *What do people do that shows they are listening closely?*
3. *How do you know when they have heard and understood the message?*
4. *What do people do that shows they are not listening closely?*
5. *How do you know when they have not heard or understood the message?*
6. *What is good listening?*
7. *What is bad listening?*
8. *For both speaker and listener what are the difficulties and benefits of listening well?*

Here are a few things about listening:

Good listening doesn't always come naturally, but it can be developed.

Listening means hearing with understanding.

It means giving another person our full undivided attention.

Good listeners try to see not just the words but the world of the person speaking.

Good listeners repeat back what the speaker said to make sure they have understood.

The role of a listener is not to judge, approve or disapprove, only to hear and reflect.

Being heard helps the speaker rethink his/her own opinions and feelings.

Practice active listening. Try practicing active listening. Assign half the group to be listeners and half to be speakers. Give the speaker at least 5 minutes to talk (talking about a piece of writing they are working on is one good topic). The other person becomes an active listener by asking questions for clarification only. Afterwards the listener restates what the speaker has said. Discuss the experience. What did the listeners do to help the speakers keep talking? Did the speakers think of anything new to add to their writing? How did it feel to be a speaker? A listener? Do you think it's true that secretly each person wants to find things to criticize or change in the other person's work, while each writer really wants to hear something he or she has done well?

4.6 Editing a Draft

Purpose

Once the content is complete, the writer takes on a new, very different role, that of an editor. Each sentence must be worked over with a fine-toothed comb to make sure everything is right. This activity has ideas for helping students to edit their work. It suggests ways to pull topics out of the writing to use in short editing conferences and ways the instructor can handle the final editing of the work of students who cannot produce a "perfectly" edited piece of text.

Research Notes



Steps

Part 1: Editing Your Own Work

1. Ask writers to edit their own work. If they have written in pencil or pen they may want to use a different color for editing. If they have written on the computer they may want to print out the story and edit it with a pencil. Here are some questions writers can ask themselves. Or, you can ask them in an editing conference:

- Are the ideas clear?*
- Is the order correct?*
- Where do I make breaks for paragraphs?*
- Does each paragraph lead to the next one?*
- Does the paragraph make sense?*
- Is each sentence necessary?*
- Have I used complete sentences?*
- Are the sentences too long or too short?*
- Is the writing too "wordy" in spots?*
- Have I chosen active, interesting words?*
- Do the words say exactly what I mean?*
- Have I used all the skills I have already learned? (See list on writing folder.)*
- Is the grammar correct?*
- Have I punctuated the sentences correctly?*
- Are the words spelled correctly?*
- If not, have I underlined words I don't know?*
- Have I put my name, the date and the draft number on the paper?*

Part 2: Final Editing

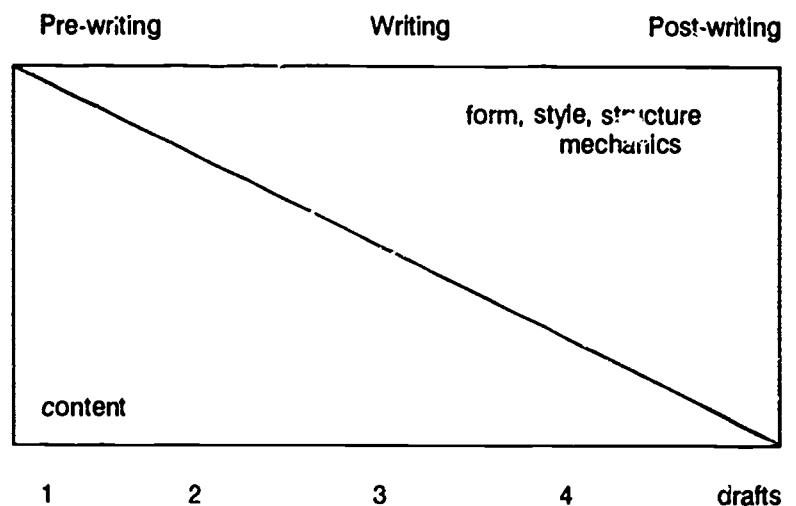
After the student has edited the writing it can be given to a teacher or tutor for final editing. We have found that how a piece gets edited depends a good deal on the individual student. For some students who get "blocked" when they notice their mistakes, we will only pick one or two high priority items to talk about in the paper. In fact, we may encourage people who are very blocked in their writing to use only dialogue journals (see Section 4.7) and do no editing at all for some time until we are sure they have the self-confidence to get their ideas down on paper. Then there are others who learn a good deal from having everything corrected on their paper and copying it again. They want their finished product to be 100% correct! In this case, as Atwell says, "the editor's blue pencil serves a very different function from a teacher's red pen. As editors, I'm one of the last stops on a writer's way to an audience he or she cares about and wants to affect."¹⁹

Part 3: The Editing Conference

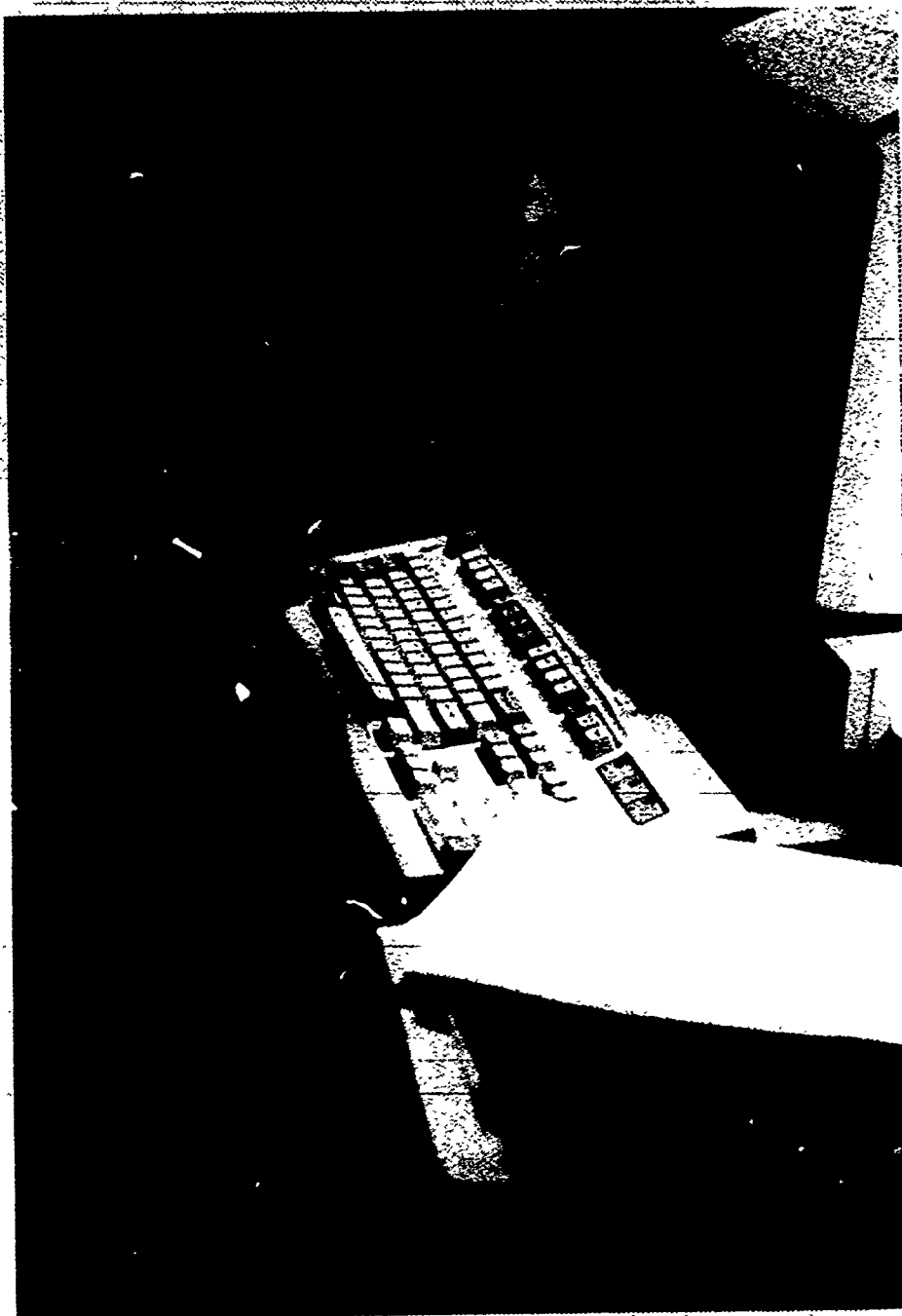
After the teacher does the final corrections on the paper, the teacher meets with the writer to address one or two skills. For example, in the case of a student who is learning to use complete sentences in his or her writing, the teacher might do the following:

- 1) Explain briefly how to use the editing skill. (e.g., Explain that sentences express complete thoughts, their parts, and the use of end marks and capital letters.)
- 2) Provide two or three examples. (e.g., Show the student two or three groups of words that are sentences and two or three that aren't. Discuss why.)
- 3) Use the student's own text as the basis for the skill building activity. (e.g., Have the student go through his or her writing, making sure there are complete sentences, capital letters and end marks.)
- 4) Go over the student's finished work. Explain any problems; make a note of skills that need to be addressed next.
- 5) Keep a record of the editing conference on the student's writing folder. Look for the use of this skill in the student's future work.

This graph shows how the importance of mechanics increases through successive drafts, while the importance of the content decreases.



Succession of drafts – adapted from Murray, D., "How writing finds its own meaning." *Theory into Practice*. Teaching Composition. N.C.T.E., 1980.



Dear Mr. President, You have people out there with eyesight who can see, but they can't read or write. It's a dream to them to feel that they could pull themselves out of the dark, to try to learn to read and write. My dream is to learn to read and write.

Last weekend I bought quarter panels
for my Firebird. PLUS extra parts for only
two hundred dollars. A real bargain.
I also ordered lower frame connectors.
One more week and I'll have the motor in
the Firebird.

Dear Marilee

as a matter of fact I do get tired
of working on my car. But it so
close to being done. It's in the shop
rite now. Time 7:55. Time to
go. I wanted to sit a lot more but -
Time fly's when you're having fun.

To be continued

4-17-29

Dear Dave,

I'm glad your Firebird is almost done. It's
a good feeling when you finish a big project
like that, isn't it? So, what were you doing
last week?

- By the way
my hand
ever since
computer
hand, is

This weekend I'm going to work
on my Firebird. I'm going to
take the motor out of the Monte
Carlo and push the Monte out of
garage. Then I'm going to clean and paint it.
Then I'm going to buy motor mounts
and header and put them on the motor.
Then I'm going to clean and paint the
engine compartment on the Firebird.
Then when the paint is dry I'll work on
headliner I have to re-glow it.

4.7 Dialogue Journals

Purpose

Many relatively inexperienced writers lack self-confidence in their ability to write. They feel as if they can't think of anything to say or they worry that their writing will have too many mistakes. Often these writers can benefit from using dialogue journals. A dialogue journal is a continuous "written conversation" between two people; between two students, a student and a volunteer, or a student and a teacher. Dialogue journals have the advantage of providing a "topic" for the student to write about and a safe person to write to, one who understands if the writing isn't perfect. This activity introduces students to the idea of using dialogue journals.

Research Notes



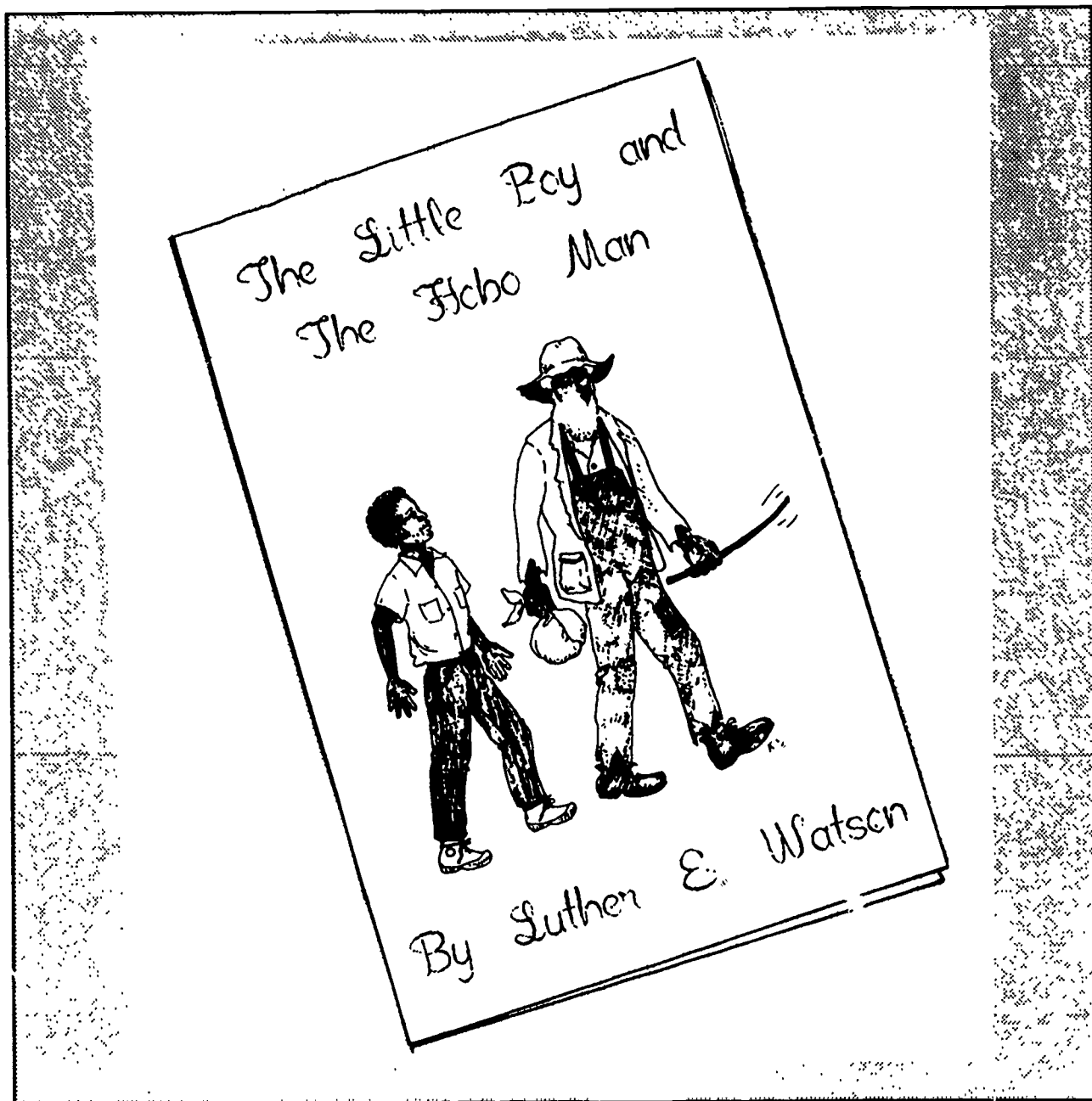
Steps

1. Explain to the students that the purpose of the dialogue journal is to write their thoughts, feelings and ideas on paper. One person starts the dialogue by writing a letter, usually one that contains some questions for the reader. The other person answers the letter and asks some of his or her own questions. Thus a dialogue, or discussion begins. In a dialogue journal the focus is on ideas - no one worries about spelling or punctuation or handwriting. The journals are private, only for the two people writing them (or for a teacher if the writers choose).
2. Ask the students to get a special notebook in which to keep the journal writing. They may decide to write the journal only in class or to take it home to work on.
3. When the dialogue is between a student and teacher, it's important to try to establish a reciprocal relationship from the beginning. Writing about some of your own questions and uncertainties about everyday problems will help the student to understand that it's acceptable to share her or his own thoughts and feelings.
4. Encourage students to write about problems they are having related to reading and writing. Ask them to write about books they have read. Encourage them to write about things they do well. As they gain more confidence in writing, you may want to encourage them to think more about topics for their own independent writing. A dialogue journal may be a good place to give advice about effective reading and writing strategies. Try to get students to write about what is and isn't working for them in the classroom.

5. The dialogue journal is especially effective when used by reluctant readers. We have seen many students blossom dramatically using the journals; most writers will see that they are writing more and with more ease than they did when they began the journal. Check the journal periodically with the learner and point out their progress.

6. A variation of the dialogue journal is written conversation. In written conversation students are asked to discuss a question, what they'd like to include in the upcoming newsletter, for example. Instead of discussing the issue orally, they are only allowed to communicate by writing notes to each other. Again, the purpose is only fluency of communication rather than correctness.

7. Another variation is a group dialogue journal. Questions are written in a book, which is left in an easy-to-reach place in the learning center. Anyone who chooses to can respond to previous questions. For example, a dialogue journal could be a place where people write recommendations of good books to read.



I'm tryin' to learn how to publish a book - to write about some of the things in my life. My teacher told me that's the way a lot of writers started off, by writing about some of the things in their past. I have a lot of things to write about, but I just don't know how to start the whole thing off. But I'm gettin' to learn more about it. I record the things I'm gonna say, then I go over them and check to see is it right. I've been thinkin' of names for my book, if I'll be able to publish it. I finally came up with one. I'm gonna name my book, *The Little Boy and the Hobo Man*. But I still got a long way to go. This is just the first step. Now I got to take the second step.

Luther

My Life in the Old Country



Lidia Nubile

I came to the United States in December 24, 1955. When I got off the boat my father and my cousin Antonietta was waiting for us at the port. Antonietta drove through New York City. The lights were all lit up. Everything looked so beautiful. I felt like that I just stepped into a paradise with all the colors and lights. We drove through the city. My cousin would explain all the buildings and what they were. I felt like Cinderella.

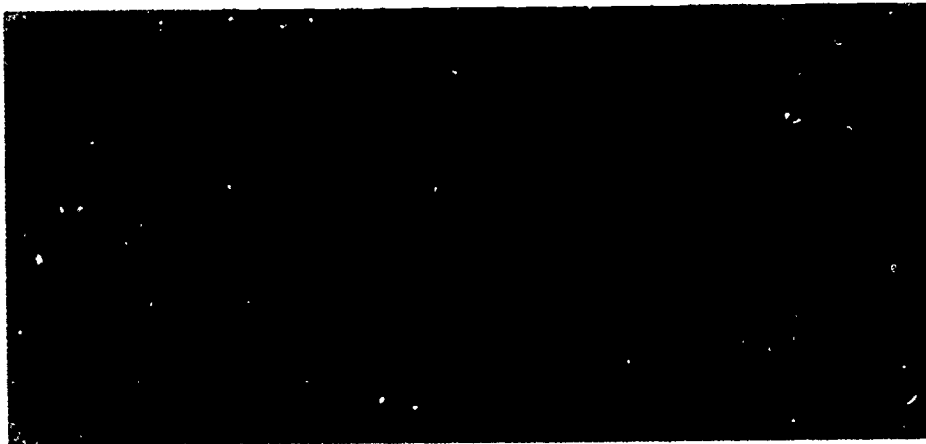
Lidia

4.8 Writing Your Life Story

Purpose

Whether they write their entire life history, a story of one event, or a description of how they are feeling at the moment, a life story seems to be a necessary piece of writing for most people in our program. This activity provides ideas for how groups of students can get started with autobiographical writing and gives some suggestions for follow up activities to expand the writing and to publish it.

Research Notes



Steps

Part A: Introducing Life Stories

1. **A Look at Some Life Stories.** Many students may never have read an autobiography or life story of any kind. Take some time to talk about what a life story is.

Bring in autobiographies and biographies of famous people and read a few excerpts.

Read from writing by new authors. We have found that seeing published life stories by other new writers gives students the confidence to write their own. Read about some "hard times" people have written about; talk about the fact that you don't have to write only about the "good parts."

If you have "published" authors in your program, invite them to tell about the experience of writing their life stories.

2. Kinds of Life Stories. Using the examples on the next page as a guide, talk with students about the various kinds of life stories they might write. Try to bring in a range of samples — from books written by basic beginning students which contain only a few words and lots of illustrations, to complete life histories written by more advanced students. If there are basic beginners in the group, talk with them and their tutors, and briefly mention the possibility of writing an oral history.

3. Connecting Reading and Writing. Encourage people to read some life stories during the planning stages of their own writing. It may give them many ideas for what they want (and don't want) to do in their own writing.

Part B: Getting Started

Getting a Memory on Paper. Getting started is always the most difficult step. Often people believe they can't remember things that happened in their past. If time allows, do some kind of prewriting activity that gives people a chance to remember events in their past. The *Remembering Your Past* section on the next page may give you some ideas. Try to have everyone participate in writing, including teachers and volunteer tutors. After the activity, give people a chance to share stories from their past and to jot down a few words and phrases that will help them remember what to write about later.

Part C: Elements of a Life Story

1. Making Titles and Chapter Headings. Many people may want to write one long piece of writing and then separate it into chapters later. Choose one book by a new writer and show how he or she divided it up.

Look at the title and discuss how it reflects the contents of the book.

What was the starting point? Was it the birth of a child, a first job, a move to a new town or a new country, a death in the family, a childhood incident?

*Look to see how many chapters are in the book. How did the author divide the life story into chapters? Did he or she work chronologically: e.g., *When I Was Born, My Childhood, My School Years, My First Job, My Marriage*, or was the book divided into chapters another way?*

2. The Importance of Publishing. At this point, you may want to briefly touch on different meanings of publishing, such as those described in the next activity.

REMEMBERING YOUR PAST

A Guided Remembering. Have participants sit somewhere where they can relax. They can close their eyes if they choose. Encourage them to take a few deep breaths to relax more. Next, ask them to think back to a time when they were children. Ask these questions slowly, leaving time for memories to come.

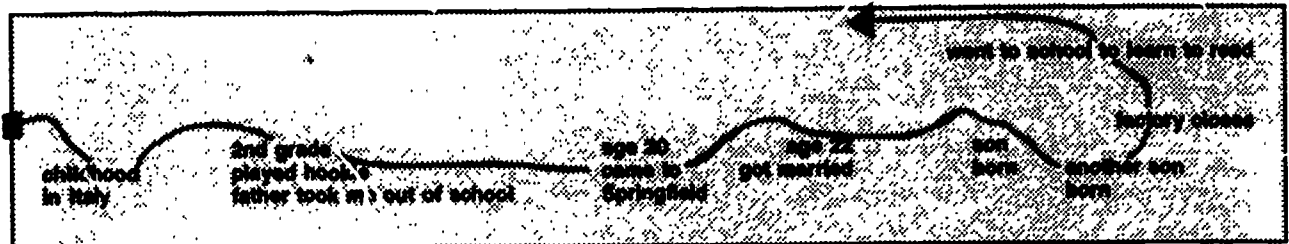
Think about yourself as a child. How old were you in this memory? What did you look like? Where did you live? Who took care of you? Did you have brothers and sisters or cousins around? Imagine each one of your family. Now imagine your activities. What did you do during the day, at school or work. Try to remember one special day. Why was it special? Was it a holiday or just a usual day? What made it special? Who was around you at the time? Can you remember anything they did or said? Can you remember what you felt then? Take a few more seconds to remember anything else about that event and then open your eyes and quickly write down a few words that will help you remember the memory so you can write it down later.

After the guided remembering, people may want to describe their memory to each other. Or, they may want to go off and write about it before they forget their ideas. Give people time to process the activity in comfortable way.

Brainstorm. Have people bring a pencil and paper to this activity. As you name each category, have them write an answer as quickly as possible. Point out beforehand that this exercise is only for remembering. They will not be expected to share what they write with anyone. It doesn't matter if the words are spelled correctly, as long as they understand them. If they can't get the word down, they can draw a picture. Ask them to:

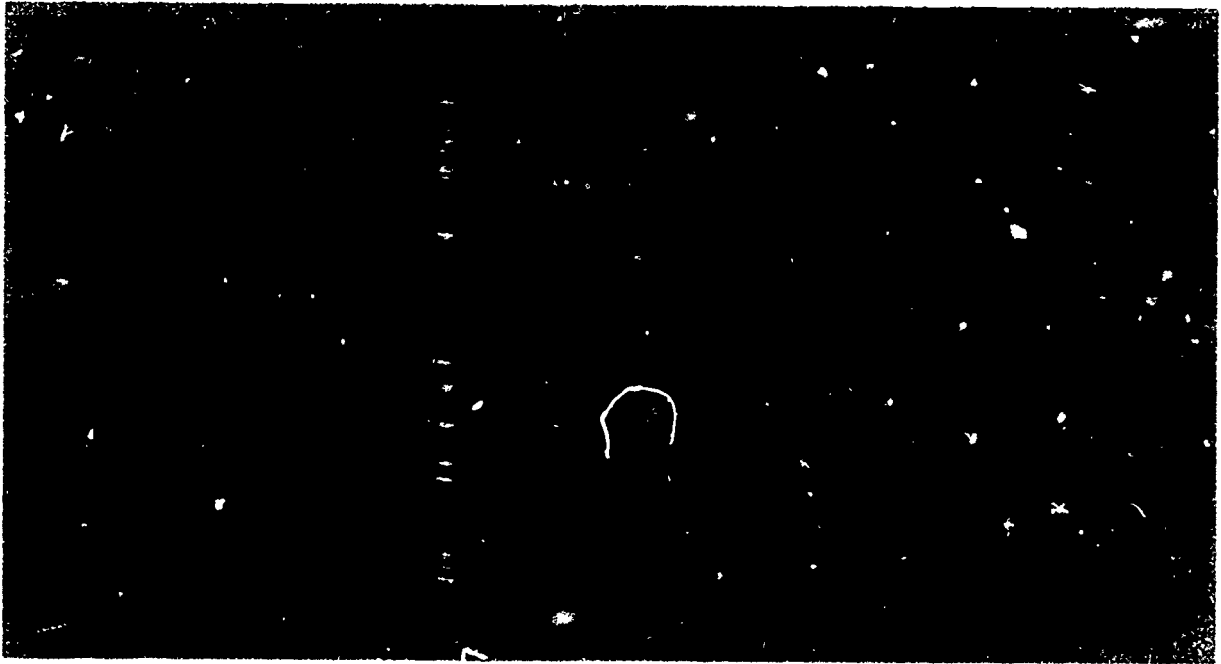
- name three foods you liked as a child*
- name three friends you had as a child*
- name three family members*
- name three places you went as a child*
- name three words that described you as a child*
- name three heroes or heroines you had*
- name one good time you had as a child*
- name a bad time you had*
- name one dream you had as a child.*

Mapping Your Life. Encourage people to draw a "road map" of their lives, similar to the one below, with hills, curves, crossroads, bumpy parts, smooth parts. Draw things by the side of the road to suggest the main events.²³



Family Photographs. Ask people to bring in photos from their past. Have them put them in chronological order. Then, they can write captions under each picture in sequence, to make a "photo story."²⁴

Family tree. Draw a family tree, with roots for parents and grandparents and branches for children and grandchildren. Write a description of each person.



MY NAME IS ROSE



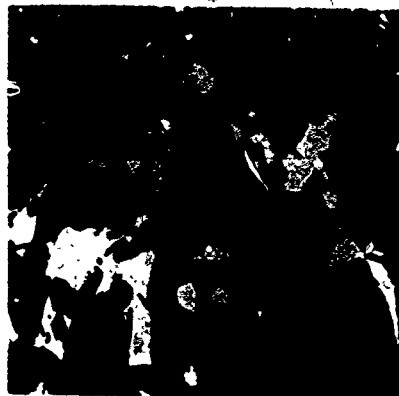
THE NEW START READING SERIES

Rose Diron is 32 years old. She is learning to read and write at East End Literacy in Toronto, Canada. Rose wrote this book for her mother, her aunt, her sisters, and her many friends. "If people read my story, maybe they will talk more about what it is like to get beat up," says Rose. "Maybe, someday, it will stop."

EAST END
LITERACY
PRESS

A17400 732634

I CALL IT THE CURSE!



THE NEW START READING SERIES

This book is about some of the important things women talk about at East End Literacy in Toronto, Canada. We got the idea for this book when Dorothy said: "It is good to know what happens in your body." If this book does not answer a question that you have, please visit your community health centre.

EAST END
LITERACY
PRESS

A17400 732579

East End Literacy Press in Canada and other presses often put a photograph and a short biography of the author on the back of their book.

RAISED UP DOWN SOUTH



THE NEW START READING SERIES

Lee Sheridan lives and works in Toronto, Canada. He is learning to read and write at East End Literacy. In this book, Lee looks back on his life as a child and teenager in the American South. "This book is about things I never talked about before," says Lee. "It feels good to get it off my chest, to free my mind. I hope others can do that too."

Jerry Lee Miller is an artist, and a learner at the St. Christopher House Literacy Program in Toronto.

EAST END
LITERACY

When we first used the Goals List we asked students if they wanted to study for the driver's test -- without knowing how few reading materials were available for beginning readers. Kathy Searle interviewed students -- some who had passed the test and some who hadn't -- and used their stories to write Tina's Story.

TINA and the LEARNERS PERMIT

That night, Tina lay in bed thinking. Everything would be so much easier if she could drive. Right now she felt **HELPLESS**. Yes, that was the word for it: **HELPLESS**. And Tina didn't like that feeling one bit.

When Tina lived in New York, she never thought about it. There were trains and buses that ran all the time. You didn't need to drive. You could go everywhere you needed.

But here it was different. There were only a few buses, and they stopped running at nine o'clock at night. Most people drove in cars.

Tina knew she could get a car. She was saving for one already. Put it wasn't easy to get a license. You had to pass a written test. Tina wasn't sure she could do it. She was afraid to try.

Then Tina thought of all the things she could do if she could drive. She could take her mother to the doctor's. She wouldn't have to pay for a taxi. She could save so much time. She could get to places the buses didn't go.

Tina thought about the job in the new store. It paid more, but it was too far away. If only she had her driver's license!

...a story with some ideas
about how to get your Drivers' License



By Kathy Searle

4.9 Collective Writing and Publishing

Purpose

One of the most difficult, but perhaps most fruitful kind of writing is that which is undertaken as a group. Writing as a group can help people name and discuss common problems and goals and gain support for their own interests. This activity suggests some ways to introduce participants to the idea of doing a collective writing and how to use a problem-posing approach to choosing a topic and tips on publishing.

Research Notes



Steps

Stages of a Collective Writing Process

Ideally, collective writing grows out of a common problem, need or interest of members of the group. It may be initiated by a teacher, by volunteers or by students, but it is most effective when all the members feel it is addressing an immediate need of some kind. Once a decision is made to think about a collective writing, the project goes through several stages. Read over the stages as described here and summarize them for students and tutors.

Stage 1: Finding a Common Purpose

The first time the group meets together, they need to decide on a purpose for getting together to write as a group. The purpose may be as simple as producing an "in-house" newsletter or as complex as deciding how to write about and publicize the problems related to the spread of AIDS in their community.²⁸ During this stage they might:

- a. **Brainstorm possible purposes** for a group writing. After all the topics have been discussed, vote or find some other way to reach a consensus on the purpose of the writing.

b. Pose the purpose as a problem Reframe the purpose into the form of a question. (For example, if the purpose of the activity is to publicize the need for funds to keep the literacy program alive, reframe the purpose into a question such as: "How can we keep the literacy program alive?") Discuss the problem. The questions below, suggested by the work of Paulo Freire, may help. ²⁷

What exactly is the problem?
Why is it a problem to you?
What do you think are the causes of this problem?
What can/should be done about the problem?

c. Discuss how writing can help Discuss ways in which it might be helpful to write about this problem:

How can writing about it help?
Who would be the audience?
What would be the best way to reach this audience (a flyer, a newsletter, a collection of writings, a poster)?
Do we need more information?
Do we need more discussion and reflection?

Stage 2: Developing an Organizational Plan

Once a decision about *what* to write has been made, the group needs to decide *how* they'll go about the planning and writing process. They need to decide questions such as:

How much time can realistically be devoted to the project? Is there a deadline?
Will everyone write about the same topic or will people cover different parts of the writing?
How will teachers and tutors be involved?
How will the group build in time for sharing of the writing, discussion, reflection and planning?
Who will decide what writing is included in the final product?
How will the writing be published?
Who will pay the printing costs?

Remind the group to keep in mind that people usually underestimate the time it takes to produce collective writing and help them to set reasonable deadlines. We have found that if too little time is allotted, often just a few people (often teachers) end up making decisions about the final publication.

Stage 3: Researching the Problem

The research stage will vary a good deal depending on the project. In some cases, research will take the form of group discussions similar to those done in individual pre-writing activities. For example, a group putting together a collective publication about what school was like for them may draw primarily on the experiences of the group. On the other hand, a group may need to do a great deal of research. The group who researched the issue of AIDS, for example, collected and read information from the Department of Public Health and many other sources before they decided to write and distribute their own brochure. Other groups may make field trips, invite guest speakers, or watch films as part of their research stage.

Stage 4: Writing and Sharing

The writing and sharing process may take many forms. For example:

A Writing Weekend A project in England arranged for the authors to get childcare and other support so they could spend two weekend days writing and sharing together. Each person went off to write alone and then later, the writings were shared.

Collective Writing One teacher, Ira Shor, tells of how he works with students to first brainstorm a common topic. Next he draws lines on page connecting items that go together, categorizing them into groups. Each group then gets a title. Each of the titled groups become paragraphs which are written together on the board or on newsprint. Finally, the group writes an introduction and conclusion. The whole text is then read aloud, and collectively, corrections and revisions are made.

Regular Writing Workshops In our program, once a collective writing project is begun, people work on it a little every day on an individual basis. Once a week or so they meet together to share and plan. As the deadline draws near, the finished writing and illustrations the writer has suggested are put on a big table in the middle of the room.

Stage 5: Publication

As the deadline grows near, the group should meet to look at all the writings together. Some decisions to be made might include:

Who will do the final editing? Teachers? Volunteers?

How should the writings be grouped together or combined?

Are there some overlapping themes?

What kind of printing and layout will be used?

What kind of illustrations does the group want?

Does the publication need a title? What will it be?

What will the cover look like?

Does the book need an introduction, a table of contents or an index?

How will the authors identify themselves? Will they each print their first and last names? Will the program be identified?

Are there others who need to be thanked or recognized?

Who will take care of seeing the book to the printer?

How many copies will you need?

Stage 6: Celebrating

The time when the book "comes off the press" is a time for celebrating. You may decide to have an "in house" celebration or invite others to a reading of the book as a publicity event. Whatever the circumstances, everyone who contributed should be recognized for their achievements. The event can be made more special with music and food.

Stage 7: Planning What to Do Next

Often a writing project is only the beginning. "Going public" with writing often leads to more discussion with a wider group of people, plans for community meetings or activities and possibly ideas for further writing.

USING THE COMPUTER FOR PUBLISHING

In our program, students learn to use computers as word processors. Many students enjoy composing right on the computer because it's easy to correct mistakes and make changes. Many also like to use the spell checker! In other cases, students write their original pieces with paper and pencil and a teacher types the story into the computer. Once the text is on the computer, here are a few tips:

- **Making Individual Books.** An easy and inexpensive way to make individual books is to use standard 8 1/2 inch by 11 inch paper. Fold the paper in half so the finished pages measure 5 1/2 inches by 8 1/2 inches. Set the margins of the text at about 1 and 1/2 inches wide. Divide the text into 6 inch long segments, 1 segment per page. If you wish, you can add the page number at the bottom of each segment. Once the text is printed out, cut each segment. Figure out how many pages, with illustrations, you will need. Fold the number of blank pages you need. Cut and paste the segments of text onto the pages. For the final copies you may want to print the cover on brightly colored card stock. You'll need a long stapler to staple the pages in the center. Most copy shops have them.
- **Clip Art.** Many students like to use computer clip art for their publications. (Often choosing the clip art is a good literacy lesson since students can read the title of the clip art as they see it.) Show them how to make borders and select the size of the pictures they need.
- **Photographs.** Many times students will be disappointed with the quality of photocopied photographs in their books. Before they decide to use them, show students what they will look like after copying. Choose photos with high contrast. If they are too dark, you may be able to cut around the copy to make a profile. Clip art borders around the photos sometimes make them look better. Of course, photos can also be screened by a printer, which produces a much higher quality print, but this is expensive.
- **Font Size.** If you have a variety of font sizes for your computer, print them out so students can decide which ones they like. Usually plain type, such as Helvetica, is easiest to read.
- **Typing in Phrases.** In making publications for beginners, try to break each line according to idea phrases so they will be easier to read. For example, Tina climbed/ the stairs/ to her apartment./ She took out her key/ and opened the door. Try to limit the number of words on each page.

A SAMPLER OF COLLECTIVE WRITING PROJECTS

In-House Newsletters Many literacy programs, like ours, publish in-house newsletters. Some newsletters we know of are *The Big Apple Journal* (New York City), *The Ladder* (Washington, D.C.), *Literacy Project Writes* (Greenfield, Massachusetts), *The Writer's Voice* (Toronto), and *Turning Our Lives Around* (Springfield, Massachusetts).

Upon Reflection In 1986, a group of new women authors at the Drop-In Education and Advice Center in Leeds, England met together for International Women's Day. They decided to write a book of stories, poems and articles about their experiences as women. "We all came with educational needs, which was our meeting point," the women said, "but we soon found that we had more fundamental ideas in common as women, apart from never getting started educationally the first time."²⁸

Every Birth It Comes Different is a collection of accounts of the experience of childbirth by students and tutors at Hackney Reading Centre. Most are by women who write about their own experience of giving birth; there are three accounts by fathers and one by a woman witnessing a friend's labor.²⁹

Working Together is a photonovella that came about through a meeting of Students for Action, a group of adult beginning learners at East End Literacy in Toronto, Canada. The book deals with problems adult beginning readers encounter with filling out different kinds of forms: a lease, a magazine offer to win money, a form to open a bank account and forms at the hospital.³⁰

What We're About by students and tutors at the Cambridge House Literacy Scheme deals with reasons participants had for coming to the Scheme, ways of working together and the difference the program has made in their lives. It was written to encourage others to come to the Scheme.³¹

Triangular Minds: Black Youth On Identity was published through the Community Education Afro-Caribbean Language Unit in Manchester, England. It is an anthology of writings by Afro-Caribbean youth. The book contains themes such as being young and black, schooling, the Rasta Response, sound systems, fitting into white society and British Black English. The book was written by two support groups of about 10 people each, ranging in age from 17 to 35. Later, after the book was published, members participated in community meetings to look for funds to promote further Afro-Caribbean projects.³²

Need I Say More calls itself a "literary magazine of adult student writings." It is published by the Publishing for Literacy Project which is jointly sponsored by the Public library of Brookline and the Adult Literacy Resource Center in Boston. Learners from all over the city contributed their work to an editorial committee that selected what was published.³³

Getting There: Producing Photostories with Immigrant Women was a joint venture between three outside researchers and Canadian immigrant women who expressed a need to talk about their problems in finding jobs. The authors talk about the strengths and contradictions in producing collective writing.³⁴

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31. Available from: Cambridge House Literacy Scheme, 131 Camberwell Road, London SE5 0HF.
32. Available from: The Manchester Free Press, Bombay House, 59 Whitworth St., Manchester, UK M7 3WT.
33. Contact the: Business Office, Boston Public Library, 666 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116.
34. Barndt, D. et al., ibid.

1. **The Ecuador Project:** Discusses the basic goals, philosophy and methodology of a rural nonformal education project
2. **Conscientizacao and Simulation Games:** Discusses Paulo Freire's education philosophy and the use of simulation games for consciousness raising
3. **Hacienda:** Describes a board game simulating economic and social realities of the Ecuadorian Sierra
4. **Mercado:** Describes a card game which provides practice in basic market mathematics
5. **Ashton-Warner Literacy Method:** Describes a modified version of Sylvia Ashton-Warner's approach to literacy training used in Ecuadorian villages.
6. **Letter Dice:** Describes simple, participatory letter fluency games which involve illiterates in a non-threatening approach to literacy
7. **Bingo:** Describes bingo-like fluency games for words and numerical operations
8. **Math Fluency Games:** Describes a variety of simple games which provide practice in basic arithmetic operations
9. **Letter Fluency Games:** Describes a variety of simple games which provide practice in basic literacy skills
10. **Tabacundo - Battery Powered Dialogue:** Describes uses of tape recorder for feedback and programming in a rural radio school program
11. **The Facilitator Model:** Describes the facilitator concept for community development in rural Ecuador
12. **Puppets and the Theatre:** Describes the use of theatre, puppets and music as instruments of literacy and consciousness awareness in a rural community
13. **Fotonovella:** Describes development and use of photo-literature as an instrument for literacy and consciousness raising
14. **The Education Game:** Describes a board game that simulates inequities of many educational systems
15. **The Fun BUS:** Describes an NFE project in Massachusetts that used music, puppetry and drama to involve local people in workshops on town issues
16. **Field Training Through Case Studies:** Describes the production of actual village case studies as a training method for community development workers in Indonesia
17. **Participatory Communication in Nonformal Education:** Discusses use of simple processing techniques for information sharing, formative evaluation and staff communication
18. **Bintang Anda - A Game Process for Community Development:** Describes an integrated community development approach based on the use of simulation games
19. **Using Consultants for Materials Development:** Describes an approach to selecting and utilizing short-term consultants for materials development
20. **Designing and Using Simulations for Training:** Outlines steps involved in designing and utilizing simulations. Presents two simulations in detail
21. **Q-Sort as Needs Assessment Technique:** Describes how a research technique can be adapted for needs assessment in nonformal education
22. **The Learning Fund - Income Generation Through NFE:** Describes a program which combines education and income generation activities through learning groups
23. **Game of Childhood Diseases:** Describes a board game which addresses health problems of young children in the Third World
24. **Road-to-Birth Game:** Describes a board game which addresses health concerns of Third World women during the prenatal period
25. **Discussion Starters:** Describes how dialogue and discussion can be facilitated in community groups by using simple audio-visual materials
26. **Record Keeping for Small Rural Businesses:** Describes how facilitators can help farmers, market sellers and women's groups keep track of income and expenses
27. **Community Newspaper:** Describes how to create and publish a community-level newspaper in a participatory fashion
28. **Skills Drills:** Describes how to make and use a simple board game for teaching basic math and literacy skills.