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ABSTRACT

This journal provides a forum for adult educators to express their ideas on adult literacy. The following articles are included: "Teaching Moments: Teaching People, Not Lessons" (Patricia Wild); "Whole Language: Implications for the Adult Learner" (Jeri Gillin); "Gatekeepers or Advocates?" (Rosie Wickert); "Writing with Teen Mothers: I Have Something to Say' (Kim Gerould); "Endings Take Time: Moments in the Writing Process" (Lucia Nunez); "Girl Talk" (Patricia Sandoval); "'Teacher, You Decide': Curriculum Development in Workplace ESL (English as a Second Language)" (Johan Uvin); "Adult Dyslexics Speak Out about Dyslexia" (John Gibbons et al.); "Right Brain, No Pain ESL" (Molly Flannery, Robert Browning); "Teaching Lesson" (Marty Kingsbury); "Adult Education: Self-Determination or Self-Delusion?" (Molly Mead); "Integrating Work and Learning in the SFCC (San Francisco Conservation Corps)" (Robert Burkhardt); "Using Bilingual Tutors and Non-Directive Approaches in ESL: A Follow-up Report" (Anthony D'Annunzio); "Teaching Literacy ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages): Notes from a Program for Displaced Workers" (Jonathan Skaff); "No More Reading Abuse" (Bridget O'Hagin); and "The Rocky Road from Frustration to Fulfillment: The Saga of a Volunteer" (Kimball Jones). (NLA)

CONNECTIONS

A Journal of Adult Literacy

Spring 1991

Volume IV

Connections: A Journal of Adult Literacy

Connections is a publication of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute, a joint project of the University of Massachusetts/Boston and Roxbury Community College, funded primarily by the Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education, the City of Boston's EDIC/Department of Jobs and Community Services, and the Massachusetts Department of Education. The A.L.R.I. was created in 1983 as part of the Boston Adult Literacy Initiative. The purpose of the A.L.R.I. is to provide training, technical assistance and other resources to Boston-area adult basic education programs. Our address is 989 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215, and our phone number is (617) 782-8956.

Connections is intended to provide an opportunity for adult educators, particularly those in the Boston area, to communicate with colleagues, both locally and nationwide. Adult literacy/adult basic education practitioners need a forum to express their ideas and concerns and to describe their students, their programs, and their own accomplishments; we are glad to be able to continue providing this opportunity.

We welcome your reactions to this journal or to any of the articles in it. We also want to strongly encourage teachers, counselors, administrators, aides, volunteers, students—everyone involved in this field—to think about sharing your experiences, your ideas, your problems and solutions with others by writing for the next issue of *Connections*. Please contact us; we'd be glad to talk with you about your ideas for an article.

The articles included here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute or its sponsoring institutions or funders. Permission must be obtained from the A.L.R.I. before reprinting an article in another publication or for widespread distribution.

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Introduction

Steve Reuys

Welcome to the fourth volume of *Connections: A Journal of Adult Literacy*. Since we at the A.L.R.I. are never sure, due to budget uncertainties and other concerns, whether each previous issue of *Connections* will turn out to have been its last, we're always especially pleased to be able to offer a next volume to our readers. Since it's not something we can count on, each time it does happen (even if it's not quite as frequently as we'd like) brings a special feeling of relief and satisfaction.

As with all three previous volumes, our purpose here is to present a collection of articles written primarily by adult literacy practitioners, for adult literacy practitioners (and, in both cases, particularly, but not exclusively, practitioners in the Boston area). We seek articles that are interesting, readable, useful, and which, taken together, reflect the diversity of thought and practice in the field.

For this issue, we were fortunate to be able to do something new: We offered a number of $100 honoraria to writers whose pieces were submitted by a certain deadline and were selected for use by our Editorial Committee. Many, but not all, of the authors represented here received honoraria; a number of pieces, while selected for publication, were submitted after the deadline and were thus not honorarium-eligible.

At this point, we'd like to provide readers with (a) very brief introductions to all the articles in this issue (presented alphabetically by author) and (b) some thoughts on the "connections" we see among them.

Robert Burkhardt, Jr., writes from California about the innovative ways in which the San Francisco Conservation Corps, a public-service employment program for young adults, manages to weave an eclectic variety of learner-centered educational activities into and around their job training/work projects.

Anthony D'Annunzio contributes from Philadelphia a follow-up report on the success of the project he first described in the previous issue of *Connections*, a project to explore the use of bilingual peer tutors and various learner-centered teaching approaches (such as language experience) in working with an ESL Cambodian refugee and immigrant population.

Molly Flannery and Robert Browning describe some creative approaches they have used in teaching ESL, approaches that attempt to work around students' blocks to language learning by engaging the "right-hand" side of their brains through music, language play, rhythm, visual images, and physical activity.

The three articles by **Kim Gerould, Lucía Nuñez, and Patricia Sandoval** constitute something of a package, which they suggest could be called "Writing with Teen Mothers." These articles look at different aspects of the work done in teaching writing at a center for pregnant and parenting teens in Holyoke, Mass., work that is rooted in the students' own lives and in the "writing as process/writing as communication" approach to teaching.

Six adult learners (**John Gibbons, Bob Hannigan, Cheryl Harris, Lorraine Russell, Ron White, and Elaine Williams**) collaborate with **Janna Oddliefson** to talk about what being diagnosed as dyslexic has meant in their lives and about how this diagnosis has helped them achieve success in learning to read and write.

Jeri Gillin describes and argues in favor of what is called the "whole language" approach to teaching reading and writing, listening and speaking, an approach that emphasizes language as communication rather than as a set of sub-skills that must be learned separately and then assembled piece-by-piece.

Kimball Jones shows us the difficulties, frustrations, and eventual successes he experienced while seeking to volunteer in the area of adult literacy. His article well illustrates what might be called the "fallacy of volunteerism"—the idea that the use of volunteers

alone can provide a simple, low- or no-cost answer to this country's literacy problems. Even leaving aside the basic need for funded literacy programs with paid, permanent full- and part-time staff, Jones' experience suggests the effort and resources that are also required just to make a system of literacy volunteers function efficiently and effectively. Contrary to the common public perception, the adult literacy "system" does not have an immediate, unlimited capacity for receiving, training, placing, and supporting volunteers.

Marty Kingsbury chooses poetry to evoke her experience as a teacher working with young adults in an urban environment dominated by images of overt and covert violence.

Molly Mead reflects on her experiences as a teacher and, from this, poses the conflict she sees between the ideas of two leaders in adult education theory—Malcolm Knowles, who gives paramount importance to student choice in the learning process, wherever that may lead, and Paulo Freire, who emphasizes the role of the teacher in helping guide students to develop a critical relationship with the world around them.

Bridget Suarez O'Hagin tells how she discovered that reading published stories—in this case, however, not stories that reflect the reality of the students' lives, but rather "exotic fairy tales"—helped Latino teenagers overcome their dislike of reading.

Jonathan Skaff draws from his recent experience as an ESOL teacher to present both some general principles and some specific methodology in teaching literacy and "workforce" ESOL. (Though "ESL"—English as a Second Language—is the term most commonly used in the Boston area, Jon argues instead for the term "ESOL"—English for Speakers of Other Languages—as being more accurate.)

Johan Uvin brings us into the world of workplace literacy by chronicling the evolution of curriculum development at one particular workplace education project, focusing especially on their efforts to increase the "learner-centeredness" of their program within the worker/employment context.

Rosie Wickert in Australia urges us all to examine the roles we play as literacy teachers; do we face our students, our colleagues, and the wider world in the limited and limiting role of "gatekeeper" or in the more positive and empowering role of "advocate"?

Patricia Wild talks about her experiences as a teacher and tells how people—her students and the reality of their lives—have taken the place of lessons and lesson plans at the core of her teaching, and she discusses some of the skills adult education teachers really need.

What are some of the connections between the different pieces that make up this very diverse set of articles? Here is one person's view of the web constructed by our 16 articles:

- Not surprisingly, various aspects of learning and teaching with regard to literacy and language, reading and writing are dealt with by many of the authors, including Skaff, Sandoval, O'Hagin, Nuñez, Gillin, Gibbons *et al.*, Gerould, D'Annunzio, and Burkhardt.
- The reading debate is explored by Gillin, who writes in support of the whole language philosophy, and by Gibbons *et al.*, who argue that, for persons with dyslexia, a highly-sequenced, phonics-based approach is necessary.
- Teaching ESL (or ESOL) is the concern of articles by Uvin, Skaff, and Flannery/Browning.
- Thoughts on teaching in general and on the role of the teacher in adult education are found in Wild, Wickert, Uvin, Mead, and Kingsbury.
- Working with populations in which a majority of the students speak languages other than English as their first language is discussed by Uvin, Skaff, Sandoval, O'Hagin, Nuñez, Gerould, Flannery/Browning, and D'Annunzio.
- Programs that work with teenagers and young adults provide the context for articles by Sandoval, O'Hagin, Nuñez, Kingsbury, Gerould, and Burkhardt.
- Uvin, Skaff and Burkhardt all deal with what can be called "workforce" literacy, though one's setting is in the workplace, another deals with "dislocated" workers, and the third focuses on a youth service corps.
- Individual and programmatic processes of change, of evolution, that they have gone and are going through as teachers are portrayed by Wild, Uvin, O'Hagin, Mead, and Burkhardt.
- The articles by Wild, Uvin, Skaff, Sandoval, Nuñez, Gillin, Gerould, D'Annunzio, and Burdhardt all present philosophies and strategies which affirm and emphasize the importance of linking students' lives outside the classroom to their lives and learning inside the classroom, while O'Hagin interestingly reports that her students were captivated by fairy tales and folk tales, not by stories that "reflected their own lives."
- How the arts—here, specifically drama and music—can be used effectively in ABE or ESL classrooms is described by Sandoval, Nuñez, Gerould, Flannery/Browning, and Burkhardt.

As you read through the articles yourself, we hope you will find more connections, both among the articles themselves and between the articles and your own work in adult literacy.

Steve Reuys is Staff Development Coordinator at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute.

Teaching Moments: Teaching People, Not Lessons

Patricia Wild

The family shelter is housed in a Baptist church; our classes are held in a spacious room usually reserved for choir practice. It is a beautiful if somber room with a definite ecclesiastical decor with its dark oak wainscotting, amber light shining through the stain-glass windows, and ranks of crimson choir robes hung beside a grand piano. Two women from the shelter and I sit at a highly varnished oak table. One woman, muttering to herself in English and Spanish, wrestles with a column of numbers while the other decodes a bar graph.

"I never knew that," says the fledgling mathematician, pointing to a blackboard in a corner of the room. Someone (who?) has written "Carries: blood, vaginal secretion, breast milk." It is this last notation, carelessly written in chalk, she finds surprising. So does her companion.

It is a teaching moment not to be denied. We put aside the books and launch into a lengthy, forthright discussion on AIDS and how to protect oneself from the horrifying disease. Only when the conversation wanes do we return to our graphs and addition problems. As the two women continue their independent work, I note (and not for the first time) how very differently I teach these days. And how very grateful I am to have "discovered" the adult education world.

When I began teaching, in those heady "guns and butter" days of Lyndon Johnson, when the war in Vietnam and the War on Poverty were being fought simultaneously, I taught in a New York City public school which received massive federal support. An army of personnel—administrators, specialists, bilingual community outreach workers, etc.—worked beside classroom teachers. One vice-principal's only responsibility was to train new teachers.

For me, a very green teacher, this meant endless hours writing lesson plans. How I struggled with them! How I labored to discover the salient point of each lesson, the key questions to excite, inform, inspire. (I said I was green!) How meticulously I wrote all this wisdom out in those tiny lesson plan boxes despite my notoriously illegible handwriting. And what incredible pride I took when Mr. Miller, the vice-principal assigned to train me, would occasionally (very occasionally) write "Good job!" in the margin.

Now my preparation takes the form of worry ("Is Mary pregnant?"), collecting appropriate materials, and locating corresponding lessons in the variety of materials already available at SCALE (i.e. Which GED book explains signed numbers most clearly? Which book offers a reinforcement exercise in a skill just mastered?) In each context, be it teaching ABE Math, GED, or, in the case of the instruction at the shelter where the funding source has not mandated what I am to teach, I respond to the strength of each individual. I teach PEOPLE, these days, not lessons.

What do I consider appropriate materials? Besides the obvious dictionary, thesaurus, and atlas, I am always on the look-out for adult learner books on health issues, pre-natal care, and stories of empowerment. And EXAMPLES of empowerment. Recently I shopped in the print and poster department of a local department store ("Biggest selection in New England!") to find reasonably priced posters depicting women of color, or posters exhorting women's strength. To my horror and amazement, I discovered that the icons available in 1990 are rock singers and movie stars, preferably blonde. (The Somerville Public Library did help me locate a Whoopi Goldberg poster admonishing all of us to "Read!" Not exactly what I had in mind.) This admittedly brief search would seem to indicate we've got a long way to go, baby.

Posters are wonderful because they're just THERE. A book casually resting (but in fact, carefully placed) on a desk can serve the same purpose. A health book written in the early 80's which never mentioned AIDS nevertheless proved useful when an adult learner, a woman who began having children at age fifteen,

discovered a simple line drawing in it depicting the female reproductive system. When I noticed she'd return to that particular page again and again, it occured to me that perhaps there were more gaps in her learning than I'd been prepared to understand. And that the moment-to-moment method I employ requires constant evaluation.

This holistic approach requires other skills, as well. One is a willingness to let go of the usual central, indispensable I-have-all-the-answers role of teacher. Clearly, things will come up that I can't answer. That green teacher struggling with her lessons plans in 1966 would have been mortified to admit she hadn't anticipated how a lesson turned out or that she didn't know something. A few years down the road, it's becoming easier to be human.

Another skill is having as clear an understanding as is possible of The Big Picture, i.e., what skills should be mastered in what order. For although I relish teaching people, I acknowledge that these people are functioning in a world which makes requirements of them. They must pass certain tests in order to move along through life. And as imperfect as these tests may be, I do my students no favors if I cannot adequately prepare them to pass those tests. And because the newly revised GED now concentrates on such skills as analysis, synthesis, and inference, I have to figure out ways to teach those skills. Or that the new GED test is a lot about algebraic notation and I'd better find a way (never, ever easy) to incorporate this alien form of writing, this strange and intimidating symbolic language into all my instruction.

A third skill is a sense of timing. One parent of a special-needs child is complaining about the quality of services available in her community. Another parent offers advice, gives names, and quite clearly possesses superior knowledge on the subject. But this is an ABE Math class! Neither student knows her times tables! How long do I let this conversation continue? If we are to acknowledge the whole person we are teaching, we must take into account the emotional baggage each adult learner brings to class. And honor it. But be able to gracefully suggest that these times of sharing and information-pooling must, by necessity, be limited.

We live in a world which celebrates the feats of superstars, men and women of incredible ability and talent. Those simple acts of courage and achievement performed by ordinary men and women go largely unrecorded and unrecognized. No one will ever get on the cover of *People* magazine for mastering long division. And yet it is these simple, incremental skills we in adult education must acknowledge. When a student completes his or her GED or ADP, SCALE invites the graduates to a wonderful awards night. But what of the student who will never achieve a GED? Or the student who, after months of struggle, finally masters a particular skill? I am beginning to think that a necessary part of the teaching method I espouse ought to be some student-generated means of recording success. For me, certainly, my journal has been tremendously helpful in keeping track of where I've been and where I think I'm going. Perhaps some kind of journal-keeping for adult learners could reinforce a sense of progress. And, just maybe, the kind of seemingly hit-or-miss instruction the student receives could, over time, reveal itself as having form and purpose. Maybe. I intend to test this theory in the future. Stay tuned.

Meanwhile I just feel grateful to be brought into daily contact with the men and women I encounter through SCALE, both students and colleagues. After all these years, I finally found my niche.

Patricia Wild is a part-time ABE Math and GED teacher for Somerville's SCALE program. Some of her teaching takes place at the Mystic Housing Project and at a family shelter in Somerville.

Whole Language: Implications for the Adult Learner

Jeri Gillin

Whole Language has become a popular method of reading and language arts instruction in schools across the United States. But while many educators enthusiastically endorse whole language for children from nursery through high school, comparatively little has been done to bring whole language into the realm of adult education. For the adult learner, whole language may be the key to unlocking the reading and writing processes.

In *The Psychology Of Reading*, Eleanor J. Gibson and Harry Levin have indicated that "When teaching a complex task it is preferable to start training on the task itself, or on a close approximation to it rather than giving training on each component skill independently and then integrating them." (pg. 324). In other words, learning psychology tells us that we learn from wholes to parts; we can't understand 3 + 3 if we have no concept of 6. Yet most traditional reading programs choose to ignore this concept. Lessons usually follow a pattern of learning first letters, then words, sentences, and finally, stories. Whole language reverses these sequential steps; students are immediately taught to comprehend and appreciate stories, and to then work toward individual letter competence. It recognizes that words in isolation are meaningless, and that the "meaning" we assign stems from our understanding of the situation at hand. For example, the word "read" cannot be identified or pronounced as either "reed" or "red" until it has been placed within the context of a sentence. What purpose, then, is served by teaching it as an individual vocabulary word?

Just as babies don't learn language by learning about language, students don't become literate by learning about literacy; they learn to read and write by actually reading and writing. For this reason, whole language does not teach English as isolated vocabulary, or phonics, or grammar units, but as an all encompassing umbrella, under which grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, thinking, and reasoning skills freely mix together.

What, Then, Is "Whole Language"?

Whole language is simply what its name implies: language which is whole, language which is complete. It is not phonics drills, vocabulary tests, comprehension exercises, or spelling lists. It is not a hierarchy of skills and subskills that can be checked off on a chart. It is the realization that human beings possess a need to communicate, and the understanding that literacy helps to fulfill this need.

It is no more difficult to teach using whole language than it is to come into a classroom armed with a week's worth of lesson plans. Whole language aims for individualized learning as opposed to individualized teaching, and instructors who have shifted to whole language have found that it enables them to bridge the gaps between the four components of communication (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Most importantly, it allows them to do so in a manner that encourages students to become active participants in the learning process. Because all aspects of communication are equally important, whole language is a natural method of instruction for the adult learner who has most likely had many life experiences upon which to draw. It focuses upon students strengths, not weaknesses, and uses their own individual experiences as a vehicle to move toward language competence.

Most English speaking adult students have previously been taught using traditional methods of reading instruction, and have not been successful. They have been tested and retested to pinpoint their areas of weakness, but have not been instructed in a manner that capitalizes upon their abilities. Since even "non-readers" are usually able to communicate on an oral/aural level, whole language focuses upon this aspect of communication, using it as a starting point from which to build reading and writing skills. It recognizes that while not everyone learns at the same rate or in the

same style, our need to express ourselves is the common thread that links our differences. Students either write or dictate stories to a teacher or assistant who writes the student's words EXACTLY as they are spoken. Grammar, style, and syntax should not be corrected, as it is imperative that students understand this transition from spoken to written language. These stories become the students' first books, and become the core vocabulary for students' sight words.

Rather than developing a precise lesson plan, complete with worksheets and questions, the whole language teacher approaches the class with a topic that she plans to cover. How far that topic progresses is determined by the interest level of the class, and it is vital that the teacher maintains the flexibility to deviate from her plans if it is in the class interest; her role becomes one of facilitator rather than dictator.

Instead of using a textbook, diligently working from front to back, the teacher makes use of REAL materials that the students encounter in daily life. The possibilities are many; students may read a newspaper or magazine, a TV guide or a brochure from a hotel at the Cape. The teacher leads a discussion of the reading, developing questions designed to help the student find information, rather than "trick" the student and point out what s/he doesn't know. For example, the teacher can ask the student reading the brochure how to make a reservation. Is the phone number for reservations toll-free? How does one recognize a toll-free number? How long in advance should reservations be made? What is the price of a room? Is a deposit required, and are refunds granted? From here it is natural to begin discussing vacations, letting students talk freely about their best and worst vacations. As the students talk, the teacher may list the vacation places mentioned on the board, or on chart paper. Later these can be categorized into vacations for winter or summer, for families or for single people, for relaxation or for people who prefer a lot of activity. The class can talk about transportation to various vacation spots, and about cost factors that influence one's decision making. After a thorough discussion, students can write about the topic; perhaps about a vacation they have already taken, or a fantasy vacation they would like to see in their future. Students can write letters to make room reservations, or simply to request further information. As a class project, students may write to the Chamber of Commerce in the vacation spots of their choice, and share information about each place either orally or in writing.

What is important is that the student is actually involved in a literacy activity; she's not merely filling in blanks in a reading workbook that has no personal relevance. Every lesson has a purpose; stories are read for the meaning they impart, rather than as a means of practicing skills, such as words that end in "tion."

Whole language stresses that every reader is also a writer, and that every writer writes for the purpose of being read. This, again, relates to that underlying philosophy of communication; if something cannot be understood, then no communication has occurred. It is, then, imperative that one is able to derive meaning from another's writing. Therefore, instead of the teacher correcting a student's paper for every spelling, grammatical, and syntactical error, the papers are initially judged by whether they make sense; has meaning been relayed? This is not to say that errors are ignored. They are, instead, used as the foundation of another lesson. If the teacher finds that the students are having difficulty with contractions, then contractions will be the focus of a whole group or small group lesson. If several people need help with compound words, then compound words will be taught at that time. It is crucial to note that the most important difference between whole language and traditional reading instruction is that, in whole language programs, skills are taught as they occur naturally; no scope and sequence charts dictate that compound words can only be taught after contractions are mastered. Skills become part of the process of learning to read and write; they are strategies for obtaining meaning from print, rather than the end product. Because all readers bring parts of themselves into the reading process, reading cannot be viewed as simply the ability to master first A then B; some people may have already mastered B without ever having previously learned A. Whole language teachers regard reading as more than the sum of its parts, and realize that not every individual will learn to read and write in the same way, at the same time.

But whole language does not blanketly condemn existing reading and language arts programs. There are a lot of good materials available, and no teacher has time to re-invent the wheel. Instead, teachers are merely asked to use discretion in their planning. Rather than asking students to fill in the blanks in a workbook, let them write a letter to a character in the story they read. Let them order real objects from mail order catalogs; then let them write a letter to order the same object, pretending the order blank is missing. Instead of underlining the topic sentence in a paragraph, WRITE a topic sentence. A creative method of teaching paragraphing is to write round robin paragraphs, where each student writes a strong topic sentence on a piece of paper, and then passes the paper to the student next to her. The second student adds a sentence to the paragraph and then passes the paper on. This continues until the paper comes back to the original writer, who evaluates whether the added sentences relate to the topic sentence, and then edits the paper accordingly. In all these activities, the goal is to involve the students in the learning process; one doesn't learn to drive a car by

reading about driving, one must actually go out and practice the skill.

As teachers move towards whole language, they will find that their students become more willing to take risks. They will experiment with language, and discover what works and what doesn't. For example, while the statement "It is winding out" is technically incorrect, the student who wrote it had made a sophisticated generalization about the English language; we say "It is raining out," and "It is snowing out," so why not "It is winding out"? This then became the focus of a class lesson on weather words, without the added intimidation of an answer being marked "wrong." As students become more comfortable with whole language, they will begin to look for clarity in their own and in other's writing, and to help each other with mistakes as they appear in daily activities.

THE TRANSITION TO WHOLE LANGUAGE

It is unreasonable to expect that tomorrow you will walk into your classroom and throw away your old materials, determined that you are now going to "do whole language." Good teachers have always incorporated whole language concepts into their programs, so rather than starting something totally new, it is suggested that you begin by modifying your current program.

The first step in any process is one of evaluation. Look honestly at what you now do, and then decide what parts of your program you really like. Don't change that. Then consider which parts of your curriculum do not meet the express goals of helping your students become more literate individuals; this is the part of your program on which to focus.

Listening

Do you spend enough time developing listening skills? Listening and reading are closely related; both are receptive (but not passive) activities. They require thinking, reacting, and a readiness for sounds that allows the student to put words into context. Most of the time adults and children are involved in marginal listening activities; this is what may be termed "hearing," which does not focus on individual sounds. Listening, in a clinical sense, asks the individual to focus on specifics and to react to them accordingly. While approximately 45% of our day is spent listening, it is the skill which receives the least attention in the classroom.

If you find that this is an area that needs attention, put together a plan that calls for more specific listening activities. Listening skills should be addressed at each class meeting. For example:

1. Give a three part oral direction just once, and ask students to complete the task.
2. Orally present factual material that is written at an appropriate grade level and contains at least five major facts (the newspaper is a good source; obituary columns are great, as they present a fact-ridden picture of an individual's achievements). The students should be allowed to take notes if they want to. After the reading is completed, the students should summarize the article, either orally or in writing, with 80-100% accuracy.
3. Read a story that describes a process sequentially, such as a recipe or a woodworking article. Students should then write, from memory, the general process that one should follow to make the item (be forgiving; no one can be expected to remember EVERYTHING!). You are looking for an indication that the student understands the PROCESS, not expecting him to be able to reproduce the PRODUCT perfectly.
4. Vary the students experiences in listening; let them listen to music, films, stories on tape, etc.
5. Provide for individual differences, such as hearing loss. Many older adults, or those who work in noisy environments, may not be able to hear well if not given preferential seating. Similarly, people with slight hearing loss may not be able to adequately distinguish conversation if something as seemingly benign as an air conditioner is on.

Speaking

Every student should speak every day. Speaking is related to writing; both are expressive skills and therefore necessary for an individual to successfully exist within the world today. While formal speaking situations create nervousness in most people, classroom speaking should not provoke this behavior. Students should be allowed to talk conversationally about what interests them: an item in the news, a situation that occurred at work, a health question, etc.. Everyone should be given the opportunity to speak their minds without fear of criticism; debates can be encouraged, but nobody's ideas should be deemed incorrect.

If you are looking for other ways to encourage your students to speak, some of the ESL discussion workbooks that are available from various publishers are excellent. More programmed opportunities for speaking might include:

1. Asking for help. Tell students to imagine themselves lost in a strange city where they cannot find the church where their cousin is getting married. How will they ask for directions?

2. Introductions. Let students introduce themselves to a new neighbor and hold a short conversation.

3. Choose a topic and make a brief report to the class. Topics can vary, depending upon the interests of individual students, and may range from giving information to explaining a process, to expressing (and defending) an opinion.

Writing

Every student should be required to write daily, and journal writing remains a popular method of encouraging students to engage in non-threatening writing tasks. The problem with journal writing is that sometimes it simply gets old; most students have kept a journal at one time or another and so may become bored with them. Others use their journals as daily weather logs; these become tedious for both the reader and the writer VERY quickly. Furthermore, this type of writing doesn't give the teacher an opportunity to provide much feedback after reading a student's entry.

There are numerous solutions to this problem, and teachers should feel free to experiment until they find a daily writing option that is comfortable for them.

1. The Programmed Journal. Students have the option of either writing on their own or choosing a topic suggested by a class member or the teacher. Students should be encouraged to think of topics to present for class writing assignments. Feel free to brainstorm a topic for several minutes (or even most of the class period, if necessary), and occasionally vary this procedure by having an in-depth discussion about the topic at the conclusion of the writing period.

2. Allow students to choose a real-life letter writing situation, similar to one of these:

a) You ordered a pink sweat suit in a size 8 from L.L. Bean. You received a brown sweat suit, size 18. Write a letter to the company explaining the problem and informing them how you would like the situation remedied.

b) You will be vacationing in Nashville, Tennessee, this summer. Write to the Chamber of Commerce requesting information about campgrounds in the area.

c) You are doing research on the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C., and have several questions you would like to have answered. Write a letter requesting the information.

d) You would like to apply for a job at Digital, Shrewsbury. Write a letter requesting an application and information about job availability.

It is important to remember to offer the students a choice of topics whenever possible; it is difficult enough for some people to write without compounding the problem with imposed topics. Students need not always write for the teacher; let them write letters or stories for each other.

Because many students do not understand that what they see on paper is speech written down, they do not realize that what they say can also be written. One way to impress this point upon them is to leave a tape recorder running during an informal time, such as before class or during a break. After the class is over the teacher can transcribe the conversations from the tape into a dialogue format. Students can be given the dialogues to read during the next class meeting, listen to the tape being played back to them, and then follow the assignment up by writing a summary of the conversation. (Of course, students should be told in advance that the tape recorder will be running, and care should be taken to be sure that nothing of a personal nature is used for class purposes.

Reading

I have left reading for last, because reading is at once the most important, and at the same time, the most overtaught of any of the communication skills. While the purpose of this article is not to give in-depth information about reading theory, but to demonstrate how to incorporate reading into the overall curriculum, it is necessary to re-think some of our traditional ideas before proceeding further.

No one learns how to read by studying about reading. Phonics rules can be recited, words can be alphabetized, root words can be underlined, and no reading may have taken place. Reading is a meaning-ridden event; reading occurs when MEANING is transmitted. For example, having been out of school for many years, I may still be able to pronounce the WORDS in a French book, but I cannot claim to be able to READ French unless I understand the ideas behind the words themselves. Because I have only SAID the words, I cannot call myself literate in the French language.

By teaching students the rules of reading, without tying those rules to a concrete, current situation, we teach them not to read, but to recite words. Reciting words may ultimately help them to score well on a word identification test, but it will do little to help them survive in a literate world.

Similarly, encouraging students to read aloud only serves to add another difficult step to an already difficult process. Reading aloud requires students to not only identify each word (with 100% accuracy), but it requires them to also speak the word ("with expression!"), and anticipate what is coming up ahead in

order to syntactically avoid errors (as in read/red, again). Most adults rarely read aloud unless reading to children, because oral reading is the least efficient of any of the reading strategies. Whether we want information or are simply looking for a pleasurable escape, we read SILENTLY. It is not necessary that we read every word in order to find the information we are looking for, or to be able to understand the story we are reading. Therefore, students should be taught from the very beginning to read silently; oral reading should be saved for a quick diagnostic check on a student's pronunciation or reading level. Even then it should be used sparingly by asking the student to choose his/her favorite part of the story to read out loud. This should never be done with every student during one sitting, or it will become little more than standard round robin reading.

Before beginning a story, students should always be given a purpose for their reading: "As you read this story, I would like you to look for the problem that Bill faces, and tell me how he solves it." Students now know what the important information in the story will be, and they can anticipate the plot and its outcome. If using a basal reader, teachers should not feel compelled to require students to answer all the questions in the teacher's manual or on the accompanying ditto sheets. Instead, ask them to get involved in the story: "What would you have done in this situation? Do you agree or disagree with Bill's tactics?", etc. If you are pressured to use the teacher's manual, complete the enrichment exercises first, as these usually provide experiences with literature or expression, and provide the students with an opportunity to expand both their vocabulary and ideas.

When choosing stories for the class to read, it is recommended that they be studied as part of a general thematic unit. A unit on cultural diversity may involve reading folk tales from various countries. Students can discuss the tales, and look for both similarities and differences. They may tell or read a folk tale from their own country to the rest of the group. They can discuss personality traits that are common among folk heroes and explore why these same values are so important to peoples of all cultures. The unit may culminate with students writing their own folk tales, either in groups, with partners, or alone, and binding them into a class book.

A thematic unit such as the one mentioned above may take anywhere from a few class periods to several weeks to develop. Teachers must be aware of indications of students' interest levels and be flexible enough to encourage activities when the level of interest is high and to begin a new topic when interest begins to wane.

Because both teacher and student are actively learning and planning together, the class becomes more alive, more vital. It is, perhaps, this vitality that sets whole language programs apart from others. For adult learners, this can only serve to enhance both their educational progress and their self esteem.

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Gatekeepers or Advocates?

Rosie Wickert

This article, which consists of the author's closing address to the 1988 New South Wales (Australia) Adult Literacy Conference, was first printed in the December 1988 issue of the Literacy Exchange.

I'd like to start with two stories. Last year I attended a meeting of ILSCAE (The International League for Social Commitment in Adult Education) in London. Ettore Gelpi, a wise adult educator based at UNESCO was to spend the evening with us. He asked us who we all were and Ettore watched us as we introduced ourselves in the time honoured way around the table. Introductions over, he rocked back on his chair, spread his hands in despair and beseeched us to reflect on the implications of what we all, without exception, had just done.

"How can I know anything of you?" he said. "How can you claim to align yourself to socially committed adult education, to the potential for change through adult education, if you continue to define yourselves in terms of your occupations." We flinched. "Adult Education is a powerful instrument of division," he said, "and in this way, you are maintaining the dominant cultural ideology of marginality." The message in this story—we are not thinking.

The second story relates to a management workshop I recently attended. The workshop was to introduce managers of adult education organisations to some planning strategies. One of these, SWOT, involves examining actual and potential Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Irrespective of our political hue, we each identified government as the major threat to planning adult education. A subsequent election in NSW has served to emphasise the point. The message—we in adult literacy are disorganised and when faced with a "threat" we find ourselves overwhelmed and unprepared. Gelpi said that night in London, "We cannot be afraid or we will feel unprepared to move."

Barry Jones, M.P., in his speech to the delegates of this literacy conference underlined the point. He told us that there is only one group in Canberra less effective at lobbying than teachers, and that is scientists. He warned us of the danger of thinking of advocacy as one of the "black arts." "Get your act together," he told us, "for what is democracy if you don't use your politicians?" Gelpi has said elsewhere (1986) that education is a very stable commodity and "the number of merchants in education is increasing very fast." Public education may well lose out by default if we don't get our act together.

Barry Jones' talk reminded me of Helen Gribble's article, "When Politicians Shrink to Normal Size." I'd like to share two of her stories with you. The first is the old story of the anonymous widow, the second is the story of Helen's first step as a "hitchhiker along the corridors of power."

> The Anonymous Widow
> Once upon a time there was a magistrate in a town of whom it was said, "He did not fear God and had no respect whatsoever for other people." There was a widow in the town who kept coming to him and saying, "Please protect me from the man who is trying to ruin me." For a long time he refused because he didn't care whether she was ruined or not but she was very persistent. Eventually he said, "Well, I don't fear God and I have no respect for people but this woman is such a nuisance, I'm going to give a judgement in her favour. If I don't, her continual visits will be the death of me."

> The Shrinking Politician
> Earlier this year I was standing just inside the doorway of the not exactly intimate hall of our Victorian Parliament, waiting to meet an in-

fluential Government member. I felt humble and timid in the face of the mighty legislative processes it hallows. Then across the hall hurried a well known politician from the previous Government consulting his watch and looking very like the White Rabbit. As he passed from sight one of the Victorian Adult Literacy Council members I was with looked at the retreating back of this very slightly built and remarkably short ex-Minister we were seeing in the flesh for the first time and said, "He's supposed to be seven feet tall." This put into words my own feelings of mild shock. (Gribble, 1982)

As Helen says, there are lessons to be learnt from these stories.

One lesson that will be the theme of the remainder of this talk is that YOU can be doing a great deal of advocacy as a literacy worker. To be sure, Literacy Councils and other professional organisations are busy working on your behalf but our effectiveness depends on the voice of literacy "out there" and you can give support to the cause in all sorts of ways. Begin by asking yourself—Am I a gatekeeper or an advocate? How can I tell?

Gatekeepers, albeit often unwittingly, are concerned about people fitting in, about social control and order. As literacy teachers, they see their role as teaching someone to read and write, not necessarily to think or question. At the classroom level we find evidence of this in "the uninspired, routine drilling of literacy on an animal training model, the 'exercise sheets' and 'parrot fashion' mode which persists because 'this kind of teaching is a great way to control and keep good order.' It is often the case of divide up the work into bite-sized exercises and conquer, from the teacher's point of view." (Boomer, 1988:6)

At the macro level "such literacy means that the ruling classes and the mind benders can more easily exercise social control over the bulk of the populace who are complacent in the knowledge that they can read and write enough to get by and be comfortable because they are largely unaware that they are being manipulated—just literate enough to receive the message". (Boomer, 1976:128)

What do gatekeepers do?

- They produce non-thinkers, factory fodder if you like.
- They subscribe to the "literacy myth" that literacy is the answer to your problems.
- They restrict exploration of knowledge to that of the dominant culture because they obligingly use teaching materials produced within and approved of by that culture. They keep themselves and their students in the dark. They control the curriculum.
- They subscribe to the myth of cultural deprivation—they believe there is really only one culture and that those who do not share its codes and customs are inevitably deprived.
- Thus they subscribe to notions of standardisation, of measuring against the "norm."
- And as the inevitable corollary to all this, they will accept unreasonable educational demands because they have no way of rejecting them. They are acted upon.

The power of the gatekeeper teacher is the irony of ensuring that they restrict the students to their own (the teacher's) level of powerlessness. They work to maintain the status quo.

It is my contention that effective literacy teachers must act as advocates. Advocates have responsibilities to their students, to their colleagues and to the profession.

As advocates you can:

- Find out about the worlds of your students. Don't make assumptions. Let the students tell you.
- Take a wider picture and use what you see. For example—find out from your students just what the impact of charging fees for TAFE [Technical and Further Education] courses will be, and inform your colleagues. Take action from an informed basis and encourage the students to do the same. Work with them. For too long teachers have been seen to act only to protect their own interests. Such teachers are not advocates.
- Become aware of your own expectations of literacy levels in all parts of your life. Use Plain English and advocate its use. Don't confront people with language and avoid alienating structures of language. Demystify. Reflect on how you feel when confronted with unfamiliar language.
- Beware the reverse "halo-effect." Don't patronise. Build on strength, don't dwell on weaknesses, aim to develop independent learners.
- Know why you do what you do with your students. Know what you are aiming for. For example—What do you think of as a "good" piece of writing and why? Examine your values and assumptions.
- Sell your successes, go public with your achievements, educate and inform your colleagues, politicians, the media.
- Involve your community, be it at work or at home, in the issues of adult literacy.

• Become as knowledgeable as you can about the issues. Explore your dilemmas. Arm yourself with answers, perspectives, questions. Use them.

I hope one illustration will underline why this last point is crucial to effective advocacy. I'll ask you a question. When you are working with your student to improve her/his basic skills, do you ever think about whether an improvement is going to make any difference to your student's life? Research coming from the U.S. (Balmuth, 1988) suggests that what improvement there is, is so slight as to have little effect on life chances. ("Improvement" here is of course measured through standardised literacy tests.)

There are a number of things that we can do with this type of research finding. We can argue that success for our students is not measurable in this way, we can turn the findings into a whip to lash ourselves, or we can just give up. Or perhaps we should be asking different types of questions. Should we be looking at "the changing literacy demands of society, the changing nature of work practices, the changing challenges of the economy and technology and the raised expectations of our people with regard to the quality of life and cultural fulfilment"? Do we agree with Boomer that "in many ways, society is outgrowing its literacy clothing" and needs "a new wardrobe"? (Boomer 1988:3) If we do, then here is our dilemma.

Boomer writes in the context of schooling, of making the literacy education of the able more relevant. It is not so much that the argument does not apply to adults; it does. It is that the future that he refers to may well be beyond the reach of many of our students. Barry Jones may say that "relieving unemployment is the greatest single social priority facing Australia" (Jones, 1982:166), but the reality is "the new jobs are largely part-time, largely non-unionised, largely for females, largely unskilled--with little prospect of advancement, little job satisfaction and poor job security." (Jones 1982: 240) The findings of the 1986 Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy state that "the skills needed now are not routine and that within 20 years most high school graduates who have only what we think of as basic skills will be unemployable." (Quoted in Grant, 1988)

The rhetoric of government initiatives is at odds with the reality. Minister Dawkins in an interview published in the Nov./Dec. 1987 issue of *Adult Education News*, responded in this way to a question:

> Question: In Western Europe and particularly in Norway and Sweden, adult training programs provide basic education for adults, who for whatever reason have not acquired functional communication and numeracy skills when young. Does the Minister envisage the new Adult Training Scheme catering for this group of people?
> Minister: The Adult Training Program is specifically described as a vocational initiative designed to help the long-term unemployed improve their chances of employment. However, the program will be very flexible, aimed as it is at providing training assistance closely linked to both individual needs and local labour market conditions. In those circumstances, it is clear that adults whose main barrier to employment is a lack of communication and numeracy skills will have that problem addressed if they take part in an adult training program.

The rhetoric is fine. The reality does not appear to match it. Skim through *Entree*, the magazine of the New South Wales Technical and Further Education Labour Market Program Unit and you will be lucky to find any mention of literacy and numeracy. Courses are being designed to succeed. They are short and intense and aimed at particular sectors of the labour market and not at the educational needs of the long-term unemployed. If we go along with the rhetoric that the current pattern of labour market programs will assist the long-term needs of the young unemployed, then we act as gatekeepers. To reiterate the point I made at the beginning, if we do nothing then we risk losing everything. We know what works and what doesn't.

I argued earlier that in the face of the pressures on the current provision of adult literacy and numeracy it is crucial that we talk about our successes, about what is effective. Unfortunately we know very little about the outcomes for our students. We each have personal anecdotes but we don't have the overall picture. We don't have the facts. Is this because we are afraid to confront the possibility that we may not be achieving a great deal? Research is now under way and more is needed. We need this information for, as has recently been argued, "until there is a greater recognition that what we are doing now may not be working, it is unlikely that we will identify and eliminate the barriers to effective programs." (Dickhoff, 1988)

I believe those barriers are now being put into place through:

- the lack of understanding about what literacy is, how it is achieved and how success is measured;
- the emphasis on skills training instead of learning and education;
- the belief that anyone can do it, which undermines the tremendous expertise we have; and

• our own silence about how good we are.

Become advocates—heed the warning signs.

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Writing With Teen Mothers: I Have Something to Say

Kim Gerould

This article and the two immediately following present three different, though complementary views of what happens at a particular educational program for young women in the western part of Massachusetts. The authors suggest reading Gerould's article first, since it provides background information on The Care Center, its writing program, and its students.

> Who's Really My Family
> In The Care Center are like 20 teen mothers or mother-to-be. We all get along well. Sometimes we get mad at each other for nothing, like if I had a hard day yesterday and if someone tries to talk to me, I'll slash them with my voice.
> I just want to say I am so sorry. Down in my heart "I love you," especially my best friend _____.
> My family I don't like because they are troublemakers. That's why I prefer having The Care Center for a family.
> Love always. --Carmen

I am a teacher and the education coordinator at The Care Center in Holyoke, Massachusetts. Our agency provides social, educational and daycare services to pregnant and parenting teens. Long before becoming an adult educator—and a teen educator—I had an avid interest in writing, first as a reader—an appreciator of good writing—and then as a writer myself. It hasn't been until the past couple years, however, that I've seen the possibility of—and begun to put into practice—integrating my love for writing into my teaching. Many pieces have converged to make this happen: the nature of The Care Center students and program, my own growth—as a teacher and as a writer-learning-to-write, my co-workers, the experiences of other adult educators, and the addition of a computer to each of our classrooms. We have also begun a collaboration with The Network to further explore how we teach writing using computers. Loren McGrail made regular visits, taught classes with us and met with us to reflect on our work with our students and on our own writing efforts.

Pat Sandoval, Lucía Nuñez, and I prepare teen mothers for the GED in both English and Spanish; we also offer ESL, Spanish for beginners and Spanish for Spanish-speakers. The GED is most often the stated goal of our girls, but they also come to the Center for the support offered by their counselors, their friends, the daycare teachers. They come for the parties, movies, breaktime, snacks, lunch, trips—for the strong sense of community.

Who Are Our Students?

> I'm a 16 year old teenage mother. I got pregnant when I was thirteen years of age. After having the baby, I was still going to school but I didn't make it because it was so hard to go to school and do homework and really you don't have time with a baby around.
> I quit school and didn't pay attention to the place. It was so hard to quit school because I was always stuck at the house and felt that the walls were closing in on me. I felt like leaving the house and never coming back.
> A lady went to my apartment and asked me if I was interested in going to The Care Center. I felt so good when I got there because they help you and you meet new people and you can take your GED. I'll be able to go to college and plan something for my future and my baby. --Susana

The statistical picture of our students is grim: low levels of education, lives permeated with violence, abuse, poverty, and, if that weren't enough, the respon-

sibility of raising a child—or children. Yet all the publicity of "children having children" doesn't capture the reality of the girls we work with each day. True, it's difficult, and many of them will advise other teens to postpone having children. But they are "typical" teens, giggling and gossiping in class, and they are mothers, worried about the baby's eye infection, exhausted from getting up every few hours at night to feed their new baby. I don't feel like I'm in a classroom of "victims"; the students are intellectually curious, once given the opportunity, energetic, funny and caring, and sometimes bored, angry and depressed. Ages range from 15 to 21 years, meaning that levels of maturity and education vary widely.

> During my pregnancy, I've experienced a lot of different emotions. I was more sensitive and my feelings were hurt more easily. I never had the thought that I didn't want the baby that was growing in me. I knew right from the beginning that I wanted it.
> Before I was pregnant all I did was party all the time. Now everything is different. I feel I've grown up and everyone who has known me for a long time has noticed a difference in me and has said so. --Tina

About three fourths of our students are Puerto Rican; the rest are "Anglo," and there are a few Afro-American students. This creates an interesting reversal; the Anglos often find themselves in the uncomfortable and unfamiliar "minority" position, although some have grown up with Puerto Ricans and feel more at ease. Many of the Puerto Rican students are dominant in English, having lived most of their lives in the U.S.; others have recently arrived from Puerto Rico, often the rural areas of the island. At times there is racial tension, covert or overt; sometimes girls reach beyond those limits and form friendships, their common situations helping to unite them.

All of our students have dropped out of school--either junior high or high school, due to their pregnancy or simply because they didn't like school. School represents a hostile environment for many; teachers are adversaries. There is sometimes little support from families to finish school since many of their parents, siblings or partners have never graduated. In fact, our students are sometimes discouraged to continue their studies at The Care Center by a partner who feels threatened by his girlfriend's or wife's advancement.

What Does This Have to do With Writing?

Most of the students arrive with very negative attitudes toward writing—writing is something you produce for the teacher, it is filling in spaces, it is right or wrong, it is returned with red marks, and has little to do with students' real concerns. It is often a formidable task to push through those barriers; I have been locked out of the classroom for suggesting that we write! I am often surprised, however, by how quickly their reluctance melts away once they've been coaxed into trying. For some, though, writing remains an agonizing process—they have "nothing to say." For those who move beyond that point, writing has become a means of self-expression, a special place where they can think for themselves and tell the truth, and where they can create something they are proud of.

Our work with writing fits in with the broader goals of the Center, as well as my own personal goals. Most of the students feel they have little power to change their lives and the environment around them. They have internalized the subtle--and not so subtle--messages from society that they are of little worth: they are female, young, Puerto Rican, poor, single mothers. We teachers are certainly not exempt from these feelings of powerlessness. Through our work in the classroom, be it talking, writing, reading or listening, we can begin to see our world more clearly, reflect on our lives and see the forces at play. Reflecting on one's own life and exposing that in writing can be painful and embarrassing, if one's self-esteem is low and the circumstances of one's life are difficult. Paradoxically, that very same reflecting and exposing can be an empowering and satisfying experience; others may strongly identify with the writer's story—"Yes, that's what it's like!" The writer makes a statement and becomes a subject, an actor; she actively inserts herself into the group. The mere writing down of the details of one's life, and having them appreciated and celebrated, negates the voices that say, "This is boring, mundane, who cares about this?" The writer's life becomes intrinsically interesting and dynamic. Furthermore, writing demands thinking and assertiveness; you make a statement when you write.

As a teacher and a writer, I must engage in the process myself—for my own benefit, to help me be more empathetic with the students' process, and sometimes to give them an example of taking the risk of writing about myself and formulating my thoughts on paper. Being a real part of the class allows trust and empathy to build between the teacher and students; writing is no longer an excruciating performance but a search for one's truths.

At first I approached "creative writing" somewhat timidly, reflecting my own and the girls' reluctance. I had to teach the mechanics of writing, which was the only aspect the writing exam of the GED used to test for (it now also includes an essay), and the other four subject areas (math, science, social studies, and reading); I wondered how to fit in more open-ended writ-

ing. I then started dialogue journals with students who were interested. I began to see the power and importance of writing for our students; it helped them reflect on their lives, ask questions and clarify their ideas. Journals were a form familiar to many, and they appreciated the privacy and the undivided attention of the teacher provided by our written dialogue.

> Hello Kim! This is my first letter to you and I hope our communication last for a long time. Right now I'm thinking about when I will have taken the GED test. I guess I'll be out of The Care Center, and that makes me sad because I like this place and the people in here. All of you make me feel good about myself... Sometimes I feel like taking my time and slowing down on my studies so I can stay here longer. I know that's crazy because deep down I want to rush into college so I can finish at least some training so I can start working in something good. I don't know. I guess we all fantasize once in a while, right? --Madeline

We did more and more "fun" writing activities, many of which I borrowed from a writing class I was taking. I was trying to work with the girls around the same issues that I was struggling with as a writer: how to suspend that critical inner voice that wants to preface my work with "This is no good but here goes...," how to let the imagination go, how to use the senses as fully as possible, and how to trust one's instincts.

> I am my name
> My name is Marianella
> **A**
> **R**eally long name
> **I** love it!
>
> **G**old and bright lights. My name will shine
> **A**s
> **R**ich and famous people greet me and
> **C**all me sweetheart
> **I**'m in heaven. Is this real? I'm feeling
> **A**ll right!
>
> --Marianella Garcia

We played with poetry, fantasies, trips into the future, memories, and personifications of qualities:

> Fear is always hiding, never taking a chance. He is always thinking of doing things but never trying. Fear is always sitting alone in the dark, afraid to come out, afraid of what people will think, afraid of what they will say, and always alone... until he meets Chance.
>
> Chance is a young lady, well maybe not so young, but she's managed to preserve her youth by succeeding. Chance has been through everything and has never backed down. Chance and fear together—what a combination! But with her help and a little patience, they will unite and become only one.
>
> If I Were....
> If I were something to wear, I would be a big, bright ugly sweater. That way no one would want to wear me and I could just hang around in a closet all day and do nothing.
>
> If I were a food, I would be a sunflower so people would only eat my seeds and not me, and I could continue growing and flowering until I die. --Kim F.

As the writings came more easily and as we read the published writings of other students, we decided to publish a bilingual collection of their work, *Hopes and Memories/Esperanzas y Recuerdos*. Though written by the students, it was edited, typed (those were pre-computer days) and laid out by me. The book had an enormous impact on the students: they were now "writers" and had taken the risk of sharing their thoughts and feelings and creativity with a broader audience.

New Variables

These are just a few experiences that have led up to the past year, in which we're focusing more consciously on the writing process, the dynamics of the group during writing, with two new variables added: computers and the GED essay.

The computers have definitely made writing more attractive; the girls enjoy being at the computer, sometimes to play games and often to write. Some will first write by hand, or even type a piece, before putting it on the computer; a few will compose directly on the computer. Students seem to enjoy the privacy and the contained sense of the computer, sitting in front of the screen and interacting with their own words. Mistakes disappear quickly, it's easy to change one's mind, no erasing, no white-out, no wads of paper on the floor—such freedom! There is also the feeling of power and satisfaction—"I can make this machine work for me"—and the concrete beauty of one's words flowing out of the printer onto paper. The students are amassing a "body" of work on their files, and each piece can be called back at any time.

The computers will help us hand over our next publishing projects to the students. They can now be in charge of editing, choosing pieces, deciding on layout, and creating the final product. As we develop our ways

of working with this new technology, I would like us to explore more collaborative uses of the computer, such as writing exchanges with other centers, dialoguing with teachers or students, or group writing.

The GED essay, though not "attracting" the girls to writing as the computers have, in a sense has helped to legitimize the importance of writing. They are required to write an approximately 200-word essay in the traditional introduction-body-conclusion format on a topic chosen for them. We were initially concerned that the essay requirement would hurt our students for whom English is a second language, and for whom such a linear, dry form of expression is extremely alien. Since the essay is here to stay, however, we are learning to work with it and take advantage of it. It is another motivation, though imposed externally, to help the girls overcome their resistance to writing. We are helping them transpose their more personal styles to the essay format. We can also "pose" the essay to them as a form they have to learn, much like a foreign language. It is empowering to be bilingual, as well as to be able to write in different modes.

Both the essay and other kinds of writing are making us more aware of cultural differences among our students. All of the students have their unique learning styles and preferences, but we have noticed some general differences between the Spanish GED class, which often has students who've been educated in the more traditional system of Puerto Rico (and have lived in a more conservative social setting as well), and the English GED class, whose students are a product of U.S. school systems and society. Sometimes more traditional students are reluctant to participate in less traditional activities, where they can't clearly perceive the academic connection. At times, however, they will loosen up in their ESL class because it's in the context of another language, not their own. There is also the ongoing and larger issue of English being seen as superior, certainly reinforced by society at large, and often unwittingly reproduced inside the Center. Ironically, many of the students who study in Spanish were in school longer and are at more advanced levels. The more we publish our students' writings, as well as read those of other students, especially writings in Spanish, the more our students can see the diversity of the writing experience and sense an audience who is eager to read their stories.

Just as we try to respect our students' cultural backgrounds and languages, we are trying to establish an environment where their "native," natural forms of writing—diaries, letters, poems, notes, plays, even graffiti (when not written on upholstery)—are respected and appreciated. It is a delicate process, in which we can't help but fail at times, trying to "read" where a student is in her writing process and her desire to share these writings publicly or not. Some girls have no qualms about sharing a deeply personal piece of writing, while others may feel ambivalent, both wanting to share with her classmates and afraid to. Another may definitely want to keep her writing to herself, or only have the teacher read it. We as teachers play the juggling act of gently nudging, praising, pulling back, offering another opportunity, and trying not to scare anyone.

An area we have only begun to experiment with is the "writers' circle." How can we help the girls learn to give one another feedback on their writing? How can they move beyond "I liked it"? How do we work with criticism, considering the tenuous self-esteem of teens and their frequent lack of tact?

Tanya is a recent graduate and mother of three who has written a great deal during her years at The Care Center, and who continues to write. This is from her dialogue journal:

> I would like to write someday like those people in the books that Kim brings in. I would like to write to my children because sometimes you can't always say what you want...
> I try to give each of my children a little of me. Ashley has my sweet nature and a need to be loved. She-Ra has my ability to be a whole but independent person. My little baby (unnamed) has or I hope he will have my ability to make fun no matter what may be going on, even if I laugh to myself over a joke I told myself.
> I would like to give my children all that I can, but most of all I would like to give them my love, because sometimes it is so hard to give love to those who are too young to say, "I love you, too, Mommy," no matter what happens.

In the end, it seems to be the process that counts. The writings pile up, the disks get filled, and yes, we need to publish these, to have more readers. But what stays with us, both the teacher-writers and the student-writers, is the process—the feelings that led to the ideas, the ideas that got into print that led us to other places we weren't even aware of before, and the feelings of pride and competence that "I have something to say and I've said it."

Kim Gerould coordinates the education program at The Care Center and teaches in both the English and Spanish GED classes.

Endings Take Time: Moments in the Writing Process

Lucía Nuñez

Please see editor's note at the beginning of the article by Kim Gerould.

A nineteen year old writing a play about two friends and a guy they both liked; a class composing an essay about the best modern invention, the birth control pill; a teen mother-to-be writing a journal entry about the fear of childbirth including the father's perspective and his thoughts about the pain his wife will go through. These illustrate some moments in the writing process. Though the finished products--a play, an essay, or a poem--are perhaps incomplete by most standards, it is the process of writing which takes on a greater importance. That process occurs at two levels, internally and externally. As a teacher, I am part of the external interactions with the students and, through their writings, I witness the internal process which occurs.

Writing with teens can be a challenge, yet a challenge from which the results are incredibly exciting. Behind their initial resistance to writing and inhibition about writing voiced in typical "teen" fashion—"this is boring" and "I don't know anything about that"—are more serious obstacles of lack of self-esteem and confidence. The curiosity and desire to express themselves is present constantly, but overcoming those obstacles is the most difficult task a teen and a teacher face. Once they begin to break down those walls, their written expression becomes fertile ground for them to explore conflict and fear and for them to question traditions and discover new values.

What conditions must be right for that process to occur? How does the student and the teacher establish a relationship in which they become co-writers, partners, collaborators in developing the piece together? When do the students feel sufficient trust in each other to argue, to explore and challenge each other's values? How can the computer become a partner in creating? Unlike a recipe for a cake, the writing process is not a step by step procedure. The answer to these questions—the ingredients for the cake—are not always the same. Each student requires a different recipe, one especially designed for her, so that the process can evolve slowly.

Knowing the student, choosing those issues which are immediate—her pregnancy, a boyfriend, a choice she had to make—breaks down one of those barriers. The "I-don't-know-anything-about-that" barrier disappears and from these personal issues emerge powerful written expressions. The students—Jacqueline, Edelmira, Janett, and Cookie—and the examples selected of their writing illustrate different points in that writing process—where they are; what they are willing to share; and how they want to express themselves.

Questions become tools to build a piece of writing—what do you see?; what are they doing?; where do you think they are going?; what does it mean? Each response is yet another sentence, another expression—we continue to build. The first draft, that first attempt to express one's ideas, is the most difficult step, one which usually takes the greatest effort on the part of the teacher and student and which can determine the eventual success of the writing activity.

Jacqueline and Edelmira write:

> La invencion mas importante es las pastillas para evitar hijos. Para tener un futuro mejor, educacion, trabajos y para la diverciones. Las personas de antes opinaban que por rasones relijiosa creian que era un pecado. Los hombres aveces no quieren que eviten los hijos porque piensa que tienen otros hombres. Hay otros que desean tener mas hijos porque ellos no los cuidan porque algunos hombres desean tener mas hijos para darse el lujo de ser machos y para mantener la mujer en su casa.
> The most important invention has been the birth control pill. To have a better future,

education, jobs, and fun. People in the old days believed that because of religious reasons it was a sin. Men sometimes do not want women to use the pill because they think their wives will have other men. Others want more children because they don't take care of them and think they are macho because they have many children and keep their wives at home.

Questioning the voice of their mothers, challenging traditional values, and creating new voices of their own were the real products of this essay on the birth control pill. For this exercise, an essay topic straight from the G.E.D. preparation books became a great topic for discussion and a debate on the advantages of the Pill. Yet, also some of the underlying themes and issues that came out were a questioning of a value system and a recreating of a new one. The acknowledgement of the Pill as an invention which has provided more opportunities for women is contrasted with the religious and social restrictions on using birth control; the conflict they face in making choices about birth control was evident in the discussion and in the essay above.

Though the entire class was initially involved, the two students who completed the essay and became responsible for writing it in the computer were Jackie and Edelmira. Jackie, a mother of two with traditional values whose extended family provides a great deal of support and influence, and Edelmira, an independent woman who speaks her mind and challenges everything, became co-writers. The discussion about the use of the pill, who uses it, and what it does to women brought out many personal issues—political questions about what they had heard about the sterilization campaign on Puerto Rican women; health questions about when and who could use the pill which greatly reflected the myths they had; and social and cultural aspects about the number of children and the influence of their husbands on the decision to use any method of birth control.

For this essay, they began by brainstorming all the ideas they had and writing each idea on small sheets of paper; these were then placed on three big poster boards with slots to hold the sheets of paper. Once they had exhausted all the ideas, they then ordered them on the poster boards by what ideas would be placed in the introduction, the body, and the conclusion of the essay. After much discussion and debate, they arranged the ideas and prioritized them. Finally, they began the process of writing these ideas into full sentences on newsprint. Seeing the essay on large newsprint was helpful to pick out the mistakes and to give feedback to each other about how the essay sounded. During the brainstorm was when the discussion regarding their feelings about the pill took place.

Janett writes:

Todo empezo cuando fui para el hospital en Diciembre que fue porque tenia una infeccion en la orina y ahy fue cuando me dijieron que estaba embarasada al principio me senti contenta pero despues no lo queria porque me asuste mucho. Yo tengo tanto miedo que estoy loca que llegue el dia pronto y de que no llegue.

Everything started when I went to the hospital in December for a urinary tract infection and it was there that they told me I was pregnant at first I was happy but later I didn't want it because I got scared. I am so afraid that I am crazy that the days arrives soon and that it doesn't come.

For Janett, a simple journal book serves as a means to explore feelings in a private way as expressed in the entry above. Teen mothers about to give birth for the first time have fears about the experience they are about to have, the unknown, what their friends and relatives tell them--being bombarded by this information about childbirth is overwhelming. Having a private place to let go of these fears, of these questions, doubts, to write these down and create a separation from them is important.

Janett began to explore the books in the classroom, discovering manuals, picturebooks and other material on childbirth. She could not stop reading them, looking through the pictures, eating them up as though they were food. Her hunger was real, a hunger for information about what soon she would experience, giving birth. Her stream of consciousness entries in her journal revolved around the same theme, the fear of the unknown.

Her entries were unique in that she included her husband's thoughts about the birth, his fears that she might lose the baby, and the discomforts and frustrations they have both experienced during her pregnancies. Each entry records each step of her pregnancy as the time nears—every new pain brings on the question, "Is it going to happen now?" Her journal serves as a notebook to make lists of what to take to the hospital, to take notes while she watches a video on labor, and as a source of comfort perhaps, like a friend to whom she can confide. In a class about World War II, one of the readings the class did was entries from Anne Frank's diary—it was this opening entry by this teen from 1942 that stood out for Janett, a young Puerto Rican teen in 1989: "I hope I shall be able to confide in you completely, as I have never been able to do in anyone before, and I hope that you will be a great

support and comfort to me."

Cookie writes:

> This historia is about mejores amigas and a guy. These amigas todo lo hacen juntas, se dicen secretos, se rein juntas, they do everything juntas. This guy is alguien that una de las girls no sabe nada del. In this historia unas of the girls lo odia and lo detesta. This are the personaje of the historia: Zandra: Es la muchacha de la historia. Zandra es muy bonita, ojos verde, pelo rubio, triguena y muy inteligente. Ella es sola sin hijos pero vive sin sus padres en un apartamento en los E.U. Angel: Este es el muchacho que juega con Zandra y Cristina. Angel es alto, trigueno y ojos oscuros. Es un muchacho que dedica su tiempo en al calle. Le gusta robar y hacer maldades. No estudia y vive con sus padres.
>
> This is a story about best friends and a guy. These friends do everything together, tell each other secrets, laugh, they do everything together. This guy is someone that one of the girls doesn't know anything about. In this story one of the girls hates and detest this guy. These are the characters of the play: Zandra: She is the girl of the story. Zandra is very pretty, with green eyes, blond hair, dark and very intelligent. She is single without children but lives without her parents in an apartment in the U.S. Angel: He is the guy that plays with Zandra and Cristina. Angel is tall, dark and has dark eyes. He is a guy that dedicates his time in the street. He likes to steal and do bad things. He doesn't study and he lives with his parents.

The computer as a writing tool also becomes a means for private individual writing without anyone having to know what she is writing about, and without having to interact. Creating on the computer using the disk as her journal book, Cookie wrote constantly during class, during breaktime, during any moment she could find for days. Finally, she showed the project she had been working on—a play titled, "Two friends and a guy." Her creativity was evident in the character sketches, in the scenes, and in the dialogue she developed. The language was uniquely Cookie's, a mix of Spanish and English, a language of the streets in Holyoke. Her words are not "rich people's words" as she calls those words which do not belong to her. As the class reads the Puerto Rican play, *La Carreta*, Cookie sees that her play has a language of the people just as Rene Marques uses the "jibaro talk," the way people talk in the mountains of Puerto Rico.

> (Angel se puso a enrolar)
> A: Aqui toma.
> Z: Prendelo tu.
> A. No, yo no fumo pasto.
> (Angel begins to roll the joint)
> A: Here take it.
> Z: You light it.
> A: No, I don't smoke dope.

The absolute secrecy under which this project has evolved has been in part because the best friend in the play also attends the Care Center. The descriptions of the characters reflect ideal physical traits mixed with real situations. The difficulty of writing one's personal experience with a detached voice is the most challenging task of a writer. Cookie continues to add and change each scene—adding dialogue during the love scene, and giving us more description of the characters.

More important throughout this autobiographical play was the personal conflict she was working out. The build up is there, and so is the conflict, but Cookie has not finished the play—the conflict is unresolved both in the play and in her life. What will happen to this friendship? Who will end up with the guy? Will these friends be the same again? The answers to these questions would conclude the final acts of the play—though like for many writers, answers and endings take time.

Lucía Nuñez teaches the GED class in Spanish at the Care Center.

"Girl Talk"

Patricia Sandoval

Please see editor's note at the beginning of the article by Kim Gerould.

"Girl Talk," a play written and performed by the Care Center students represents language and learning interaction at its finest. As the facilitator/follower, teacher/learner, director/actor, and one who begged, borrowed, and stole equipment, as well as lost sleep in order to see this through, I feel entitled to this biased opinion. From inception to performance, a period of six weeks, I was witness to the process of how an idea became a reality resulting in some of the most exciting learning I had hoped to imagine.

As a spectator or a participant, theatre has always been a part of my life. As a teacher it is only natural that I bring it to the classroom whenever possible. However, in my desire to bring theatre to the students of the Care Center, the learning was reciprocal.

To say that the Care Center students are a unique group of young women is an understatement. While they share some commonalities such as ethnicity and economic and educational similarities which define them as a group, they are unique individually as well. It was their individual talents and experiences that brought about a collaborative effort which resulted in the display of ability in December.

Performance night memories stand alone in everyone's mind who was present. However, the performance was but one of many memorable aspects.

The process of their writing and producing a play often left me stunned not only with their ability and talent, but also by the significance of the profound statements they were making about their lives. I felt privileged to experience their lives. Theatre was simply the means.

The procedure I used combined theatre and ESL techniques. In the beginning we were not certain where we were headed; I only knew that it was some place very special. The procedure could be done with any group of students, keeping in mind that the end product will reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives. "Girl Talk" explored themes of pride and loyalty among pregnant teenagers.

It all started in September when we began theatre classes as an extra-curricular activity. The students enjoyed the activities and I was delighted with their creativity. During class we read a play about a pregnant teenager in England, and they wrote powerful essays comparing their lives with the character's in the play. While they pointed out similarities, the life of a young pregnant Jamaican teen in England during the 1970's contrasts sharply with a young pregnant teen in Holyoke in 1988. Lori wrote the following:

> I know how Rose felt. My parents were also angry with me when I got pregnant and tried to get me to have an abortion too. My grandparents got even angrier and they still don't talk to me. What they are angry about is not so much that I got pregnant, but that the father is Puerto Rican.

Clearly these young women had their own stories to tell. Classroom discussion prompted Nelly to challenge, "Why don't we write our own play!" Admittedly, I did not know what challenges lay ahead. What I did know was that I could not express doubt in my ability when I was trying to show them they have reasons to have confidence in theirs.

Once the decision was made to write, we eagerly set up a schedule which they defined. Writing would take two weeks, and rehearsals would take four. The date and time were set.

While an actor uses the specific events of the play to define her/his character, we had no events yet. Therefore, it seemed to make sense to reverse the order—create characters and see what happens. Although our destiny was still uncertain, our direction

was more clear. Apprehension and excitement set in for all of us. I divided the class into three groups. Each group would eventually create a character through discussion and negotiation from a list of prepared questions. The questions called for decisions as simple as age and name to home, family and school situation. A few of the questions follow:

> Is your character in school?
> Does your character like school?
> Does your character have friends?
> Who does your character live with?
> Would your character prefer to read alone or party with friends?
> What makes your character happy?
> What is troubling your character?

Three very distinct, yet complementary characters began to emerge. Once the many group decisions were made, the students individually wrote character descriptions, followed by a letter in their character's diary. The following is Nelly's character description:

> She dropped out of school because of a mistake by destiny but surviving working hard and keeping her apartment and other thing.. together. Natalie is strong brave and full of pain because of the desconsiderations of men. She is simple and full of love. She is a good cure. (Nelly explained that a "good cure" is someone who helps others.)

Carmen's reads:

> She is pregnant, not because she is bad, but because she does not know the facts of life.

Rose's diary entry reads:

> I have friends but they all turn against me when they found out I was pregnant.

Their desire to state a simple fact—we are not bad—kept recurring as a theme. And they were making other conscious realizations about their lives as well. During this phase they shared these writings with one another, discussed them, and then wrote a collective description. The following is some of their comments made about their characters during these negotiations.

> She must be poor because she quit school and doesn't have skills.
> Even though she has her own apartment, she is lonely because her parents don't want her.
> Her apartment is small and lonely, but very clean.
> She is lucky if she has an apartment. It's better than sleeping in a hallway.

While they were forming and articulating the realizations about their lives with one another, I was allowed visibility into their world of being a pregnant teen in Holyoke today.

Once character descriptions were formed we role-played situations between the characters. During these interactions the conflict of the play (and their lives) solidified itself as to the theme of their work. We then tape-recorded the final role-playing, and they transcribed it. We now had a script! At that point Carmen beamed, "Wow, we are really writing our own play, aren't we!" There were many drafts and revisions. The following is a portion of the final script:

> VERONICA (Spanish pronunciation): Please listen to me.
> AMANDA: We were best friends, Veronica.
> VERONICA: I know I know. You see it was just something that happened to other girls—not us. I thought we were better than that. I thought that happened to only bad girls. I mean we used to laugh at the girls that that happened to and my parents...well when I told them about you, they didn't want me seeing you...and I didn't know what to do. I was confused.
> AMANDA: You were confused? We were best friends and you were confused?
> VERONICA: I thought a lot since then. I was wrong.
> AMANDA: Did you think I was bad all those years?
> VERONICA: No, of course not.
> AMANDA: You turned me down because I got pregnant. I think you are the one that's bad.
> —When I needed you the most you turned your back on me.
> —Well I'm proud of who I am and I'm going to be a good mother and nobody is every going to make me feel bad about myself again.

What was happening, in essence, was that the students were struggling to define their lives and put that definition into an art form.

Three days before the performance, the rehearsals hit a stone wall. All was fine when the students transcribed the emotion-filled improvisations into a written script. But when the actors memorized the script, their performances fell alarmingly flat. This should not have surprised me since everything in

theatre as well as ESL methodology and research indicates that without meaning and the desire to communicate, words are merely just that. But to see this happen so drastically in front of my eyes was startling and frightening. Panic set in. To compound the situation, individuals who observed the "flat" rehearsals expressed doubts in the students' ability. The desire to have the students display and prove their intelligence, creativity and ability became my passion.

I realized that I, as well as the students, had lost sight of all meaning. They were focusing on words and I was focusing on acting. I needed to take a hard look at the meaning of all of this. What did the play mean?

I took inventory.

All of the students had, in one way or another, collaborated on this huge project. Where English and Spanish are spoken simultaneously and interchangeably, and where often negative stratification occurs because of it, the play became an event that all students contributed toward, regardless of language or academic proficiency. Where students balk at the idea of essay writing they rewrote and revised the script again and again until it was perfected to THEIR satisfaction. Further, rich and lively negotiation took place as the students decided what would or would not work from dialogue to scenery. (At one point a well-meaning student painted a beautiful Swiss Alps scene as a backdrop.) While some students worked on posters, other gathered props. (One staff member arrived for work to find her desk on the stage.) Even absenteeism, an occasional issue at the Care Center, was drastically reduced during this time. Tanya amazed the community with the maturity of her dedication to the play. Rose and Nancy, who always sat on the periphery of group activities, became such dedicated workers that they began to join in other activities, and performed in another scene on performance night. (Nancy, an extremely shy student who decided she could not perform two days before the performance actually did perform when her replacement did not show. Perhaps the back row of the audience did not hear her, but a shy and reluctant teen rose to the occasion when needed to perform with poise and pride.)

There was internal drama as well. A friendship between two students intensified and solidified itself. The conflict between the characters of Amanda and Veronica on the stage was acted out in real life between Rosa and Carmen. Their stage reconciliation mirrored their true feelings toward one another just as the play was mirroring composites of their real lives. In addition, although Carmen is a well-liked student, her academic experience in the public school system initially placed her academically behind the other students; however, her emotion-filled rehearsals earned her well-deserved respect from the entire Care Center community. As the play ends with the characters realizing they need one another for support, the music they chose was "Lean on Me."

When I took a conscious look at what all this meant in terms of self-respect, motivation, commitment, and academic learning, I realized that what had been gained thus far was the real meaning of the play. While the students were taking a conscious look at their lives and finding the positive, I needed to take a conscious look at the process and find the positive as well.

Once I let go of my desire to see the students as actors, and to show off their ability, a very interesting thing happened.

At 6:00, on December 16, 1988, a group of students from Holyoke stunned the audience when they performed an emotion-packed performance of "Girl Talk."

Patricia Sandoval teaches the English GED class and ESL at the Care Center.

"Teacher, You Decide": Curriculum Development in Workplace ESL

Johan Uvin

Three years ago, I was asked to develop a competency-based curriculum for the Workplace ESL program at the South Cove Manor Nursing Home in Chinatown, which I did. I identified the competencies that enable nursing assistants to perform their jobs. I developed a test that revealed which competencies workers could already perform and wrote activities to teach to the competencies they could not perform yet.

At first, I was very excited about the curriculum. As a teacher, I welcomed the opportunity to be involved in curriculum development activities. I did not have to work with a document created by somebody else. The test scores and checklists of performance objectives also met the nursing home's demands for accountability. In addition, the curriculum met the need for structure that my co-workers and I felt. It helped us prioritize what to teach given the time constraints of the grant and the limited resources available. Soon, however, my enthusiasm decreased as I came to see the shortcomings of the product that I created.

The competency-based curriculum turned out to be unworkable for a variety of reasons. Learners needed and wanted more than the language to perform their jobs. The skills focus of the curriculum was too narrow to accommodate the affective, social, cultural, cognitive, and metacognitive needs that learners expressed. The curriculum also predetermined what was to be taught and learned and, as a result, failed to absorb changes at the nursing home and the evolving needs of learners. The implementation of new systems of recordkeeping, for example, modified the language requirements of learners' jobs substantially and made whole sections of the curriculum redundant.

In addition to the content, most of the methods suggested in the curriculum were inappropriate as well, if not to say culturally biased. They turned out to be incompatible with the preferred learning styles, strategies, and activities of Asian learners. The selection of an appropriate methodology, in other words, was yet another aspect of curriculum development that did not get enough of my attention.

HOW I APPROACH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT TODAY

Since December, 1988, my view of curriculum development has evolved considerably. Almost three years of classroom experience and teacher sharing have enabled me to clarify what curriculum development should entail for our program to be successful. Let me outline the key principles first.

Curriculum development is a dynamic and ongoing process in which learners and I engage actively and collaborate to increase our understanding of, and our impact on the working environment. This implies that curriculum development tasks are included in the instructional agenda and that learners play an active role in investigating issues in their lives at the workplace and in their respective communities, as well as in deciding how they will act on these issues. In other words, curriculum development tasks are not accomplished before instruction and without the learner. Rather, curriculum development is a real collaborative effort of teachers and learners with input from supervisors and support from management.

Inherent to this view is the idea that the curriculum development process does not progress linearly. Needs assessment, the writing of goals, the determination and grading of content, the selection of methodology, materials development, assessment and evaluation are carried out in a cyclical fashion. Implied also is that the curriculum development process can begin with one or a combination of these tasks and that it is possible to work on several tasks at the same time.

Even though there are many possible levels of participation, full participation of learners is critical. This means that learners share decision-making responsibilities with their peers and with their teacher. It

is the teacher's objective:

1) to involve learners in the selection of a learning arrangement that is appropriate (e.g. group instruction, coaching, tutoring, etc.) and convenient (i.e. favorable logistics);

2) to design activities that facilitate the participation of learners in the needs assessment and in the writing of goals;

3) to draw instructional content from the experiences of learners and to assist learners in grading it;

4) to negotiate learning and teaching activities;

5) to involve learners in developing their own materials; and

6) to demystify assessment and evaluation by involving learners in identifying and documenting what counts as progress and in choosing or designing appropriate ways to assess this progress.

From my experience at South Cove Manor, I have learned that the fewer decisions made without the learner, the better. In other words, the chances for a program to be more efficient and responsive increases when learners enter the curriculum development process early on.

HOW I PUT THIS APPROACH TO WORK

To put this approach to work, I learned that three things need to be done:

1) find ways to involve learners in the curriculum development process as soon as possible;

2) find ways to make curriculum development an integral part of what is happening in the classroom; and

3) find mechanisms to draw content from the learners as well as other people at the nursing home on an on-going basis.

Below is a brief description of ways that I have found helpful. Not all of these ways are new. I have adapted some from family and workplace literacy curricula in the U.S. and Canada and applied them to my working situation at South Cove Manor.

Ways to Involve Learners at the Early Stages

At the beginning of each 22-week instructional cycle, I met with workers individually as soon as they expressed an interest in the program. The purpose of this meeting was manifold. Key purposes were to start a dialogue with workers about their individual needs, expectations, and concerns and to involve them in the planning of a course that would be responsive to their needs. An important part of this initial meeting was to choose a learning arrangement that was appropriate and convenient.

I also met with all interested workers at an orientation. At the orientation, I further assessed with learners what they needed and why. We discussed how they envisioned their needs would best be addressed. Given the space constraints at the nursing home and the confines of the grant, learners also decided when classes would be held, how often, how long, and how they could be grouped. My goals for the orientation were to develop a sense of the common experiences of learners, to begin to build a group, and to establish a support network for learners.

Besides meetings with workers, I involved learners in two other ways. I worked with workers and I asked some workers to keep a dialogue journal about their jobs. By working with workers, I developed a sense of the technical aspects involved in providing daily care and I got a good sense of the interactions that learners are involved in during a working day. I also lived through the experience physically, mentally, and emotionally and was able to see the nursing home through the eyes of an entry-level worker. From my interactions with workers at work, I began to develop a sense of the major issues that learners were facing at work as well as in their lives in the Asian-American community.

Through dialogue journals learners showed me which issues or themes were significant to them. Entries such as the one below became the starting point for a variety of classroom based curriculum development activities. This excerpt shows one of the challenges that a nursing assistant was facing.

> The patient and me
> we are in the main dining room.
> It is 12 o'clock,
> I'm taking the patient to lunch,
> to encourage patient to eat is very difficult.
> If the patient doesn't eat I don't care, I tell the nurse.

Ways to Make Curriculum Development an Integral Part of What Is Happening in the Classroom

Problem-posing is one good way to integrate curriculum development into instruction, particularly if it is clear from the start what the significant themes in the lives of workers are. However, problem-posing methodology it is not the only way. Other methodologies such as experiential learning create similar opportunities. Here's one way that I have found helpful. It does not assume any pre-investigation. To illustrate each step, I have summarized what happened in one class. The abbreviation "Ps" stands for participants, "T" for teacher, and "D.T." is the name of one participant.

Ps share their daily work experiences with each other: D.T. walked in very upset and told her classmates she was hit by a patient.

Ps compare their experiences and identify similarities and differences: D.T.'s experience triggered many others. An emotional discussion revealed that all learners who work on the second floor had similar experiences.

Ps investigate the context of their experiences and identify causes and consequences of their experiences: I asked D.T. to describe what happened, where, when, and why. In collaboration with her peers, D.T. described the resident, the room, and listed step-by-step what she and the resident did and said. We acted out the incident twice. The second time D.T. stepped back, observed herself and gave feedback on the accuracy of the re-enactment. In a follow-up discussion learners said that they were very stressful and scared when they were assigned to take care of this resident. Some said they have been seriously injured as well. They said that the reason for the patient's abusive behavior was loneliness and depression over a recent stroke. All learners wrote about their individual experiences with angry residents.

Ps identify aspects of their experiences they want to further explore: Learners wanted to know what their and the residents' rights were and what they could do or say to protect themselves.

Ps identify their strengths and weaknesses: Learners knew all patient rights. They did not know what THEIR rights were. All agreed also that they did not know what to do or say in situations like this one.

Ps and T discuss which individual and group activities or assignments will enable them to learn what they need to know or know how to do: I asked learners if they thought training would help and if it would be useful to learn how to ask for training. They didn't think so. Instead, two learners wanted to find out more about the patient's condition and decided to ask the charge nurse about it. Three learners wanted to know their rights. I suggested they read the bilingual nursing home manual and report back to class next time. We decided to practice how to ask for emergency help, how to ask the charge nurse for information, and how to put the resident at ease.

Ps practice or carry out their assignments: In small groups learners rewrote the transcript of step three as a play. I assigned them to include full sentences instead of single words and to think of ways to calm down the angry resident. They acted it out.

Ps give, receive, and respond to peer and teacher feedback: I asked learners if and why the play was helpful and what we should do next. They said they needed additional practice.

Although there is no one-to-one correspondence, it is possible to indicate at each step of this model where "traditional" curriculum development tasks are integrated. In step 3, for example, learners perform an ad hoc needs analysis that includes an assessment of their language as well as other needs.

Problem-posing and experiential learning methodologies such as the one I described above may not always be appropriate or may not even work— at least not initially. Just like any other methodology, problem posing is the product of a particular culture. As a result, learners may not be able to identify with this methodology and may demonstrate resistance. Their views of what their English class should look like may be very different. Asian learners in particular come to "learn English," not to talk about their problems, and they expect the teacher to decide for them what to teach and to provide a model they can repeat and practice. They trust the teacher's judgment. Statements like "You are teacher you know" are common. I learned that it is important to acknowledge and explore these views and expectations. For example, after asking learners why they wanted me to decide, I learned that they felt uncomfortable with the fact that a teacher solicits input from a learner, not that they didn't care.

Learners resisted problem posing initially for another reason. In many cases, the investigation of issues with learners revealed how much learners still needed to know or learn how to do. Some learners were overwhelmed and their self-esteem and self-confidence went down rather than up.

Problem posing may not work initially. This has to do with learner trust. As the experiences of learners are the starting point, it is important to establish mutual trust and respect first. Otherwise learners won't feel comfortable sharing their experiences.

What to do about these initial obstacles? To overcome these barriers, I tried a variety of things. I made it a point to explain to learners what problem posing and experiential learning methodologies were about and I gave them some examples that showed clearly that it is possible to learn from their experiences as well as learn the language necessary to perform their jobs.

To solicit methodological suggestions from learners, I explored with learners in class how they were taught, how they used to learn, how they liked to learn, and how they felt they could learn best. In one class, I used 25 visuals that showed teaching and learning activities that ranged from extremely teacher-centered to obviously learner-centered. Through a variety of activities with the visuals, we made a list of classroom activities we would and would not use throughout the course and which ones we would try out. Later on in the course, I solicited learner feedback on each activity we tried. In another class, learners acted out their ideal

language class. Using their own languages. they showed me how they envisioned the role of the teacher and the learner in the language classroom.

With my co-workers I discussed how we could meet the learners' request for more systematic language instruction and how cycles could be made more coherent. Inspired by activities in *English at Work: A Tool Kit for Teachers*, we came up with a process that allowed us to structure the initial weeks of classes around a classroom based investigation of the nursing home. We asked learners to describe with whom, when, where, why, and how often they used English already. We analyzed their jobs with them and focused on tasks they could handle with ease. Classes became structured. Learners developed language skills along the way and their self-esteem increased as they discovered how many purposes they could use English for already. Subsequently, learners identified the language requirements of their jobs and compared those to their actual language skills. Consequently, learners became more aware of their needs. Therefore, the planning of future classes with learners was simplified. Below are excerpts taken from an example of how one learner analyzed her job and how she specified where she used English already. It is interesting that her job description included more, and more accurate, information than the job description written up by her supervisor/ trainer.

Ways to Keep Track of Changes

Classroom rituals, learning diaries, individual and group journals, conferencing with learners, feedback sessions at the end of or during activities or classes, meetings with nursing home staff and residents, and observations within and outside the classroom are good ways to keep track of developments at the nursing home and to identify and address learners' issues and needs as they arise.

Classroom rituals, for example, allowed me to identify important issues that needed to be resolved almost immediately. One ritual that worked well was asking simple questions like "What's new?" or "What happened at work today?" Encouraging learners to bring in everything they needed or wanted to read or fill out was another one.

CHALLENGES

On-going curriculum development and active learner involvement in curriculum activities created a whole new set of challenges for me as a teacher. In working with beginning speakers of English, I needed bilingual assistance quite regularly. The fact that I didn't speak the learners' languages very well hindered me. In particular, I needed bilingual assistance to make meetings with individual learners worthwhile.

Another challenge was that my co-workers requested more than a process description. They asked for a framework that was more specific. In response to their request, I suggested they could explore certain themes with learners which seemed to return each cycle. These themes were: teaching and learning; relationships with residents; relationships with supervi-

Time	What?	Where?	Use English?				
			Listen	Speak	Read	Write	Math
Before Work							
8:00 am	I get up	at home in my bedroom	O	O	O	O	O
.....	.....						
9:45	I walk to SCM	on Tremont&Shawmut	+	+	O	O	O
10:00	I go to my English class	in the conference room	+	+	+	+	+
A: Work							
12:00 pm	I punch in and sign up for lunch	in the punch clock area	O	O	+	+	O
12:01	I wash my hands and put on my apron	in the kitchen	+	+	O	O	O
12:05	I serve food and put the trays in the traytruck	at the trayline	+	+	+	O	O
.....	.....						
7:30	I organize the diet cards per floor	at my working table	O	O	+	+	+
7:40	I wash the rice cooker, blender,&coffee maker	in the sink	O	O	+	O	O
7:50	I mop the floor	in my area	O	O	O	O	O
8:00	I punch out	by the exit	O	O	+	O	+
.....	.....						

sors; rights and responsibilities of workers, residents, and the nursing home; health and safety issues; and cultural issues.

The third challenge had to do with program accountability. The question I had to face was: how can I show that the program is achieving its goals? Learners and I documented learning as it happened. The challenge was to make this information quantifiable for the funder and the nursing home management. I tried to meet this demand for accountability by asking learners and supervisors to list the purposes for which workers needed English. I consolidated all suggestions in a checklist of practices and returned it for revision. After that, I asked learners at the cycle's beginning and end to check off purposes for which they could already use English and ones they would like to work on. A statistical analysis of the data indicated progress.

By making the experiences of learners the starting point for curriculum development, the diversity of needs and expectations became abundantly clear. To address the different language abilities, needs, and preferences of learners, I had to come up with alternative ways to manage the classroom. Individualized assignments and activities, pair work, small group work, and the use of materials that did not require me to assume the role of an intermediary are some of the ways I have dealt with this challenge.

Participatory curriculum development is stressful and time-consuming. Involving learners actively did not always run smoothly. There were days that learners just did not feel like assuming responsibility for their own learning. There were also days when conflicts arose between learners and myself about which direction the classroom should take. Besides producing a higher stress level, participatory curriculum development requires more preparation and follow-up time than traditional curriculum development. I had to manage my time differently.

BENEFITS

Learner involvement in curriculum development yields many benefits to learners, teachers, and employers. Learners can make the program more responsive to their needs. This ensures that not just their work-related language needs will be addressed. As learners make a difference, they become more motivated. Their sense of ownership and self-esteem increases. This enhances the opportunities for learning to take place and translates indirectly to improved job performance. People who feel good about themselves are much more likely to do a good job. Another outcome for learners is that they do not only learn the language but that they become better language users as well. Through a classroom-based analysis of the contexts of their experiences, learners further their understanding of the socio-linguistic and cultural forces that shape communication.

Teachers benefit as well. We become more efficient as we are better able to make our classes more responsive to the needs of learners. By involving learners, we are also able to choose classroom activities that are more compatible with how they learn best. We also become less of an intermediary between the learner and materials, which, in turn, fosters the learners' independence.

Besides program efficiency, employers reap additional benefits. Employers, aware of the skills profile of the 21st century entry-level worker, appreciate workers with good decision-making, problem solving, and communication skills and who are flexible enough to cope with problems as they arise. The curriculum development process draws on these skills and, as a result, parallels many of the work-related situations that learners find or may find themselves in.

ONE FINAL QUESTION

In this article I showed how my approach to curriculum development has evolved. I also discussed the benefits and challenges of an on-going curriculum development process that involves learners all the way.

The whole curriculum development story for Workplace ESL has not been told with this article. Many questions remain unanswered. One important question, however, needs some immediate consideration. As the empirical evidence to support worker involvement in curriculum development is growing and as it reveals benefits to learners, teachers, and employers, why do we keep sending mixed messages to funders and sponsors? Why, in other words, do we keep on masking our participatory practice?

Johan Uvin is the on-site Program Coordinator for the Workplace Education Program at the South Cove Manor Nursing Home in Boston's Chinatown area. In Belguim, his country of origin, Johan was involved in first and second language literacy as a trainer, facilitator, and organizational developer. He participated in the first adult literacy pilot project in Belguim as a curriculum developer and facilitator, published a booklet on experiential learning and adult literacy, and founded and directed the "Open Leerhuis," a center for adult basic education. Up until 1987, he was a member of the National Committee for Curriculum Development for Adult Basic Education in the Flemish community of his home country. Since 1988, Johan has worked for the Chinese American Civic Association, which acts as the learning provider in the South Cove Manor partnership.

Adult Dyslexics Speak Out About Dyslexia

John Gibbons, Bob Hannigan, Cheryl Harris, Lorraine Russell, Ron White, and Elaine Williams (in collaboration with Janna Oddleifson)

We would like to explain how we have finally been able to overcome illiteracy. After spending most of our lives convinced we could never learn to read and write, we have recently made enormous progress. The success we have experienced in the last few years is the result of being diagnosed as dyslexic and receiving effective help.

We hope the truth about what we have lived and experienced can provide new insights for professionals who find dyslexia a confusing and controversial topic. We especially hope that what we have to say might make it easier for other illiterate adults with dyslexia to receive the information and help they need.

What Undiagnosed Dyslexia Meant in Our Lives

Although we are different from each other in many respects, we agree on what undiagnosed dyslexia has meant in our lives. As children it meant feeling like normal kids until we went to school. It meant being able to do many things, but not being able to learn to read and write. It meant not understanding why written words were so confusing. And why we could not recognize and remember them. Most of all it meant feeling stupid because we could not learn like the other children.

Right from the beginning we were labeled with inaccurate and destructive labels. We were described as "unmotivated," "immature," "slow," and even "retarded." We interpreted these to mean we were dumb, lazy, and/or bad. If we expressed our hurt and anger through our behavior (and we often did!), our learning difficulties were then attributed to "emotional problems," or "problems in the home." In special classes we learned very little and felt cut off from the normal routine of the school. By the end of eighth or ninth grade our sense of failure, frustration, and alienation had grown to the point where all but one of us dropped out of school. Only Elaine was determined to earn a high school diploma; she graduated, but like the rest of us, was still barely able to read and write.

In our adult years, dyslexia has meant facing adult responsibilities as an illiterate person. It has meant struggling with joblessness, underemployment, and sometimes, poverty. It has meant feeling like imposters and living with the terrible fear that people would "find us out." For some of us, it has meant trying to escape through alcohol and drug use.

In spite of these things, we also accomplished a great deal. We have and are successfully raising families, we developed useful skills, and held responsible jobs. There was much to be proud of. Perhaps it was our successes, the sense of being capable, that finally convinced us to stop being victimized by illiteracy and try again.

Several of us sought help in various adult basic education programs which had differing attitudes and beliefs. In any case, we worked hard with the help of compassionate tutors and instructors. Unfortunately this was not always enough. While some of us made noticeable progress, others made little or no gains. Something still was missing; the pieces were not falling into place as they should. Eventually we all came in contact with people who urged us to undergo diagnostic testing. Only then did we realize that there was a reason why we were having so much trouble learning to read and write: we discovered we were dyslexic.

"The Monkey On My Back Was Finally Put In Its Place!"

Being diagnosed as dyslexic was enormously important to all of us. It freed us psychologically and emotionally from the shame and guilt we had felt for years. It was a tremendous relief because it officially recognized and named a difficulty that had caused us much suffering, but which we had not understood. For the first time in our lives, we could believe it wasn't our fault. John's words accurately express all of our feel-

ings. "The best thing that ever happened to me was being diagnosed as dyslexic! It was a real breakthrough, a revelation! The monkey I'd carried on my back for years and years was finally put in its place, and I felt I could now do something about it!"

We want to make it very clear that being called dyslexic has helped us, not hurt us. In no way do we think it saddled us with blame or a negative label. In fact, it is only since we have been diagnosed as dyslexic that we have been able to shed the accumulation of negative labels that so seriously eroded our confidence and self esteem.

As Elaine has said, "I never understood why I could do many things, but I couldn't learn to read. Half of me accepted the labels of "dumb" and "stupid," but the other half knew I was an intelligent human being. My parents were told that there was no reason why I couldn't learn. They were made to feel it was their fault. In my heart, I knew it wasn't a psychological problem, but there had to be a reason. Once I was diagnosed, it made sense for the first time."

To Bob, "dyslexic" meant he was not a bad person. "Teachers never could see through my behavior and see why I could be such a bad little kid. One teacher told me that I would be a menace to society and never amount to anything. I didn't really know what a 'menace to society' was, but I knew it wasn't anything good. Now I know that even though I did some bad things, I never was a bad person."

The word "dyslexia" can be helpful in other ways too. Ron says, "If I get into a situation where I don't think I can do the reading or writing involved, I am comfortable telling people I am dyslexic, when I would never say to them that I can't read well enough. I can then explain that I might need some help, or more time to do it in, or even that I can't do it at all."

It is hard to put in words what it meant to fully realize that we were not abnormal or unintelligent—that, in fact, we have unique intellectual strengths. To learn that dyslexia is something we were born with, and not something we were responsible for, lifted a huge burden of guilt. For the first time we were given honest explanations of our auditory and sequential processing and memory weaknesses. We began to understand why we hadn't been able to learn in the way that works for most people.

The idea that not everybody learns in the same way was new for most of us. To be assured that we could learn if we were taught in a way that fit our learning style gave us tremendous hope.

We Were Finally Taught In the Way That We Could Learn

Private tutoring with a teacher who had worked successfully with many dyslexic adults was made possible for several of us through the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. One of us received tutoring at the Massachusetts General Hospital's Language Disorders Clinic. Even with all the assurances we had been given, we approached those first tutoring sessions with a great deal of fear. "I was petrified that I wouldn't really be able to remember any better than I had before," Bob recalls. The possibility of failing again was terrifying to all of us. Fortunately, we were working with real "pros" who were not only compassionate and encouraging, but seemed to know exactly how we felt.

The thing we desperately wanted to learn was to be able to figure out words. They seemed unknowable, like "meaningless rows of little black letters." They were like "unfriendly strangers" whose faces and names we could never recognize. In spite of all our fears, our years of failure, and all the things we did not know, we began making progress right from the start. Bit by bit, little by little, skill upon skill, we inched forward. Gradually words lost their mysteriousness. We finally were given the tools we needed to figure them out.

The tutors we worked with were trained in the Orton/Gillingham method of instruction. Before incorporating these procedures into our instruction, they explained how these techniques could help us. They made sure we understood the rationale behind the learning process we would be using.

We began with the basics and learned all of the letter sounds we had never learned. In order to do this we used "multi-sensory" procedures. We had to see, say, and write the sound letter combinations, and we had to do this many times. We needed lots of practice and lots of repetition. Our tutors understood this and gave us lots of drill. They gave us lots of encouragement, too. They told us we would never forget these things once we had learned them in this way. We have found this to be true; we have lost the fear of forgetting.

When people ask us if we minded learning phonics as adults, we answer with a resounding "No!" because we understood what we are doing and why. Lorraine says, "I really needed to go back and learn the vowel sounds. Using key words and gestures, I'm finally learning the short 'e' sound. It is so exciting to learn phonics, like the 'unk' sound, for example, and then go out and be able to read words with those letters. It's really thrilling!"

For Cheryl it's like being given a key to words. "There used to be certain letters I hated because I never could remember what they sounded like. Now all of that is cleared up because my tutor makes sure I know what sounds go with which letters. I also have learned how to break a word down. Before, I had no idea there were rules in the language that you could apply. For

me, this has been a serious relief." "Learning about the language is exciting to me," Elaine agrees. "Who would have ever thought there were four ways you can spell the /sh/ sound? English is crazy, but it is also fascinating!"

Bob appreciates being able to see the patterns. "I can now look across a line of print and see the patterns that are there. Then I can break the words down into syllables and know how to pronounce each syllable. But I had to be taught about these patterns. I had to work with them many times before I really learned them."

The Orton/Gillingham methods are sequential and structured, but they are also very individualized. Our lessons were tailored to our individual needs. Having the structure helped because it let us see the progress we are making and where we had to go next. "It keeps you on your toes and it keeps you moving."

"I could see myself making progress in each lesson," John remembers. "This was exhilarating, to really see that I was moving ahead. That in itself was so encouraging! I was in my forties, had managed two restaurants with eighty-five employees, and had been stuck at a third grade reading for years." After two and one half years of tutoring, John's reading ability went to an eighth grade level.

We all have made excellent progress for the first time in our lives. We no longer feel trapped in the dark tunnel of illiteracy. We owe this to our compassionate and dedicated tutors, and we owe it to the fact that we have finally been taught in a way that we can learn.

We are fortunate people in many ways. We are working towards high school diplomas and attending classes in community colleges. We have had job promotions, and new opportunities in our lives and work. Even so, it is hard not to wonder what might have been—what we might have been able to accomplish if we had had this type of instruction as children. And we can not forget that there are many other people who have not yet discovered that there is a way that they can learn and overcome illiteracy.

Educators Must Respond

No one should have to wait as long as we did to get proper help. We know from experience how it feels to be unable to learn through conventional reading methods. People like ourselves need honest and forthright explanations about why they have had so much difficulty. They should not be kept in the dark about their learning strengths or their learning weaknesses. They should understand what dyslexia is and what kind of help is available.

We urge adults educators to become familiar with the kinds of reading and writing difficulties associated with dyslexia. Even if a professional diagnosis is not possible, appropriate teaching approaches can be made available. People with auditory processing and sequencing weaknesses need more than whole word "sight" methods or partially phonetic methods. They need to have a phonetic, sequential, multi-sensory method that explicitly presents the logical patterns and structures of the English language. They deserve to be taught in the way that they can learn. We believe our lives are living testimony to the importance of what we are saying. After all, who better than we really knows what dyslexia is all about, or understands the way in which we learn?

John Gibbons, Bob Hannigan, Cheryl Harris, Lorraine Russell, Ron White, and Elaine Williams, the six adult learners who contributed to this article, all live in eastern Massachusetts and all share the experience of not discovering, until they were adults, that dyslexia was the cause of their reading problems. They came together as a group a couple of years back to help present a workshop, for Janna Oddleifson at the Wellspring Adult Education Program in Hull, Mass., on dyslexia from the adult student's point of view. Out of this grew the idea of preparing something for this journal. With Janna's help, they began to work on an article which, after various group discussions and individual interviews, after several drafts and much editing, eventually emerged as the piece included here.

Right Brain, No Pain ESL

Molly Flannery and Robert Browning

This article first appeared as a report written by the authors in 1989 as part of a mini-grant project funded by the A.L.R.I.

In my opinion, one of the most disempowering fallacies that has been perpetrated in Western academic education — and in most of the world, I believe — is the notion that we are all born with certain aptitudes and limitations which we can do very little to change, so if we don't "get" a subject as it is presented in the classroom, it's simply because we are not "gifted" or "talented" or "good at" it. However, I propose that much of the fault for people's failure to learn lies with academia and its unimaginative approach to teaching and ignorance of the impact of the emotional and perceptual environment on the learner.

More and more it is being realized that emotional stress can severely limit a person's ability to function successfully. Almost anyone who has experienced the conventional academic system has felt how much anxiety can interfere with concentration, clear thinking, and performance. From throwing up in kindergarten to the complete nervous breakdown traditionally associated with "exam week," we have all shared in the myriad adverse "side effects" that a stressful learning situation can have on the well-being of the learner.[1]

I would venture that close to 90% of the people you meet in this country will tell you that they are not "good at" languages. These people have usually plodded through the typical academic language class, memorizing grammar "rules," vocabulary, and insipid dialogs with little success. When such individuals enter the ESL classroom, they often bring their negative self-images as a language learner with them, and ironically seem geared towards repeating their past failures.

Just as children who have been beaten by their parents are apt to choose spouses who inflict the same on them — some perverse human inclination for the familiar, no matter how gruesome — once we have "failed" at something, many of us incorporate that into our self-images, and blithely repeat these failures. Because of this penchant for the familiar, unorthodox (or unfamiliar) methods in the ESL classroom often meet with some resistance from students who expect lists of rules, vocabulary, highly structured drills, etc. Sensing these expectations and seeing the wisdom in complying to some extent with them, I found myself reluctant to plunge right into juggling, jumping rope, doing yoga, etc. in the ESL classroom, as I had originally intended to do as ways of releasing various physical and emotional blocks to language learning. Though I still hope to get to the point where students will see the relevance of such activities, I found that much ground work needed to be laid beforehand. In the following chapters, I describe those intermediary activities which work within the familiar classroom structure while incorporating some novel, "right brain" approaches.

The right side of the brain is the seat of emotions, in addition to being the center of pitch, melody and rhythm discrimination. It also is the source of the "innate human ability to intuit or perceive as a whole, that underlies the primary human impulse toward expression."[2] The left side is more occupied with analytic, linear thinking. Certainly speech involves both, but academia has traditionally felt more comfortable addressing the left brain.[3] In order to orient my students to some of the "right brain" approaches, we spent some class time discussing learning itself and the effectiveness of various approaches. I find adult learners are much more open to trying something new when they understand some of the reasoning behind it. Furthermore, any awareness of the learning process enhances learning itself.

In these discussions we dwelt chiefly on how children acquire a first language as opposed to how adults learn a second language, the former seeming to

incorporate more of the right side of the brain. Also, we discussed the value of not thinking too much about language while using it — i.e. not invoking the analytical powers of the left brain in attempts to achieve impeccable grammar or mastery of every word except when doing exercises or corrective editing. Some students pointed out that they seem to speak English much better when angry, because then they are only intent upon communicating a feeling, circumventing their usual anxiety about correctness.

Some of this anxiety about correctness can be dispelled by such discussions, but also a relaxed, congenial classroom atmosphere goes a long way towards releasing learners' tensions. A teacher's sympathetic, though authoritative, manner and gentle tone of voice (Have you ever noticed how many language teachers seem to shout at their students?) can make a world of difference.[4] This and a good group spirit, which can be fostered by group outings, projects, team sports, cooking and eating together, in addition to happy classroom interaction, help to create a safe environment, free from the learner's great fear of making mistakes.

I'm still a ways from realizing my vision of a huge ESL classroom with several musical instruments, a reading corner, a game-playing area, an exercise space with juggling balls and chin-up bar, and a stage — something like a day-care center (where does more learning take place than in those?) — in which students and several teachers would move through activities according to their feeling at the moment. However, the approximations to this ideal which I've described in the following sections feel like a good beginning. I hope some of these ideas will be useful to other teachers who are convinced, as I am, that there must be a more natural, no pain, right-brain way to learn a second language.

TALKING GIBBERISH

I was standing in the echoing subway station listening to a child happily babbling to himself in nonsensical sing-song when I realized that the cadence and inflection (or the rhythm and melody) of his babble were quite like real conversation. Even though the consonant and vowel clusters didn't form recognizable words, nevertheless, the sounds did fall into sentence-like phrases with the cadence and inflection of language. This of course got me to thinking about how it is that language is really learned. Does an infant acquire language by mechanisms that could be made available to adult second language learners?

Second language learners generally try to piece the language together word by word and are characteristically overly concerned with meaning and correctness, whereas infants seem to find intrinsic pleasure or interest in imitating, recombining, and inventing sounds, approaching actual language by successive approximations in a playful and largely effortless way. This playful pleasure is for the most part absent from the adult approach to a second language which tends to equate learning with "work" and thus approach it in a typically plodding, methodical, left-brained way which alienates the learner and makes language acquisition seem an endlessly complex maze of words and rules that must be memorized and mastered. In reality language is a basic part of being human, a living, evolving medium for communication which arises naturally from the inclination of minds to reach out to one another.

Talking "gibberish" in the classroom can be a form of play which not only illustrates some of the basic characteristics of a language but also makes learning a less threatening, more welcoming experience.

"Gibberish" Activities: Total Gibberish

By trying to communicate with nonsense syllables the class engages in a "gibberish" conversation. All sounds (except known words) are acceptable as long as some feeling or idea is behind the utterance. A lot of laughter generally ensues, but so does some surprisingly genuine communication and realization about the nature of language, namely, that sharing a common body of words is really only one part of communicating. Gesture, facial expression, intonation, cadence, and context make up a large part as well.[5]

In the course of this exercise a word is often invented by one speaker and then picked up by another and a common meaning evolves. By starting to create their own language in this way students become aware of the fact that language arises out of the impulse to communicate and exists not as a thing in itself but depends on the agreement of people to give it meaning. Too often adult learners concentrate too much on trying to understand each word in a statement rather than apprehending meaning through contextual clues. In this way they often miss the easy and obvious. I remember a student telling me that a woman spoke to her in the checkout line at a grocery store, asking if she could go first as she had only a couple of items whereas the student had a huge cartful. The student struggled to understand her but didn't realize the woman's meaning until it was too late and her own items were being rung up. Had the student been paying attention to contextual clues rather than listening so hard to each word spoken, the woman's meaning would have been immediately apparent.

I find it useful to discuss some of these thoughts with the students both before and after this exercise to encourage thinking about language and the nature of the learning process. By so doing they become better

learners, more interested in the process.

Highlighting Musical Aspects of Language

Before doing a jazz chant, dialog, or any oral activity which uses predetermined language, students imitate the cadence and inflections of each phrase as modelled by the teacher who uses only one syllable, "la" or "da" for example, in place of each syllable in the text. Expressed in this way a sentence such as "Do you like coffee?" would read, "Da Da Da Da Da?", with each syllable rising in pitch.

Students tend to "flow" much better over the words after repeating each expression in this way, that is, focusing on the rhythm, melody, and phrasing — the "musical" or right brain aspects of language.

Zuktious Pingling

This is a fun way to bring the students' attention to recurring inflectional characteristics of English, namely, the use of suffixes and word endings to define usage.

Students complete a "cloze" exercise using a list of nonsense or "gibberish" words which contain typical English suffixes and endings (see example below).

> One morning I went to the store and bought a (1._____) that tasted (2._____). It was so (2._____) that I couldn't (3._____) it. I asked the (4._____) where he got these (1._____s). He wasn't sure so he called the (5._____) and he said they were from (6._____). Then I (7._____) for five minutes because I was so (8._____).
>
> — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
>
> sukerful zuktious Ragalofland supervelixer velixer viddled zinflation lugrect

[Answers: 1=zinflation, 2=sukerful or zuktious, 3=lugrect, 4=velixer, 5=supervelixer, 6=Ragalofland, 7=viddled, 8=sukerful or zuktious]

It's helpful first to familiarize students with the "cloze" exercise by having them complete it using any English words which would make sense in the context, and then moving on to the nonsense words.

Then, rather than pointing out the salient elements contained in the nonsense words, the teacher encourages the students to use their intuition — their sense of what "sounds right." When they've completed the exercise, they're encouraged to explain why they chose the "words" they did, sometimes comparing their nonsense choice to their English choice, so that they begin to tease out the significance of endings and other identifiers contained in the nonsense words.

Lists of English words containing the same identifiers can then be elicited from the students along with discussion of the parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) which they signal and any parallels or equivalents which may be found in the students' first language.

In short, by emphasizing the playful and musical aspects of language learning and encouraging a greater awareness of contextual and structural clues, these gibberish exercises can shift a student's approach away from the laborious word by word struggle to a more holistic grasping of patterns and sounds.

FLOW: Reading for Flow

Once students have become comfortable with the gibberish exercises, you can move closer to actual language, but not so close that you jeopardize the relaxed feeling, free from fear, that you have been trying to instill in them. Reading for flow is not reading for precise pronunciation or meaning, but is meant to familiarize students with the overall intonation, rhythm and phonemes of English.

I hung up a large paper with the following commands in the front of the classroom one day:

1. RELAX
2. GET GOING
3. DON'T STOP
4. DON'T GO BACK
5. DON'T WORRY
6. BE HAPPY

THIS IS FLOW. THIS IS LIFE.

Then we started sight-reading English aloud: rhymed verse, prose, plenty of copy from many sources. We were just reading, moving through material quickly, trying to break out of the tedious, timid, word-by-word left-brain deciphering of text.

I would model an entire block of text at a normal native speed. Also, I would avoid the exaggerated clarity of Classroom-ese. Then I would model the text again in the same way, but this time eliciting group repetitions after each phrase, setting a pace that to them would feel up-tempo so they couldn't think too much. (This line by line modelling may be preceded by the syllabic gibberish modelling described in the preceding section.) As the students became comfortable with the exercise, I introduced longer pieces and modelled them less until the students were sight-reading new material up-tempo without any modelling at all. Whenever the students would revert to their old laborious tactics I would remind them of the six principles of flow which I had displayed on the wall, encouraging them to move forward rather than worrying about

"getting it right."

In order to keep the tempo steady and upbeat and to distract the students from their self-conscious conscientiousness, I suggested that they accompany the reading with a steady pulse made by clapping, drumming on the table, shaking maracas, etc. Surprisingly, keeping a steady beat is not always easy and requires some time and effort. But it is worth the time spent. Group synchrony and the festive din subtly help to create a happier and less threatening learning environment.

Because reading aloud while keeping a steady beat doesn't come easily to all students, some intermediary steps can be helpful. For example, after establishing a steady pulse, the teacher alone reads aloud over the students' beat. Or the class reads aloud while the teacher keeps the beat. Or half the class keeps the beat while the other half reads aloud, etc. etc.

Another technique for encouraging flow in reading aloud is to choose an emotion to portray the reading. This, like the above technique, serves in part to distract the students from their inclination to fall back into their halting deciphering since they are more concerned with expressing the chosen emotion. For example, we would decide to be angry or fighting tears or trying not to laugh while reading a passage aloud. Usually I would model the passage using a particular emotion, first as a block and then line by line, encouraging students to focus on the melodic and rhythmic elements evinced by the emotional reading. The emotion chosen need not be obviously correlated to the text. In fact, sometimes by choosing an inappropriate emotion, the distracting effect is amplified and the meaning of the text still comes through, sometimes with refreshing effectiveness.

This idea of distracting students' conscious minds is part of a new understanding of how the brain works. By focusing on clapping, expressing an emotion, or some such task while reading, the right and left brain are engaged. Usually "teaching is addressed only to the cortical structures and the left hemisphere of the learner, as if he were an emotionless and cybernetic machine. [Whereas] the functional unity of the brain is unbreakable...Therefore the emotional and motivational complex, the image thinking and logical abstraction, must be motivated simultaneously."[6] Just as some people are able to concentrate more fully on a lecture while doodling in their notebooks, it seems a more natural receptivity comes into play when both hemispheres are activated. For this reason, I feel that encouraging, or at least permitting, students to doodle, knit or even rock in a rocking chair during speaking and listening activities might allow them to absorb more material more easily.[7]

Writing for Flow

As with reading for flow, writing for flow aims to bypass the laborious mental translating which often bogs down adult learners. Once the students have chosen a topic which interests them, I ask them to write steadily for five to fifteen minutes, depending on their level and previous writing experience. I tell them not to censure any thoughts or edit any words, but to just let their mind and pen "flow" (again pointing to the principles hung on the wall). I also insist that they not use their dictionaries until they are finished, just approximating their thoughts as well as possible with invented spellings or an occasional word in their first language when necessary. Obviously, to stop and look up words in a dictionary while composing disrupts one's thought processes and prevents one from "flowing," particularly when trying to adapt oneself to the strange syntax and rhythms of a foreign language.

Sometimes emphasizing speed in writing can help students over the hurdle of mental translation. For example, giving them a page with, say, sixty blank spaces laid out in a paragraph formation and asking them to fill them in in five minutes (thus allowing an average of only five seconds per blank), can force them to bypass translating since they simply don't have time for it.

Another way to elicit "flow" in writing is by supplying students with a stack of flash cards containing one word each, turned face down. These should be words the students understand already -- for example, vocabulary words that have been well-reviewed or words that the students themselves supplied in some other context. Also, it's helpful if the words are related to each other to some extent, though this is not essential. Then I ask the students to compose a story or dialog including one new word drawn from the top of the stack in each sentence. This can be done individually, in pairs, or in a group — in which case the writing can be done on the board, large newsprint, or even on an overhead projector either by a student or the teacher.

Again, the principles of "flow" are emphasized during the activity, i.e. not perfection of each word and each sentence, but rather the reproduction of a steady stream of language. I accept any language in this activity, as long as the word on the flashcard is used in a way that shows it is understood and relates somewhat to what precedes it. Amazingly interesting and often humorous material results from these exercises. In fact, it could make a great party game.

Talking For Flow

The above exercise with the stack of face down flashcards also works well as an oral activity, that is, rather than writing each sentence, one simply says it aloud. In this way even more language can be pro-

duced since speaking is less time-consuming, and of course the stories or dialogs can be taped if some record is desired.

One fun way of doing these exercises in dialog format is to have two students perform the dialog. Also, assigning roles or a situation in which the flash card words would be somewhat appropriate — such as doctor/patient if using medical words — facilitates the activity. To remove pressure from the actors, I encourage all the students to supply them with lines—using the flashcard word which the actor picks and shows to the class—as well as theatrical directions, e.g., "Look happy to see her," or "Be scared now." I've found this works surprisingly well. The whole class remains involved though only two are acting. In a professional theater, eight directors/prompters to two actors might be a recipe for disaster, but in my ESL class it seemed just the right combination to keep the ball rolling with minimal pressure on any one individual.

To enhance the above activity, or any classroom dramatization, I find a few props, costume accessories, and even a simple "stage" with sound and lighting work wonders. For example, at one end of my classroom, I have an old rug with two thrift shop arm chairs, and a little lamp and table. This can double as a living room, restaurant, doctor's waiting room, etc. by arranging the chairs at slightly different angles, adjusting the lighting from classroom flourescent to table lamp to even candlelight, and putting on a cassette with some background music or sounds. I've been amazed sometimes at what fine acting, humor and most importantly, language, have come out of some of the shyest students after assuming another character with the aid of strange hats or dim lighting.

This technique of having two actors and several "directors" not only "flows" well when using the flash card cues, but also upon adequately setting any scene. After reading a text or discussing some issue in class, if the text or issue lends itself to dramatization, the above sort of theatrical improvisation can serve as further exploration and practice of the material. However, it's very important first to spend some time delineating the characters, the setting, and the situation before launching into a skit. These I elicit from the students and write on the board. I never try to determine the outcome of a scene beforehand, but simply work to create a clear starting point. Perhaps the most important element to ascertain at the beginning is the objectives of the two characters, i.e. what do they each want as the scene begins. When these skits work well, not only do they aid in language acquisition, but also they build students' confidence by giving them the empowering experience of entertaining an audience, making people laugh or feel things.

Another fun way to get language flowing orally is to imitate the Johnny Carson, or better yet, the Phil Donahue show. The talk show format is one most students seem familiar with, and whether assuming false identities or their actual ones, my students became quite loquacious when caught up in the fun of being "on the air." Using magic markers — or any cylindrical objects — as fake microphones, and setting up a little talk show stage with my two arm chairs described above, I would play host to begin with, occasionally strolling into the "audience" for their input so everyone would stay involved. I would slip into this talk show mode only for about ten minutes now and then, when it seemed a propos. For example, if students revealed in the course of a lesson that they had some interesting expertise or experience, they would become the guests and we would move to the stage and I would interview them in a chatty, low-pressure talk-show style, followed by "audience" questions and comments. Or if discussing a famous person, fictional character, stereotypes, whatever, students could do a role play of the person in question as guest. After having observed the teacher play "host" a few times, on different occasions, students could start to take on that role when comfortable with it. Again, as with the dialogue improvisations described earlier, all coaching from fellow students on what to say and how to act is encouraged as it lessens any pressure felt by the performer and involves the whole class on a participatory level.

Theater as a means of reducing anxiety and getting people to open up and express themselves more—use more language— might be surprising to people who associate acting with "stage fright" and feeling "tongue-tied." Certainly it is important that these activities be presented in a light, playful way and that no one be forced to participate, though a bit of coaxing sometimes helps. Also, I don't recommend using theater games until students are relatively at home as a group. But once they are comfortable, these techniques—just like dressing up for Halloween—can truly uninhibit students, a factor so crucial in language learning, in ways that regular classroom "discussions" never could.

A less theatrical activity in which students spontaneously produce large quantities of language is a take-off on "Password." The students, preferably in pairs, are again given stacks of face-down flash cards containing words familiar to them. The students in each pair then take turns drawing the top card from the stack and trying to elicit the written word from the other student, who hasn't seen the card, by using as much language as they like, provided that it's English and that they use no form of the word written on the card. All the pairs of students can be carrying on this activity simultaneously so everyone is very involved the whole time. This can be done as a race if each group has the

same number of cards to work through. Racing can actually help students speak more flowingly as they become more concerned with getting their point across quickly than with forming a perfect sentence. Also, being able to explain a word using other words is a very useful skill for any language learner who has moments when a desired word won't come to mind.

All these "flow" activities— reading, writing, and speaking—aim at producing or moving through large quantities of language rather than achieving perfect syntax, pronunciation, or comprehension. They build students' confidence by immersing them in lots of language without any pressure towards perfection, helping them to bypass the paralyzing self-consciousness and conscientiousness of so many adult second language learners.

MUSIC: Music as Foreground

There's nothing like knowing a song by heart in another language to make you feel as though you're getting a grip on the language. Memorizing anything is empowering, but few things are as pleasurable or as effortless to keep repeating to oneself as a beautiful song. Also, lyrics which have been well set to a melody reflect the rhythms and intonations of natural speech. For example, the melody to "Do you know the way to San Jose?" goes up to its highest point on "way" and also ascends slightly to the last syllable, "-se," just as the words would if spoken by most native speakers.

For this reason, frequent and regular repetition of a few good songs over the course of a semester can greatly enhance the language learning process.[8]

The most important factor in selecting these songs is that the students like them. I always encourage them to bring in cassettes of any songs they want to learn, but if that doesn't work out, I find that a good beat and words they can relate to emotionally are key factors in selecting songs to learn. The cassette, "The Best of Carly Simon," though rather dated, has several songs which have been popular with my students because of the above mentioned factors and also the clarity of her enunciation.

Often I introduce a song by just telling the students a little about the composer or performer and then allowing them to listen to it without a lyric sheet, asking them to listen for the feeling or mood of the song. Then I hang the lyrics on newsprint in front of the class and we listen again as I point to the words being sung. Finally I give them their own copy. This procedure seems to allow the students to focus on the feeling and flow of the song, rather than getting bogged down in the text too soon.

Writing in response to music, rather than memorizing a song, is another effective way of using music in language learning. Music evokes such subtle emotions that trying to translate them into language is a challenge even when dealing in one's first language. But for this very reason, this activity encourages students to stretch their use of language, abandoning familiar formulas, in order to express something they may never have expressed before.

I usually play about three selections of about three minutes each, suggesting that students shut their eyes and let the music bring forth whatever feelings or images it will. Then after each selection, I give them five minutes to write, just to pour out whatever may have come to them during the song, without censoring themselves or using the dictionary, permitting invented spellings and words from their first language, just as in the "writing for flow" exercises. When we've finished, we go back and read aloud what we've written, listening to a snatch of each song as we go to recall what the writings refer to.

Almost any music that's not too strange to the students and that has strong feeling works well for this activity. If the music has lyrics, I always emphasize that understanding them is not important to the exercise — they are to respond to the feeling of the song. I believe this focusing on feeling helps students, as in the first gibberish exercise, to get away from their word-by-word struggles in both comprehension and speaking, and relate to language in a more relaxed, intuitive way.

Music as Background

Basically there are two ways I find background music has an uninhibiting or relaxing effect in the ESL classroom. The first is the same effect it has at a party or in a bar or restaurant: it creates a festive atmosphere while providing some privacy for conversation. Just as low lighting "takes away the shy," as one student told me at a party, some background music before class or during the break when students often chat informally among themselves or with the teacher does the same thing. Certainly nothing inhibits language learning quite so much as shyness, so I greatly value any way of reducing this barrier. Background music also works well for the same reasons when students are working in pairs or small groups.

The other way I use background music is to accompany composition writing and written grammar exercises.[9] Instrumental music, rather than vocal, is most conducive to such activities as it is generally less distracting as long as it's not too boisterous. The right instrumental music has a soothing and enveloping effect, shutting out outside noises or little classroom sounds which can be disquieting. Particularly when writing compositions, background music can allow one to feel more alone with one's thoughts—even in a classroom full of people. This aloneness is helpful to

concentrating on writing. Also, if the same music is used regularly as background for a given activity, hearing that music can start to help one recapture the frame of mind necessary to that activity. That is, a sort of Pavlovian conditioning takes place.

Both as foreground and as background, there are many ways in which music facilitates language acquisition. But most importantly, as music is a more direct expression of feeling than language, singing songs in a new language can be an excellent means of starting really to feel a new language. That is, a word when sung rather than spoken can resonate at a deeper level where one need not willfully memorize that "happy" means "feliz," for example, but one feels by the very sound of the word set to music that it is so. In this way a more natural association between sound and meaning in a new language can take hold, so that one starts to absorb intuitively new words in larger quantities as they somehow just seem to mean what they do.

SLIDES AND VIDEO

Pictures have always been a popular and effective way to get people to talk or write about something. I'm forever keeping an eye out for interesting, emotionally evocative material in magazines, photo-anthologies, etc. to use as focuses for expression with my students.

One interesting variation of this technique is to show slides to your students. I started by using slides of various places that I have been in my life. I would hand out writing paper which would be divided into four parts, two parts per side, numbered one to four. Then I would show a slide or a group of related slides to the students and ask them to write six sentences about them in the first block on their papers. If six seemed like too many then I would ask for four or three depending on how things were going. When everyone had their sentences written in the first block, I would show another slide or group of slides and repeat the process, this time writing the sentences in block two, and so on until I had elicited a dozen or so sentences from each student.

At this point I would show the slides again while various students read their sentences along with the showing as an accompanying narration. This not only gave them a chance to read their work aloud, but also made for interesting listening, as each person's response to the pictures was unique. Also, I played soft background music while showing the slides, which combined with the subdued lighting and group focus on the projections to create a very low anxiety environment in which to compose.

A variation on this which takes advantage of the same environment, but places more emphasis on listening comprehension, results when the teacher plays the role of narrator. In this type of exercise I talk to the students about the slides as I showed them, and periodically checked their comprehension either by simply asking them what I had said about a particular slide or sometimes by actually handing out a set of written questions.

Whether narrating myself or having the students write, the subdued lighting, the music, the colorful projection always gave these events a memorable quality which everyone enjoyed.

To involve the students at a deeper level I asked them to bring in their own pictures. However, most people tended to have snapshots rather than slides, and these proved to be more difficult to organize and display. They tended to end up all over the table with everyone looking at different pictures at the same time. Some conversation was generated, but most often the interaction was chaotic and fragmented, unamenable to group focus.

If only I could project the snapshots as I could slides, then they could be viewed in an orderly sequence which the group could concentrate on together. The answer lay in the school's video camera. Perusing the manual one day I noticed that the camcorder had the capacity to record photographs onto video cassettes and to display them on a monitor at the same time. The school had a beautiful 24" color monitor and so with a little thought and a few connectors I set up a system to show photographs on TV.

I'd sit in the back of the room with the camcorder pointed down at the table, and with the help of a little 30 watt spotlight which hardly affected the room at large, I'd slide photos under the camera and everyone could watch them on the TV. Then I discovered that these photo sequences could be recorded on video tape while being displayed like slides. This created a whole new set of possibilities. Why not create videos while doing the picture exercises using snapshots and narratives to tell people's life stories?

So I tried it. Again in the semi-dark room with the group focus on a screen, and with music in the background, we looked at pictures and talked about them. Not only did the snapshots take on a whole new dimension when seen on TV, but the video medium itself was of interest to the students. And the fact that we could record the event and watch it afterward like a TV show made us realize what a tangible product this exercise could create: autobiographical documentaries in video. What began as an extension of an exercise to use pictures to generate language became a basis for a class project in media.

We're still working on these projects, and discovering that there are many ways of using video as a catalyst and tool in the language acquisition process. In fact video literacy, along with computer literacy may well play a very significant role in the future of

language. Ask yourself: How will we be communicating in the future? What will tomorrow's language be like? Surely video is not a medium to be overlooked.

EPILOGUE

Teaching of any sort requires consumate patience and imagination. Each student learns in a slightly different way, so there is no one way that works or even should work for everyone. As a teacher I know I sometimes feel frustrated when students don't seem to "get" a lesson I feel I presented quite clearly. It takes tremendous energy to step out of my own way of perceiving and feeling to imagine what the student is struggling with. But this is what has to be done. As one ESL student wrote on a teacher assessment form, the ideal teacher is one "que siente lo que siente el alumno" — that is, one who feels what the student feels.

Notes

1 "The combination of a fearful mind-set and the social suggestive norm of man's limited capacities [means] pupils suffer to greater or lesser degree from 'school neurosis.'" Lozanov, p. 52

2 Arguelles, p. 4

3 "The deep-rooted preference for the ... left brain in so many cultures makes one wonder whether it may not be related to the patriarchal value system. Whatever its origins may be, there have recently been attempts to promote more balanced views of brain functioning and to develop methods for increasing one's mental faculties by stimulating and integrating ... both sides of the brain." Capra, p. 294

4 "Infantilization is a controlled state of intuitive activity, emotional plasticity, increased perceptiveness, and confidence ... [which] arises when a highly harmonized contact is established with a person possessing authority." Lozanov, p. 149

5 "When sentences made up of nonsense words are given an intonation contour, there is a left ear (right hemisphere) advantage for identification of that contour, such as telling whether they are declarative, imperative, conditional, or interrogative patterns." Segalowitz, p. 93

6 Lozanov, p. 151

7 "Right-brained people are haptic. That is, they move a lot. In school they are always in trouble for not being able to sit still in class....Not only does the left-brained world not understand that some people need to move to learn, it seldom provides the opportunity to move in a learning situation." Vitale, p. 90

8 "The right hemisphere basis for intonation has been exploited in therapy...[in] a program called Melodic Intonation Therapy, whereby aphasics are taught phrases in song, since singing is often preserved in aphasia while voluntary sentence construction is not. Gradually, the melodic part of the sequence is deemphasized until the patient has at his command the phrase alone....The developers of the therapy suggest that it will be most effective with patients who have good comprehension but inadequate production [like many second language learners]." Segalowitz, p. 38

9 "Some of us [right-brain dominant people] need to hear music in order to learn or need to have noise around us all the time." Vitale, p. 29

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Teaching Lesson

In Memorium for Charles King and Tiki McConnell

Marty Kingsbury

(1)

I stand at the blackboard ready to teach
but they read the paper (or flip the pages),
or sleep, or eat, or graffiti the desk.
Paragraphs are boring, history's a snooze,
science don't matter, and the story's o.k. I guess,
but who cares?
Their uncles O.D. and their friends are arrested
or caught in the crossfire of alleged gangs.
They're pregnant at 16, they work until midnight
and if they ever do what they did again,
then they'll be living on the streets so help me . . .

I sit at the table ready to listen
and the days creep by with no progress.
Over and over and over we go
the number dead, the number wounded,
the number now in jail.
The language is guns, the science is guns,
the history is deep and cavernous.
And when they write, which is often, which is incredible,
Their words slash the page as if it were skin.

(2)

I dream long and deep
sitting at a trial with my students
and we watch the rapist go free.
He's a puny man, hunched in ripped leather,
with nowhere to go and nothing to do.

Carmellita comes with me to the river of dreams
and we prowl the bank with mud to our knees.
We gather more women to find the rapist.
We wear guns and knives strapped in leather
and our arms are strong like wartime.

When we find him, we slay him.
It's as simple as that.

His body bobbles on the skin of the river.
Blue skin, pale hair, his own guns
strapped in leather.

We set to work and more women gather.
More stones! More stones!

We dig till our elbows are covered in blood,
till the river takes this man on his journey,
till the moon sets deep in the night.

And then we stop
because I have to get up and go teach.

(3)

I stand at the blackboard ready to teach
and I don't care what is "going on."
The only thing that exists for these next minutes
is Harriet Tubman and Langston Hughes,
the role of the father in family life,
or a single atom of uranium.

You're out of this class if you attempt a basket;
it's two minutes for one minute if you're late to class;
you wanna gab? Get out.
I have lost my quality of mercy.

One brave student from the back of the class
says my mouth is too smart,
my words are too harsh,
that I'm taking too much privilege.

But the gundrugdeaths multiply by 300%.
Like a cancer it broods in every city,
and though we discuss it less and less,

like Vietnam there's a body count,
every goddamn day.

I am old at 38,
exhausted by 5 o'clock,
worn thin by Thursday,
and looking for a new job in March,
every March,
until like Siddhartha,
"the years passed and nobody counted them."

(4)

I dream daily now, and we are rarely heroic.
I get nuclear waste for show and tell,
a field trip to NASA, and we escape to the moon,
and four executions like Tienenman Square,
but the bullet only grazes my head
because I am the teacher,
the only teacher,
trying to pull them through.

And then it is *poof* the end of June
and then they start marching
out of my classroom door:
soldier by soldier,
senior by senior,
junior by sophomore,
by freshman,
by friend.
They look younger now than ever, I think
and their eyes are lovely (dark and deep).

So show me handsome and show me proud
when you shake my hand today,
and take this world, it is yours now,
and shape it as I have taught you,
for this is a time like no other,
except birth.

Marty Kingsbury taught the University School at Action for Boston Community Development for two years. She was the teacher for 30 students from the Boston area working toward their high school diplomas. In 1989 the students published a book entitled Problems in Contemporary Society *(available at the A.L.R.I. library). Special thanks to Sandy Martinez, Carolyn Hunt, Claire Shepard, Marisa Klein-Iacomini, Jay Ostrower, Jay Grymes, Carol McCarthy, and Bonnie Englehardt for all their help. The poem printed here was written in 1989-1990.*

Adult Education: Self-Determination or Self-Delusion?

Molly Mead

Over the past twenty years there has been tremendous development in adult education, both in the number of educational programs for adults and in the growth of ideas about how best to teach adults. I want to speak to the latter development and its impact on the former. Specifically, I want to talk about the idea that adult learners, as opposed to their teachers, should have the primary role in setting the direction for what they learn and how they learn it.

The idea that adult students should have a major role in setting goals for their education has taken solid root in many adult education programs, and for good reason. It is an idea founded on the premise that students who are actively involved in education will learn more than those passively waiting for their teachers to transmit knowledge. It is also an idea that is fully compatible with the concept that education is about power. An educational endeavor that involves students in making critical decisions about what and how to learn is presumed to be an endeavor that makes important and necessary changes in the power relationship between teacher and student.

I am firmly committed to the concept that learning is better when it is active. I also think it is essential for education to raise questions about power relationships and to embody a relationship between teacher and student that represents an equitable distribution of power. However, I have come to question whether the practice of allowing students to be self-directed, at least as many of us have implemented that practice, is truly effective. At its worst, it is a practice where we, as teachers, give up an important piece of power. In abdicating our role as direction setter, we teachers create a power vacuum in which our students flounder to make the best choices.

This is an important but difficult issue for adult educators to grapple with. Allowing students to set the direction for their learning seems intuitively right to lots of teachers for the reasons I've mentioned. However, I am convinced that it is a practice that has many problems. Our students are often not best served when we let them choose what and how they want to learn. I have struggled with this issue for the past 20 years, as an adult educator, as an adult student and as a researcher. In what follows, I would like to share what I have figured out and the questions I am still asking. I hope this article opens up and continues a critical dialogue. The adult educators I have had the fortune to know are committed to their teaching and desirous of doing good work. The question is, what should teachers be doing to do our best teaching. I know I do not have all the answers; I believe I can shed some light.

Personal Context

A few words about myself are in order, because what we believe is always inextricably woven with who we are, what we have experienced. For twelve years, until recently, I taught adult students in an alternative, adult education college within the University of Massachusetts/Boston. The students in this college are mostly working class, racially diverse, supporting themselves and family while going to school. I have also, for the past twenty years, run a wide variety of workshops and training programs for other adult educators and for human service workers. Both my college and my workshop teaching has been based on the premise that adult students should set the direction for what they learn and how.

On the other hand, most of my experiences as a student were not in adult education programs incorporating principles of adult education. I went to an Ivy League university as an undergraduate, did mediocre work and concluded that I was not a good student. I got a master's degree from a program that was the embodiment of traditional education, did better work and hated it. Finally, I got my doctorate from a school of education that practiced both adult and traditional education. For the first time, I was confident enough as

a learner to be genuinely reflective about my education.

I have gone through several changes in beliefs about good education during all of this. At first, I thought traditional education was marvelous and I was not. Then, I embraced adult education and thought for a time that I had the answers about good teaching. Now, I am less sure about either of those positions. I understand the questions to be much more complex.

Adult Education

What do I mean when i talk about the ideas of adult education? Although people can mean many things by this term, I am primarily referring to the ideas of Malcolm Knowles. Knowles came out of a time in adult education (the early 60's) when programs for adult learners were starting to grow but practice was not. Adults were being taught much as children have been—what I refer to as traditional education. By this I mean education in which the teacher is the acknowledged expert and authority, and in which learners are relatively passive, taking in what the teacher puts out and returning what the teacher asks.

Knowles questioned this practice and rightly so. He argued that adults are different from children and should be taught differently. Adults, he said, have more experience, and their experience needs to be incorporated into the educational process. Adults, he believed, are more self directed, so they should be allowed to choose the direction for their education. Adults, he concluded, are oriented in the present moment, and education needs to provide answers to questions adults have in their lives. Many adults, both teachers and students, were delighted with what Knowles was proposing and began to put his ideas into practice. Students were asked to set goals for what they wanted to learn. They were also asked to take major responsibility for how they wanted to learn and to share a role in evaluating their efforts. The only major critique of Knowles came from educators of children. They argued that children are not so different. Knowles conceded the point and began to argue that everyone should be taught in this new way.

As I mentioned earlier, I was one of the teachers who whole-heartedly embraced Knowles' ideas and put them into practice. My teaching validated and incorporated the experiences of my students. My methods were active and involving. The students were major partners in setting the goals of a course or workshop and evaluating the success of our efforts. I was mostly a facilitator of the student's learning. It was fun and exciting. Was it the best I could do? Was it best for my students? Was it best for me? Several experiences led me to ask these questions. I will share two.

The first took place when I was a doctoral student in a course in evaluation research. This was a course I had taken because I knew little about the topic and had some interest in how to conduct evaluations. The teacher could have borrowed a page out of Malcolm Knowles' book on teaching. On the first day of class he asked us to write about what we wanted to learn. I was stunned. I had no idea what to write. Finally, I managed a few weak sentences about wanting to learn different methods of conducting evaluations. I had no sense of what to say beyond that. The professor collected the papers and said the course would be significantly shaped by what we had written. Sure enough, the next week he came in with a syllabus based on our expressed interests. Then, he indicated that there would be no required text. Rather, we should choose readings on evaluation that interested us and hand in written reflections on those readings.

The course continued in this vein. The teacher presented some information, but most of the activities were designed to pull out what we knew and to reflect on how we would incorporate what we were learning into our work. The teacher was an acknowledged national authority on evaluation research. His main technique for sharing what he knew was to encourage us to ask him questions. His answers were always helpful. I desperately struggled to frame good questions. I was interested in what he knew. I was limited in my ability to access his knowledge.

The experience was an incredible one for me. Although he was perhaps practicing an extreme form of adult education (and I am not so sure about that) I could recognize many of his methods as being my own. I had two reactions to his teaching. The first is that I did not learn all I could have because I did not know the questions to ask. The second is that this teacher did not impart all he could have. I am not suggesting that he should simply have lectured each week imparting his expert knowledge, but there needed to be more room for his voice. The course reminded me of a beautifully wrapped package with little inside. It looked good, but it was sadly hollow.

The second experience occurred in my role of teacher/advisor. The student was a black woman, mother of eleven children, resident of the projects, community activist extraordinaire. I was advising her, as I did all my students, with the idea that she was necessarily self-directed. When she came to me looking for direction, I suggested to her that she needed to decide what courses to take, what papers to write, what work to do. When she talked about pressures from other areas in her life, I was sympathetic and indicated that she needed to set her own priorities. Eventually, she dropped out.

This is a hard example to talk about. I am not suggesting that I should have told her what to do, made

her decisions for her. But I know that I have an enthusiasm for learning (and a sense of what a student needs to do to be successful) that this woman did not share. With her lack of confidence, and her at best ambivalence towards education, I was telling her that it was all up to her. Is it little wonder that she decided to leave? This woman had a dream. She wanted to own a home. She was clear that education was virtually essential to that dream. Without a college education, her hope of earning enough to manifest that reality was severely limited. I feel that I failed that student. In a life of tough choices, I did little to help her seize the choice of education. As far as I know, she still lives in the projects.

I could share many other stories like this--stories from my teaching, from other teaching that I have seen. I think these two stories illustrate the point. We have to ask much tougher questions of the basic premises of adult education. In our well-meant desire to share power with our students, in our right attempts to treat our students with respect, acknowledge their lives and needs, we may have developed a practice that does not do them or us justice.

A Word About Values

There is another important critique of the idea that adult students should be self-directed. It is well presented by Paulo Freire. Freire posits that education is about power and values. Education can be used to maintain the status quo, to support dominant culture values and maintain existing power relationships. Alternatively, education can be an instrument to allow people to have a critical relationship to the dominant culture, to question the implicit values of that culture. To this end, education can be a means to change power relationships. Freire, of course, says good education must do the latter.

The ideas of adult education, as I have described them above, are not likely to result in a questioning of the dominant culture. Dominant culture values are so pervasive and implicit that it is a major task to surface them and be critical of them. That, essentially, is the role of the teacher. Freire would say that the teacher should be in a dialogic relationship with the students, understanding the students' world and developing educational practices that allow the students to have a critical relationship to that world. This is education as radical practice.

Knowles ideas, on the other hand, are a manifestation of liberal thinking. Each individual makes his or her own choice. All choices are fine as long as they are the choice of the individual. Knowles presumes that this is value-free education, or education in which students freely choose their values. Freire argues that this is almost always education that supports the status quo, that supports existing dominant culture values and power relationships, because it is too difficult for an individual student, with no support from a teacher, to adopt a critical stance toward that culture.

So, What Should We Do?

I believe that teachers and students each have an important role in any educational endeavor. I favor education in which students are active learners and power relationships are challenged, including the power relationships between student and teacher. I agree with Paulo Freire that teaching is a dialogic relationship between teacher and student and one in which each has to learn from the other. However, it is critical that teachers fully own our part in that relationship.

When I teach, there is a reason I am in that role. Perhaps I am extremely knowledgeable about the content area. Perhaps I bring particular skills or a value perspective to the subject. Always, I expect myself to have been thoughtful about the content area. I also have skills as a teacher. I have ideas about and experience with a variety of teaching methods. My job, then, as a teacher is to have a very strong voice in the educational endeavor. If I know a lot about the subject, students deserve the benefit of my knowledge. If I have developed some clarity about my political perspective, students deserve to know that. To be true to myself, I need to teach what I know and from the value perspective I have developed. That does not mean that there is no room for students to set some of the direction. But I would argue that setting direction is a shared process. It is not enough for students to simply be self-directed. That is an abdication of the teacher's responsibility and power.

I said at the beginning that I have as many questions as answers. I don't know exactly what it looks like when teachers and students both have power in an educational relationship. I suspect that it can take many different forms. But I do know that simply letting students make all the important decisions about what to learn and how is not power sharing. It is abdicating power to the students and creating a situation in which many students will flounder or make old, familiar choices that do not enable them to take a critical perspective on what they are learning.

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Integrating Work and Learning in the SFCC

Robert Burkhardt, Jr.

A different version of this article first appeared in the Fall 1989 issue of The Journal of Experiential Education. *The SFCC (San Francisco Conservation Corps), the subject of the article, was founded in 1983 as the nation's first municipal employment program for young people. The "boot camp"-like program, intended for men and women, aged 18-23, who are unemployed and out of school, includes paid physical work on San Francisco's public lands and facilities, as well as a required education component.*

How can we so integrate labor and learning for youth that their passage to adulthood makes educational, technical, social and cultural sense? What is the best way to teach the interdependent dignity of work and education? Is it possible to choreograph the rituals, conventions and procedures of a curriculum so that young adults will internalize habits which in turn become the tools of lifelong learning, without stifling their individuality? These questions are at the heart of the sixty service and conservation corps programs in states and cities acros. America, and their answers have intriguing implications for the structuring of educational activities in public and private schools. Here is how one program, the San Francisco Conservation Corps (SFCC), currently answers the questions.

It was Crew 10's turn, so their representative Craig walked to the blackboard, wrote, turned and announced, "La palabra de la semana es 'strategia.' Who's got a definition?"

We had done our daily exercise at 7:30 sharp: stretching, 120 jumping jacks, 60 pushups, 160 situps, trunk rotations, cherry pickers and a brisk run. The staff and corpsmembers of the SFCC had come in from the Great Meadow at Fort Mason for our Monday community meeting which, after a brief silence for focus, and "hello" in a dozen languages, always begins with "Word of the Week."

"Plan?" offered a hesitant voice, followed by an uncomfortable silence as many of the 100 corpsmembers studied their workboots. "Strategy" is not a frequent flyer in the street vocabulary of high-risk, inner city youth. Craig, who was himself uneasy teaching his peers, turned and quickly printed a definition on the blackboard. Others put the word of the week up in Spanish, Chinese and French.

"It is Corps strategy," I reminded them, "that you write about the word of the week at least once in your journal. And we look forward to Crew 10's 'strategic' skit this Friday." Craig sat down to applause, and the meeting moved on to announcements and issues before the crews left the center for their work sites, where they are currently, among other tasks, removing graffiti, landscaping a park, recycling cans and bottles, teaching literacy in a summer program for latino youngsters, doing home repair for the frail elderly, installing play structures in childcare centers, completing a mural, and removing fish from a pond they are draining to repair.

Three years ago I personally selected the weekly words and led the discussion in search of definitions. You can hear the need to control (disguised as a search for virtue) in the words I chose: service, quality, production, character, learning, competence, etc. One day a corpsmember walked up and asked, "How come you always get to pick Word of the Week?" Since that date, on a rotating basis, the crews have picked the words, and while there have been some doozies, corpsmembers hit paydirt repeatedly: crack, minimum wage, electoral college, poetry, violence, contract, music, colors, responsibility, culture, racism, to name but a few.

The Friday skits amplifying and reinforcing the word of the week began several years ago as brief, wooden productions watched by a disinterested, uncomprehending crowd. As experience with the medium fueled corpsmember imaginations, the perfunc-

tory performances evolved into two- and three-scene scripted playlets, with props, confronting the issues and subthemes of daily life in the Corps, presented to an audience of critics. "You call that art? Hell, wait till you see what we have planned for next week!" The corpsmember-produced word of the week skits normally focus on work relations (especially the injustice of having to take orders from a supervisor who doesn't know anything), but onstage we have seen babies delivered, death by crack overdose, a revolution in the streets after a "stolen" presidential election, ethnic dance, muggings, weddings, gay-baiting, family violence, theft, a rap on the virtue of recycling, and more. Crew 1 once selected "imitate" as w.o.w., and a corpsmember BECAME administrative staff, mirroring our pontifications, our foibles, our mannerisms and our twitches. It was hilarious, particularly during the Spanish translations (we ask bilingual corpsmembers to serve as translators at community meetings, strengthening a variety of their skills). Brief program announcements became long discourses about the Golden Gate Bridge; complex statements were translated monosyllabically, delivered deadpan by polished bilingual actors, secure enough in their surroundings to lovingly, skillfully bite us. The staff was bent over in tears of laughter.

The Friday skit always follows crew reports, in which the 18-23 year old corpsmembers summarize the projects on which their crews are working. These reports are a conscious attempt to develop leadership through public speaking, and include the corpsmember's name and crew, what the crew "stands for," the nature of the project and the reason for doing it, tools used, safety hazards encountered, when intelligence was most used, when the crew worked best as a team, where they will be next week, and the most important thing the corpsmember learned during the week (which frequently is to listen to her/his supervisor). Reports may be in English or Spanish, and corpsmembers are encouraged to give reports in a language different from their native tongue, fostering cross-cultural appreciation. We regularly ask American-born corpsmembers to imagine themselves obligated to give a crew report one year from now in Tagalog, Chinese, Polish or Arabic; we then ask them to find a way outside community meeting to thank Ariminda, Juan or Mauro for having mustered the bravery and skill to present a crew report in English.

Since most young people are going to watch television, why not educate their eyes? Eighteen months ago I taped a piece off the CBS Evening News about the South African singing group Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Ladysmith was up for a "Grammy" (which it won), and the four-minute segment hauntingly interwove apartheid, injustice, creating culture and popular music. I showed it to the SFCC corpsmembers, who watched silently, attentively, and broke into spontaneous, enthusiastic applause at the end. Thus was born SFCC Video News.

As a result, several nights a week I tape Brokaw, Rather, Jennings, McNeil-Lehrer, PBS, CNN and anything else which might provoke discussion and expand minds. In that community meeting when Craig named "strategy" as the w.o.w., I later wrote on the board "What is the purpose of art?" Ideas flew in from all over the room: "For beauty." "To use the imagination." "To show truth." "To offend." "To give hope." I asked if movies qualify as art, and most corpsmembers assented. After framing the discussion, we watched an ABC "Person of the Week" story on Spike Lee's "Do The Right Thing," and we talked for a few minutes about imagination, offense, truth and hope.

Charles Kuralt's "Sunday Morning" on CBS and NBC's "Assignment America" have likewise provided rich, multicultural slices of Americana to help SFCC corpsmembers better understand the world around them. Whether the topic is orphans overcoming adversity, Kiowa dancers, competing environmental interests, stroke victims who play the piano, Latino youth who make the Olympics, or Black singers who perform in Japanese, there is an immediacy to the visuals which piques interest as it expands world views. Corpsmembers are asked to express and defend opinions about the stories. We believe that SFCC Video and the related discussions will bear cumulative fruit. Combined with the speaking, listening, reading and writing experiences already mentioned, they help to foster an environment where opinions are sought, questions are useful, minds are engaged and ideas are honored.

Less than half the SFCC corpsmembers have high school diplomas, and one-third did not grow up speaking English. These factors reinforce our decision to provide a daily program of reading and writing. All corpsmembers keep journals, and their work supervisors write responsive comments in an ongoing dialogue. We do not care so much what corpsmembers write as THAT they write, every day. Four days a week, out on the work sites, corpsmembers use breaks, down time or the lunch hour to record their feelings and frustrations, aspirations and achievements, as well as technical aspects of the deck they are building or fence they are constructing.

After thirty-two hours of paid labor Monday through Thursday—corpsmember wages currently begin at $4.35/hour and can go as high as $6.10—Friday is education day. Each corpsmember has had at least one 4-6 p.m. class earlier in the week: English as a second language, G.E.D. preparation, Spanish for anglos, etc. On Friday mornings, immediately after

our Chinese fitness exercises, writing circles start the day. All staff members lead a group of five or six corpsmembers, and no two writing groups approach the forty minutes in the same way, except that everyone writes, and everyone shares her/his writing. We once considered having a weekly topic for all groups, but staff overwhelmingly insisted on personalizing writing for the individual groups.

My own section is probably representative: Lynell, who is very bright and prefers drawing cartoons or performing rap to writing; Demian, enthusiastic and quick with words, though terse in prose; Cesar, who doesn't even like to write in Spanish; Robert, who writes methodical, painstaking, scholarly responses; Sylvia, whose mind is always off somewhere, usually with her three year old; Mike, hearty and cheerful when with us, but currently in jail for two months; Andres, serious and careful, who helps translate for Sylvia and Cesar; and Carmen, new to the SFCC and slowly figuring out our system. Each week we reveal a little more of ourselves: family problems, aspirations, past failures and successes. Each week the corpsmembers grow more able to contradict me and assert their own opinions. Each week, the written word is somehow less threatening and more of a tool for living. It is a slow, but palpable process.

We started "The Reading" two years ago when we determined that a daily reading/thinking/speaking exercise would promote critical thinking, improve morale and increase production. Each work supervisor gets a packet every morning with ten copies of the day's reading, which fits on one side of a page and is prefaced by a provocative question: What do you say to someone who has lost a loved one? What if your daughter were a lesbian? How would you solve the crack problem? What is fear? Who were the freedom riders? What makes a good worker? What is a Catch-22? We have developed some 350 such readings. Below the question is text. For example, one reading asks, "How did the world begin?" Below are a passage from Genesis, a paragraph on the big bang and a Native American creation myth.

In the van on the way to the worksite, the supervisor asks the question of the day and elicits responses from the crew. The supervisor's ability as a facilitator plays no small role in the success of the discussion, since many corpsmembers prefer walkmans to Wordsworth. There are benefits to this discussion which go beyond preparing the crew for the day's reading. Corpsmembers may now experience their supervisors as curious, vulnerable, questioning human beings, rather than as martinets who simply issue orders and enforce discipline. Further, illiteracy is no barrier to opinions, and the discussion can become sufficiently lively to engage corpsmembers emotionally, which can in turn fuel the desire to read. Many SFCC corpsmembers have less than happy memories of "school," yet are full of insights and awareness. In the safety of a small, supportive group of non-judgmental peers, reading aloud and animated discussion become the building blocks of improved literacy.

At the worksite, having framed the reading with oral discussion, the group takes a few minutes to read aloud and discuss the day's selection. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. There are days when one can hear the thump of lead balloons hitting the ground all over San Francisco. Less frequently (ah, but when it happens!), the crews have returned to the center so deeply caught up in the day's question and reading that debate rages during tool storage, van cleaning and—que milagro!—continues as they depart for home. What do the other passengers on the 49 Van Ness think when they see a group of young Latino, Black, Asian, Pacific Island and White workers, their uniforms spattered with paint, concrete, sawdust or mud, climb on the bus energetically arguing ethical and moral questions? It seems to me that they see the future of their city.

Certainly a daily diet of labor-intensive, hands-on, hard physical work can offer opportunities which challenge young women and men to grow in skills and abilities: reading blueprints, installing community gardens, sharpening tools, mixing concrete, operating chain saws, framing walls or painting senior centers are all activities where inspired adults can help foster thinking workers. One supervisor in the SFCC, for example, is famous for holding blueprints upside down, scratching his head, and asking his crew to assume a leadership role in building the play structure. It rarely fails to produce the desired response. His belief is that production schedules are more easily met when workers "own" the project, even if it takes an investment of time at the beginning.

However, cerebral skills such as curiosity, deduction, articulation, making connections and synthesis must be practiced regularly by the young if they are to become healthy life habits in maturity, and labor alone is an insufficient instructor. The appropriate role of the "teacher" is to maintain a high level of intensity, demanding the engagement displayed by minds at work, whether on the job site or in a "class." "Students" need a variety of ways to link learning and life, in which growing minds are challenged by new information, situations and questions which impel response.

There is no best way to do this. What are the conditions? How capable are the "teachers"? Who are the "students"? How much time is available? What goals are realistic? The answers to these and other questions shape a curriculum. Adults do not necessarily know which experiences are the best teachers, but

in an era when illiteracy, drugs and sexually transmitted diseases among youth are a plague, adults must act to save lives and society. In a time when technology has essentially eliminated geopolitical borders, adults must develop global consciousness and teach multiculturalism. In an age when the disappearance of species and natural resources is accelerating, survival for any depends on all of us becoming environmentalists.

I have recently begun teaching a class titled "Origins of Ethics." Too many young people I meet act as though they are outside of and unaffected by history; they do not have a context to understand the caves we have come from nor the uncertain future towards which we are headed. So a group of eight corpsmembers and I spend two hours every Friday morning looking at the ethical questions posed by the lives, actions and writings of people like Gandhi, King, Mother Teresa, Moses, Miyamoto Musasshi, Lao-Tzu, Mohammed, Crashing Thunder, John Stuart Mill, Jesus, Hammurabi and more. We move chronologically from creation to the formation of societies, and use the ideas raised by the minds we encounter as a backdrop to examine our own lives. The impact of the ideas we discuss helps the corpsmembers see themselves as part of the continuum of people inside history, building and creating, rather than as hapless spectators or victims. We talk about justice, and love, and service, and tolerance, and we look at events in the corps and the world around us to measure our own awareness and values. There is much shouting and laughter, and regularly I marvel that the discussion is swirling noisily without my leadership. The eagerness with which the class devours material suggests to me that Bertrand Russell was correct to assert that we make moral progress only when we are happy.

The apparent contradiction on which the corps is created finds expression in the tension between rigid production schedules and our desire to nurture growth in corpsmembers. The SFCC $3.1 million budget is constructed on a planned number of hours to install the irrigation system or plant the dune grass, and a youth's personal needs frequently have to wait until the end of the day, lest the enterprise become enfeebled through cost overruns. Good judgment by the supervisor is essential here; there are problems which can't wait until four p.m. We believe that the activities, exercises and practices described above promote in corpsmembers the capability and resilience to unify our dual mission. Youth empower themselves for leadership through the hard task of production; the corps produces quality work in the public interest because corpsmembers have internalized the discipline of self-direction. This integrated approach to work and learning in the SFCC has helped us evolve as an organization during our first five years. In the next five we will build on the base, continuing to seek ways to assist youth in the difficult transition to active, responsible citizenship.

Robert Burkhardt, Jr., was, until recently, the Executive Director of the San Francisco Conservation Corps. He is now living and working in Colorado.

Using Bilingual Tutors and Non-Directive Approaches in ESL: A Follow-up Report

Anthony D'Annunzio

In Volume III of this journal an article was presented by D'Annunzio and Payne on the use of the language experience approach (LEA) with Cambodian refugees and immigrants. The major objective of the study, funded by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education, was to determine the feasibility of using pedagogically unsophisticated bilingual Cambodians as tutors in teaching English, reading, and writing. At that time the experiment was less than half completed. A description of the tutor training and the use of LEA, individualized reading, and expressive writing was included in that first article.

This follow-up article concerns the possible reasons for the rapid gains made by the ESL Cambodians. These reasons include the self-initiating, non-directive orientation of the tutorial program, and a fostering of the development of a person-centered relationship between the bilingual tutors and the target populations.

In order to determine the efficacy of these formats, the population was organized into two groups of fifteen or more non-English speaking Cambodians, receiving a maximum of ten hours of instruction per week for four and a half months. Very few of the students were able to attend on a per diem basis. The average was between two and three days per week, two hours a day. The population, with an age range of 17 to 67, was provided by local literacy providers and located in these agencies. The Cambodians were recent arrivals to this country who had endured great hardships and had not, with a few exceptions, received any formal schooling while in Cambodia. They were illiterate in their native Khmer.

The pretest mean scores on the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL) revealed that all students performed at the "non-English speaking" level. The Diagnostic Reading Scales (DRS) produced no pretest scores, while the Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised (WRAT-R)—Word Recognition Subtest produced a mean of pre-first.

The post test scores on all the indices were substantially higher than the pre-test performance. On the BINL, post test performance revealed that they achieved a mean score in the "Fluent English Speaking" category, roughly comparable to a typical fourth grade American student. Their reading comprehension on the DRS advanced to a mean of 3.7 grade level while their word recognition advanced to the beginning of the third grade. These highly significant results were attained despite the fact that total instructional time was short. Although the test score gains clearly indicated the rapidity and extent of their progress, more revealing was a subjective examination of their work portfolios and their day to day performance in English speaking, reading, and writing. Their rapid growth in English speaking, reading, and writing competency was strikingly obvious.

The LEA, individualized reading, and expressive writing were all based upon the following self-initiating, non-directive principles (Nessel & Jones, 1981; Spache & Spache, 1986):

1. When the learner takes initiative, self-concept and learning efficiency are significantly enhanced.
2. Student interests and life experiences are of great personal value and highly meaningful.
3. Learning to read is easiest and most enjoyable when materials match the language pattern and speaking vocabulary of the readers.
4. Skills, habits, and attitudes are not to be imposed from without, but are acquired at the learners pace and in accordance with their readiness.

The other aspect of the program that contributed to its self-initiating, non-directive orientation was the development of a concomitant person-centered relationship between the bilingual tutors and the target population. This personal involvement was given additional impetus by training the tutors in the use of

non-directive, incidental counseling which highlighted the following counseling goals (Rogers, 1970; Corsini, 1979):

1. Understanding the phenomenal world of the refugee/immigrants by "getting into their shoes."
2. Avoiding any behavior toward them that was overtly or covertly judgmental by not expressing approval or disapproval or doing any unnecessary probing or interpreting.
3. Completely trusting the resources of these adults for self-understanding and positive change.
4. Allowing the adults' experiences to be the tutors' for the moment, and feeling what it would be like to live the experiences of the students.

Rather than being superimposed, non-directive counseling was a natural outgrowth of the intensely interpersonal and sustained instructional relationship between the tutors and the adult students. The LEA and, later, individualized reading and expressive writing fostered the disclosure of personal experiences which frequently revealed the intimate needs, interests, and concerns of the ESL students.

Non-directive instructional procedures (which allowed the students to take a great deal of initiative for their learning), the opportunity to vent their personal problems in a safe and accepting milieu, and the use of bilingual instructors who shared the students' experiences, all assisted in providing for obvious growth. More precisely, the use of the modified LEA, individualized reading, expressive writing, and non-directive counseling provided many advantages when used with ESL adults:

- They were basically non-directive, thus allowing the ESL students to take considerable initiative in regard to how they proceeded in their progress toward English language acquisition, reading, and writing.
- They provided for complete individualization of instruction in a non-intrusive way.
- They fostered the quality of personal involvement which frequently revealed the intimate needs, interests, and concerns of the ESL students.
- They fostered the venting of personal problems in that each instructional encounter became, in effect, an incidental, non-directive counseling opportunity.
- They allowed the students to experience immediate success, establishing awareness and trust in their own experiences.
- They ensured an adequate background of experience since the adults could only relate what was in their experiential repertoire.
- They permitted new students to be brought into classes at any time since there were no lock-step instructional procedures.

After a short training period, as this project has clearly indicated, pedagogically unsophisticated bilinguals became effective tutors and trainers of other tutors. The use of bilingual tutors, coupled with LEA, individualized reading, expressive writing, and non-directive counseling, may break the chain of heavy reliance upon professional intervention. The two bilingual tutors used in the project were only high school graduates. Inservicing and continuous monitoring by the project director made them very effective instructors. It should be emphasized at this juncture that the non-directive instructional and counseling formats used by the tutors did not, by their very nature, require extensive pedagogical and technical background. The tutors acquired the necessary competencies during a week of inservice and continuous feedback from the program supervisors as they worked with the students. Those students who advanced most rapidly were used as assistant tutors to initiate the LEA, and non-directive counseling, with new arrivals. The assistant tutors also increasingly served as catalysts for many group oriented activities. The high degree of student turnover typically associated with ESL classes was kept to a minimum.

Perhaps the most salient factor in the success of the program briefly delineated above was the opportunity for these refugees and immigrants to take the initiative. Rather than being superimposed, the impetus for their educational attainment came from within.

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Teaching Literacy ESOL: Notes from a Program for Displaced Workers

Jonathan Skaff

Many teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) who work with the adult immigrant community have experienced the dilemma of teaching students with low levels of literacy in their native languages. Literacy ESOL students are problematic for the teacher because they do not respond to standard teaching techniques. Much of what ESOL teachers do in the classroom is based on the assumption that students understand the concepts of reading and writing, and are familiar with strategies for learning in a school setting. Literacy students, however, in most cases have minimal understanding of how reading and writing systems function and how to go about learning them. If teachers are going to succeed in assisting this population to attain English literacy, there is a need for a fuller understanding of student learning needs and a wider dissemination of appropriate teaching techniques and materials. This article is an initial attempt to systematize some of the knowledge that I have gained from four years of instructing literacy ESOL students from Latino and Chinese backgrounds. In addition the article will pass on some practical teaching ideas that I utilized successfully in the literacy classroom while I was employed at the Workers Educational Assistance Center (WEAC) of Roxbury Community College.

(I have deliberately chosen to call my approach literacy ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) instead of literacy ESL (English as a second language). ESL is an inappropriate acronym in this context because English may be the second oral language of literacy students, but for the most part it is going to be the first written language. The acronym ESOL, on the other hand, only assumes that the students will have the ability to speak a first language other than English. The importance of making this distinction involves more than avoiding a simple misnomer. If classes given to learners with low native language literacy are identified as ESL, teachers are subtly encouraged to make the unwarranted assumption that they are teaching second oral and written languages. They will consequently be less likely to recognize that literacy students need teaching approaches that are different from those appropriate for learners who had the benefit of more native language education.)

WEAC was a model educational program for dislocated (i.e. laid off) workers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. While there, I taught a group of older Chinese students who had low levels of English and literacy in their native language. All but one of the students were female. Before coming to WEAC, they had worked together at an electronic assembly factory that moved out of state. Their possibilities for future employment were limited due to their lack of English and native language education, their age, and the declining manufacturing sector in the northeast. The class I taught attempted to help them improve their oral and written English skills so that they would be better prepared to find new jobs. The examples of teaching materials, provided later in the article, were developed to meet the educational and reemployment needs of this group. (The complete WEAC Literacy ESOL Curriculum is available for free from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Washington, D.C. 20202.)

Before describing my approach to teaching literacy to non-native speakers of English, I would like to point out that there is a growing movement to promote biliteracy as an educational solution for this population. The biliteracy approach involves initial instruction in native language literacy. Knowledge about how the native language works and how to go about learning is later transferred to the acquisition of literacy in English. Biliteracy is an effective means of teaching literacy, just as literacy ESOL can be if it is done properly. This article will not attempt to argue the relative merits of the two approaches. However, from

a practical viewpoint, there is presently an insufficient number of programs offering biliterate instruction, and biliteracy is difficult to implement. In cases where students from a variety of cultures are being served. In my opinion the adult education community should attempt to cultivate both approaches if there is going to be any hope of adequately serving the low native language literacy population in the future.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF LITERACY ESOL

The principles described below encompass the elements of teaching practice that I feel are necessary to promote effective learning in the literacy ESOL classroom. Many of the principles are applicable to other educational settings, but their importance in the literacy ESOL classroom is often magnified due to the exceptional needs of the students.

Classroom Atmosphere

1. Teachers and just as importantly intake personnel should attempt to make students feel at ease in what is probably an unfamiliar and intimidating environment.

Literacy students will inevitably feel anything from discomfort to panic in a school setting. Their experiences, if any, in school probably lasted only a few years and took place ten, twenty, thirty or more years ago. In many instances they will lack confidence in their ability to learn and one bad experience can scare away a student forever. Teachers should encourage literacy students and never overwhelm them with material that is overly difficult. Intake workers should be polite and helpful, and should avoid administering initial assessment materials that may be intimidating. (The Workers' Educational Assistance Center developed a model initial ESOL assessment meant to be accessible to dislocated workers with and without literacy problems. It is also available for free from the U.S. Department of Education at the above address.)

2. The teacher should respect the knowledge, experiences, and language ability of the students.

Literacy ESOL students may not have much knowledge about the world of books, but there are many things about life that they can teach the instructor. By listening to and acknowledging the worth of student experiences, the teacher will encourage student self-respect and will also be provided with a wealth of material that can be utilized for teaching purposes.

Self-esteem will also grow if students are encouraged to generate as much language as possible. Any group of language learners, who have been lumped together in the same class, will have a varying understanding of the target language and the concept of literacy. Consequently it is not necessary for the instructor to act as a fountainhead of knowledge who supplies every bit of information. It is more effective to have students teach their classmates whenever possible by letting them share their understanding of the English language. In doing so the teacher not only demonstrates respect for student knowledge but also provides more opportunities for language practice. In the mixed level class this also keeps more advanced students from becoming bored by allowing them to assist classmates.

3. Class should be fun!

If the literacy ESOL class is enjoyable, school will become a less intimidating place. Games, songs, jokes, and drama can teach the language while breaking down inhibitions about learning.

Teaching Methodology

1. The teacher should not take for granted any student knowledge about literacy.

Apart from not being able to speak English, literacy students usually do not have a full understanding about the purpose and underlying concepts of written language. They also may lack certain skills needed to facilitate reading and writing. Many of these skills and concepts may seem obvious to the teacher, but if they are taken for granted in the literacy classroom, students will grope around blindly in their attempts to solve the mystery of reading and writing. Some examples of these skills and concepts are provided below:

- The concept that the written language for the most part is a symbolic representation on paper of what is spoken.
- The related concepts that the language is made up of many sounds and these sounds are combined to form words. In alphabetic writing systems such as English, each sound can be represented on paper by one or more letters or combinations of letters. These letters, like spoken sounds, can be combined to form written words.
- Writing skills such as how to hold a writing implement and how to form letters.
- Reading skills such as previewing and guessing meaning from context.

The teacher should attempt to design classroom activities that integrate instruction in the English language with training in these basic literacy skills and concepts. The classroom activities found in the final section of the article provide some examples of how literacy concepts can be integrated into the ESOL curriculum.

2. Literacy students have an easier time learning English when it is introduced to them orally.

For literacy students oral discourse is the familiar,

concrete form of communication, while reading, writing, grammar, and phonics are unfamiliar abstractions. Introducing new language orally with the aid of pictures, realia, drama, or the school surroundings will provide literacy students with a classroom environment in which they can learn naturally, as they did in childhood. Children lack literacy skills but still manage to learn to speak their native languages by observing, listening, speaking, making plenty of mistakes and then gradually correcting their mistakes. By recreating this type of learning environment in the literacy ESOL classroom, students will be able to acquire oral English without having to resort to written materials. In fact adult learners will acquire language more quickly than children because their cognitive ability is more developed and because they have the advantage of a teacher who can guide them to learn in a systematic manner. The common oral discourse that is developed between teacher and students will become the basis from which further knowledge of English and literacy can be derived.

3. Reading materials should be obtained from the oral language produced by the students (the language experience approach).

The process of transcribing spoken language as the students watch demonstrates the relationship between familiar oral communication and the new concept of written expression. In addition it usually provides the class with reading material that is more interesting and relevant to the lives of students than what can usually be gleaned from typical ESOL textbooks.

When working with beginning literacy students, it is usually advisable to initially transcribe individual words that are familiar to students. If a teacher transcribes too much language, students will become frustrated. As students advance they will eventually be able to handle sentences and then paragraphs.

4. Rules of grammar and phonetics should be pointed out after students understand what they are saying, reading, or writing.

Literacy ESOL students do not generally respond well to approaches in which a grammatical or phonetic rule is taught initially and students are then asked to practice using the rule. To most if not all students in a literacy class, the rule will be a perplexing abstraction that they have a difficult time relating to their life experience. Whereas when a teacher introduces the language using pictures, realia, drama, or the school surroundings, students will sense patterns in the language as they learn. Once awareness of a certain aspect of English is raised, then a rule of the language will be much more understandable and relevant to learners. In fact students will often request an explanation of why they should say something such as "they are" instead of "they is." It is at this point when questions are being raised by students that rules of the language can be most effectively learned.

In addition it is usually not efficacious to employ terminology such as "present progressive tense" when teaching literacy students. This type of jargon only serves to confuse and intimidate students who are just beginning to grasp English and the concept of literacy.

5. The overall structure of the literacy ESOL curriculum should be in tune with the needs and interests of the students.

Allow students to determine curriculum content to as great an extent as possible. Students are more intent on learning and have a greater feeling that they can succeed when they can relate classroom activities to their everyday lives. If classroom content seems abstract and irrelevant, learning will become a forbidding task, and students will begin to wander away mentally and physically. However when students are learning English that is directly applicable to their needs outside of the classroom, their enthusiasm for school will grow.

In our literacy program at WEAC, students were most interested in learning to use English to describe feelings, to talk about family, to go shopping, to visit a doctor, and to find a new job. I concentrated on these areas and utilized the content as a means of teaching elements of grammar and phonetics. For example, in learning to talk about feelings, the students were introduced to elements of grammar such as subject pronouns and the verb "to be." If I had taught the students grammar that was overly divorced from content or had covered topics that were irrelevant to them, they would have become frustrated and lost interest in school.

6. Challenge students to think critically.

Language acquisition undoubtedly involves a great deal of memorization, but learning is most effective when students are inspired to go beyond saying the right word at the right time. Students should be encouraged to apply their learning to new contexts and to use English to solve problems pertinent to their lives. If students are challenged to think and evaluate on their own, they will begin to gain the confidence needed to confront new situations in the English speaking world.

CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS

What follows are some examples of classroom activities which attempt to put the above mentioned principles into action. As was mentioned previously, the materials were developed for a group of older Chinese dislocated workers with low levels of literacy in their native language.

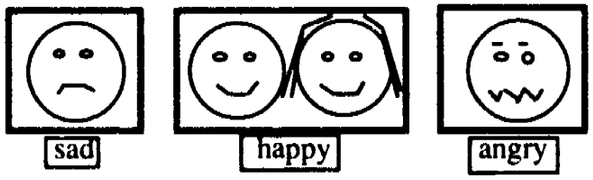
Sentence Building

Sentence building demonstrates the relationship between oral and written discourse. Before embarking upon sentence building exercises for a particular topic, first go over all material orally. Once the teacher and students have a common understanding about a certain aspect of oral English, then the written language can be introduced. Sentence building is an exercise involving the entire class. It teaches reading. It can also be used to teach basic composition to literacy students who have not reached the point where they feel comfortable writing with pencil and paper.

To introduce a sentence building activity, use pictures that have already been talked about in class such as the one shown below:

Ask a familiar question about the picture such as, "How is he doing today?" After a student replies, "He is sad," place a flashcard beneath the picture with a key word from the answer written on it. In this case the class is learning to read some adjectives, so the word is "sad." To help students make the connection between spoken and written expression, point to the picture and then the flashcard while repeating the key word.

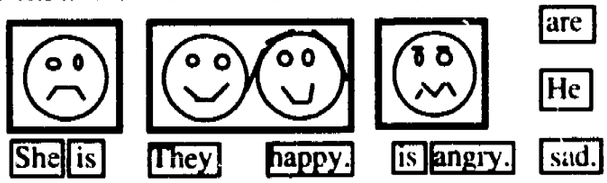
Have students practice reading the words beneath a group of pictures and then remove the flashcards and place them to the side. Students take turns coming to the front of the class and placing a flashcard beneath the proper picture:



Once students have learned, through the same procedure, to read subject pronouns (I, he, she, etc.), then it is possible to utilize the written vocabulary to create complete sentences. Again try to initially elicit an oral response to a question such as, "How is she doing today?" After a student responds, place flashcards under the picture that transcribe the student's answer literally:

Ask a student to read the sentence and then discuss whether it is correct. After making corrections, students should reread the sentence. The teacher might stress the verb "is," if it is new in written form.

When students can read a variety of sentences, use the flashcards and pictures to make cloze exercises on the blackboard. Students come to the front of the class and fill in the blanks with flashcards:



Once students master the cloze exercise, remove all of the flashcards and post them at random next to the set of pictures. Students should take turns selecting flashcards that they can then use to form sentences beneath the pictures. This gives them their first experience at composition without the necessity of using a pencil or pen to write words on paper. At the early stages of literacy learning, it is usually much easier for students to compose sentences with flashcards than to endure the agonizing slowness of writing on paper. This type of activity serves as a less stressful introduction to the writing process, and helps students to understand the link between reading and writing.

As a follow up to any of the above sentence building activities, the teacher can produce handouts that require students to match words or sentences to pictures, copy words or sentences, complete clozes, and eventually to write sentences without copying. However, handouts or textbook exercises are not a substitute for sentence building activities that are done as a group. Literacy students will have a difficult time finding words that the teacher refers to on a handout, especially when material is being introduced for the first time. It is much easier for students to follow what the teacher or another student is reading when the entire class is watching the blackboard and unfamiliar words are being pointed out by the teacher or a student.

Student-Inspired Stories

Once students have advanced in their knowledge of literacy and English, they will reach a point when they can go beyond sentence building activities and begin to read more extended pieces of discourse. What follows are two exercises that grew out of conversations with my class of Chinese dislocated workers.

One day a student brought up the subject of gambling and we spent part of the class discussing it. It seems that about half of the class enjoyed gambling while the others did not approve of it. After our discussion had wound down, I asked a student to recap what we had discussed and I transcribed her speech. We then practiced reading the story that was produced. On the next day I used the story to make a cloze

exercise practicing the affirmative and negative in the present tense, which we were learning at the time:

Gambling: (likes/doesn't like)
Chow _____ blackjack and mah jong. She _____ to win money. Chan _____ gambling. She_____ to lose money.

The students had fun with this exercise while they were practicing reading, writing, and grammar. It would not be appropriate for another class because it only had meaning for that particular group of students, who were familiar with the likes and dislikes of their classmates Chow and Chan. Of course the procedure that was utilized to produce the exercise is applicable to other settings.

The following activity was created when a student announced to the class that the Employment Office had not given him the unemployment check he had expected. The student wanted me to help him. I asked him for the name and phone number of the person he had spoken to at the office, but he said that he did not have the information or know how to ask for it. At that point I drew this picture on the blackboard to make sure that all of the students understood the situation.

When everyone was clear about what had happened, I sat behind the desk to play the role of Employment Office counselor. I told a student to come ask me for a check. The following dialogue occurred:

A: Can I have my check?
B: What's your name?
A: Lee, L-E-E.
B: I'm sorry. You don't have any more checks.
A: Okay. (He walks away.)

I asked the students whether they thought this was a good ending. They laughed and said that it was not good. I asked the students to come up with a better ending, but they replied that they did not know what to say in this situation and asked me to supply a better ending. So I wrote the dialogue on the blackboard with a new ending:

A: Can I have my check?
B: What's your name?
A: Lee, L-E-E.
B: I'm sorry. You don't have any more checks.
A: Please write your name and phone number.
My teacher will call you.

We practiced reading the dialogue and then acting out the role play. Students who were better speakers eventually played the part of the counselor. On the following day I made a cloze exercise that they had to fill in. The students had a high degree of interest in this activity because it gave them a strategy for tackling a problem that they all might encounter. The two days of class spent on the activity reinforced their speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Critical Judgements

Towards the end of my time teaching the dislocated workers, the students were involved in looking for work. I tried to design exercises that would help them in their job search. One exercise, which we did whenever a student came back from a job interview, encouraged the class to think in English about possible jobs. I asked the student to report on his/her interview. After the report, we discussed the student's feelings about the interview and the particular job that was being offered. At the end of each discussion we tried to sum it up by making a chart showing the good and bad aspects of a job. The students would dictate their opinions to the teacher, who would then write the information in the appropriate column on the board:

Good	Bad
Benefits	Pay $4.75/hr.
- Health	No sick days
- Dental	Hours 3-1 1 p.m.
- Vacation	No union
Supervisor is nice	
Easy work	

Making the chart always generated additional discussion and when it was finished we had a new set of reading material.

CONCLUSION

Some idea of the progress that the WEAC literacy ESOL students made during ten months of class lasting eight hours per week can be drawn from a comparison of the material covered in the sentence building and critical thinking activities. It is evident that the language contained in the critical thinking activity is much more complex. The achievement of the students is even more impressive when it is taken into consideration that most of them were in their fifties and sixties and many complained that their memory was not as good as it used to be. I hope that teachers and researchers will accept this as preliminary evidence of the effectiveness of my teaching approach and will be inspired to further research and develop the field of literacy ESOL.

Jonathan Skaff taught English for two years in China and taught ESOL in Boston at the Cardinal Cushing Center and the WEAC He is now pursuing a doctorate in Chinese history at the University of Michigan.

No More Reading Abuse

Bridget Suárez O'Hagin

The following account of how one teacher "discovered that reading exotic fairy tales helped Latino high school dropouts get over their ingrained dislike of reading" was originally written while the author was still teaching within that program. It thus remains in the present tense, although the author no longer teaches at El Centro.

I teach mathematics, science and reading to Latino teenagers (many of whom are parents) at El Centro del Cardenal, a bilingual, alternative school in Boston. Our program, Pa'lante, is considered "one school" by the funding sources. But although all the students are Latino, there are really two separate "schools" in Pa'lante, the English side and Spanish side. While most of the students who study in English are high school dropouts, most of the students who study in Spanish are not. Thus, the negative attitudes about school that most of the "English" students bring with them are not shared by the "Spanish" students. Many of them are recent arrivals from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic and more and more are coming from Central and South America.

I teach on the "English" side, and although our program is officially a GED preparation program, unofficially it is a "literacy" program. On paper (i.e., those enrolled in the program) the "slots" per teacher ratio is 12:1, but attendance patterns bring this down to about 4:1, four students per teacher on an average day. Most students who study for the GED in English speak Spanish and English. They tell me that they don't know how to read Spanish and that there are a lot of Spanish words they don't understand. They speak to each other in Spanish all the time when they're chatting or gossiping. Their Spanish is street Spanish; it's what they know and it serves their needs—communicating with family and friends.

English-dominant students who enter our program are given the TABE reading test and generally score between the 3rd and 8th grade reading level. Using the reading scores as our initial guide, students are placed in either pre-GED or GED classes. Those who score 8th grade reading level and above are placed in the GED classes; those who score below 8th grade are placed in the pre-GED classes. A 9th grade reading level is generally considered requisite to passing the GED examinations. The problem, however, is that they hate reading.

Good reading skills are necessary to pass the GED tests. Memorizing specific facts about the difference between vertebrate and invertebrate animals or when the Civil War was fought could increase their st scores, but we have more basic work to do—reading. When I discovered that I could stop trying to stuff them with a mishmash of facts—which meant, of course, horrible, boring worksheets that only confirmed their rightful notion that "reading is answering questions"—it freed me to search for interesting reading material. Once I decided we should at least try to have fun in reading class by reading something they would find interesting, I made my second decision. No questions. No boring, stupid questions about what they had just read. No more reading abuse.

Many (but not all) of these students now enjoy reading, but before I illustrate how this came about, I would like to describe the typical "academic mindset" of a student who enters our program. Unfortunately, these students fit the typical profile of a Latino high school dropout in Boston. Low-income Latino youth. Teenage mothers on welfare, little or no academic self-confidence. Project kids. Clichéd as it sounds, these stereotypes accurately describe many of my students. I read Rosenfeld's study (1971) on black ghetto elementary school kids when I began graduate studies, never imagining that *I* would encounter these "academically battered" kids as teenagers in my classroom. They're black, brown and "white" skinned, but they all receive the same treatment as low income Latinos. "It

is ironical that the school, the so-called savior of the poor, has served as the conveyor belt which has solidified social stratification." (Ornstein, 1974)

I've talked to a lot of my students about their experiences in the public school system and their reports are overwhelmingly negative. There is story after story of bad experiences with teachers, sometimes leading to violence and expulsion. Unfortunately, the teacher, who for most students is the person who represents the school and educational institutions in general, becomes the scapegoat and the villain in what is really the complicated failure called the public school system. The students in our program left the public school system for a variety of reasons, but all of them point to the fact that they not only did not find support from anyone, but felt helpless and stupid. Many of them often refer to themselves as "dumb" or "stupid" in class and say things like "I know I won't understand this," "I'm a really slow reader," "I know I'm gonna fail," "I can't learn anything," etc. A lot of what we do is confidence building. That often takes up so much time that there is very little time for the academic work that needs to be done.

A True Story

We often unwittingly recreate our negative childhood experience, our history. The familiar is comforting; it's what we know. Although I hated my high school education, I, too, at first "rewrote," recreated my own learning with my students. Just as the teachers of my past "wrote" my educational story, so, too, am I now writing (if only in the margins at this late date in their lives) the educational biographies of my students. It took me a while to realize that I had the power to change the status quo; teaching these particular students accelerated that realization.

When I finally decided that, even though these students were enrolled in a GED preparation course, we would all be better off reading something that they liked, I was left with the daunting task of finding books that teenagers who hate reading might enjoy. My first step was to ask them what they WANTED to read. But they didn't know. They weren't readers. How could they choose when they didn't even know what the possibilities were? I then asked them what kind of book or story they would like to read. They all said, "Something true." They said they didn't want to read something made up, because that was stupid. (As good a story as this makes in retrospect, given that what they ended up loving was fairy tales, it is true.) I did as I was bid. I went in search of "true stories." Not only did I find them true stories, I found them "culturally relevant," true, real stories. Autobiographies of New York Ricans growing up in poverty, Mexicans growing up poor, stories by and about Latinos living in the United States. Real people, real Latinos, real stories. Not fairy tales, by any definition. We read them out loud together. While current teaching-of-reading theorists may advocate "let them read what they have experienced themselves," I have not found that method successful. They were unimpressed and uninterested with these stories which reflected their own lives.

Fairy Tales

I continued searching. Like many "brilliant ideas," finally choosing a fairy tale to read with them was a lucky accident. I was using articles on money and the history of money (something I thought might interest them) from a history magazine for young readers, *Cobblestone*. The entire issue was about money and in it was a Bulgarian fairy tale with a lesson about greed, "A Gift From the Heart." They had read, with interest, about a culture where the wealthiest person in the village is he who possesses a particular gigantic stone near his home. There were only a few minutes left of class and, as I had xeroxed this very short story, I decided to use it. I can't say that my expectations were high or low since I really didn't have any. I was just "using up" the time we had left. They read the story, were touched by it and pretty much unanimously said, "That was a good story. That was nice." High praise, indeed, coming from them. I went out and immediately began looking for more of the same. We have been reading fairy tales for eight months now and interest has not yet waned.

It seems strange that these tough teenagers, "dropouts," would enjoy reading fairy tales. But they do. One of my biggest surprises was that the boys like reading them as much as the girls. (We have very few boys in our program, only about four or five at any given time, as opposed to 15 to 20 girls.) My own sexist stereotypes, which I like to keep to a minimum, were modified when I saw the boys enjoying the fairy tales so much. We have read a lot of fairy tales at this point. Some of the first ones I tried were the classics: "Sleeping Beauty," "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Bluebeard." Most of the students had never read fairy tales and the only ones they knew anything about were those they may have seen as Disney movies or cartoons. This lack of experience with the oral genres of fairy tales and folk tales works in their favor because the stories are new, fresh and interesting to them. While I rarely ask them questions about content, I do stop as we're reading aloud and ask them to predict what will happen next. Initially, most of them refuse to venture an opinion. But as they become more used to the fairy tale format, they become good at predicting.

Fairy and folk tales are perfect for reading class because they're usually short and can thus accommodate the attendance patterns which are a daily reality in

our program. If I have four students one day and four students the next day, it is very possible that only one of those students will have been there on both days. Given this framework, it is very difficult to build on anything from the previous day. (It's not impossible, though—more on this later.) I tried having students work individually on reading and answering questions, but they lost interest right away. Also, they like working together. One of the difficulties I had when I first started teaching Latinos was that they were forever helping one another with their work. Latino culture is not alien to me—I consider myself a "cultural mutt": working class Mexican, Irish, Spanish, Yaqui Indian; a fairly typical American—but even *I* had been taught in the schools of Tucson, Arizona, that one did one's own work. Schoolwork was not meant to be collaborative. But not with these students. Once I got over my shock and prejudice that helping each other out was not only not bad, but good, I started taking advantage of it.

1001 Stories

One of the early stories that was very successful with all the students (a miracle in itself) was a Russian fairy tale, "The Tale of Tsarevich Ivan, the Fire-Bird and Grey Wolf." All manner of magical, deceitful, horrible, gory things happen to the son of a king as he tries to do his father's bidding, fall in love and rescue his princess. The students loved it. One of the wonderful things about their being inexperienced readers is that once they accept something, they seem to have no trouble believing it and getting into a story. When we stop and talk about it or what we think Tsarevich Ivan will do next, it's as though it's a true story. When it comes to reading and appreciating these stories, they are NOT jaded. Another important thing about these stories is that the books are illustrated. We cannot afford to have more than one copy of a book, so I xerox them; thus, the illustrations, which are often beautiful and colorful, aren't done justice by the copy. I used to hold the original as we read and I would show the pictures to everyone but then I began asking the students before we read a new story, "Who wants to read the original?" Someone always wants to and she or he shows the pictures to everyone else.

We have gone through so many fairy tales and folk tales from so many cultures, that I started running out of the good ones. Recently, while searching through the Fairy Tale section of a local bookstore, I came upon Andrew Lang's version of *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*. I had never read it but it looked interesting and had lovely illustrations and it was very different from the other fairy tales we had read. While the language was more difficult than the students were used to, I decided to try it. I was so unsure whether they would like it that I took it out of the library and xeroxed just the first two stories. We have now been reading this British, 19th-century Victorian version of these wonderful Arabian stories for two months. Initially I decided that I would only try it with my "high" reading group because I didn't want to frustrate the "lower" reading group. But when I saw how much one group like it, I asked the other group if they would like to try it; I said that we could stop any time if it was too hard or if they didn't like it. Both groups are still reading it.

Unlike the other fairy tales we had read, *The Arabian Night Entertainments* is a series of interrelated stories. Stories within stories. The English is Victorian, the structure complex. When we started reading the Arabian Nights I did what I usually do with a new story—a little geography, history, basic time frame, the language that was spoken. They did have difficulty with a lot of the vocabulary—"whilst," "vizir," "genius" (singular of "genii"), "Calender," "eunuch" (to this day, the best discussion because of a new vocabulary word; they were all horrified by the fact of it and by its long and illustrious history)—and with the unfamiliar syntax, but we talked about it (American English vs. British English vs. Australian English vs. English over a hundred years old) and they had no problem with it.

Because the stories are so interrelated and attendance patterns continue to be erratic, we all contribute to giving an oral summary from the day before. Actually, I now secretly like the fact that because there is always someone who was not in class the day before, the students are forced, in a very genuine way, to retell the story orally. They are reluctant to do it but they want the person to know what's going on, so they do it. And like anything else, the more they do it, the better they get at it.

I don't think it's any surprise that these teenagers, who always complained bitterly about having to read, sometimes will go over a few minutes into their break time to find out what is going to happen to Aladdin. These fairy tales and folk tales which come down to us from oral tradition, when read out loud (as they were intended to be "heard"), are still good stories.

While it may sound effortless and wonderful in retrospect, there were (and are) many days when the stories fall flat. I consistently talk to the students about reading and explain to them that I believe that if they are to become better readers, they have to read. And that if we are going to read together every day, we should read something we all enjoy. Sometimes the students tell me that they don't feel as though they're "working" or learning because we just read all the time. I tell them to relax, that they are learning and becoming better readers, they're just doing it in a way they're not used to. Some students' reading scores

have improved by two grade levels within six months.

Conclusion

The problem is they hate reading. The bilingual Latino teenagers on "the English side" of our alternative school needed to find to find a path to literacy. I have described how, together, we have found that path. Now they enjoy reading stories. One reason they enjoy it is because when the story comes to an end we rarely try to spell out the moral of the fable. Instead, each of us is left free to draw our own conclusions and usually the conclusions remain tacit, implicit. These stories are meaningful to the students not because they are relevant to their day-to-day lives, but perhaps because the process by which we read helps them build a bridge between their own oral culture and literate culture, using written texts which come from oral tradition. If so, it is a bridge they willingly cross.

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The Rocky Road from Frustration to Fulfillment: The Saga of a Volunteer

Kimball Jones

After forty years of teaching English and French to secondary students, I looked forward recently to using my skills in literacy, a field I believed in strongly. I put in months running in circles, and marking time, yet eventually reaped rewards much richer than I could have imagined.

I could have taken on a dozen volunteer tasks immediately, but on terms suitable to the proffering organization. However, I had ideas of my own as to what I wanted to put into and get out of the experience. And as a prospective source of free labor, I thought this eminently reasonable. I imagined there would be counseling and placement services available. I have not yet located any; indeed, were it not for some lucky personal contacts and not a little leg work, I would still be waiting for my first assignment.

A visit to the local library was prompted by a tip from friends. In the material there I found only one lead, which I pursued vigorously, and which may nine months later bring me a live person to tutor. This was my only even remotely successful experience dealing with public informational sources. I will readily concede that another, shrewder seeker might have done better, but not much, I should think.

I eventually attended a useful training session with the group I found through the library. I found, here as elsewhere that the skills and knowledge I had brought from secondary school to the literacy field are largely peripheral, and that I had and still have much to learn if I wish to claim even minimal competence. There is no question in my mind that the training is useful. But more on that later.

It was not too long after my first contact with the tutoring program that another personal lead brought me to a wonderful training ground and work opportunity, Employment Connections, Inc., in Chelsea. Located in a former car dealership, it is a sprawling complex which offers a multiplicity of opportunities to the illiterate and the jobless. It is also almost unknown to more conspicuous literacy organizations, and I can't imagine stumbling onto it without the accident of a personal contact.

My mentor at ECI, as Employment Connections is referred to in this acronymic era, soon gave me the first of several notices of events at the Adult Literacy Resource Institute, and two mini-courses there enriched and informed me and gave me the opportunity to interact with wise teachers and classmates with professional experience. The A.L.R.I. librarian helped with materials and recommended to me the International Institute of Boston. I recently completed a useful training seminar series there and will start citizenship preparation with my first one-on-one client, a fruition I look forward to particularly keenly because of its long incubation period.

My experience may be atypical, and the ads I have seen lately on TV may send hundreds of eager applicants into satisfying contacts. There may also be a means of access to agencies which can help match skills and interests to needs. If so, I haven't yet located it. At this stage, I feel able to find what I need, or at least someone who can point me toward it. Yet my path to this familiarity was marked by detours, doubling backs and dead ends. It was a needless waste of time and effort, which could have been even worse were it not for some blind luck.

The existence of a clearing house to coordinate organizations and volunteer needs seems a necessity, if the best interests of both are to be served. It would have to be broadly enough based to encompass large, multi-faceted entities such as the United Way, and also smaller, more out-of-the-way programs like ECI. It should include all categories of volunteering, and where appropriate might forward referrals to more specialized sources, such as to A.L.R.I. for literacy requests. I think it could be run on a phone, a shoestring and occasional free TV spots. Researching and cataloguing the various categories of need and opportunity

in the area should not be a gargantuan task, and listing updates and referrals could be done by phone.

With such a resource in place, the article in my local paper on volunteer opportunities for retirees could have offered more specifics than five Elder programs and one school. And the tale in the *Globe* of the woman who searched for six months for someone interested in a volunteer with a background in special education and finally gave up, need never have been told.

All the above notwithstanding, I have already had inordinate joy in learning and in heady, rewarding contacts with people I could otherwise never have met and admired. ECI is a storefront under a big sign at the far end of Broadway in Chelsea. It offers literacy to native speakers and ESL students, as well as GED, a business program and a machinist's course. It counsels and places graduates of its programs in suitable and self-supporting jobs.

The large room in which I spend three mornings a week has up to thirty learners in it on a busy day, all doing some group work in spelling and vocabulary, but mostly working individually with the sliding assistance of three teachers and one volunteer. They range from some who can distinguish between "flaunt" and "flout" to those who agonize over "if" vs "of." The span in age and ethnicity is equally great, although Cambodians and Puerto Ricans make up a majority between them.

My first revelation was the level of motivation, which is indefatigable except in some of the youngest. Attention to minutiae and willingness to repeat endlessly without prompting were part of this. Best of all for a former secondary teacher, learning, not a grade, was the goal. At the same time, I observed immediately that dignity and wisdom are independent of literacy level or bankroll size. Generosity and tolerance of mistakes and customs were in abundant evidence.

I saw no signs of the defense mechanisms the literature leads one to expect in this setting. Confidence was sometimes lacking, hardly surprising under the circumstances, but the human-to-human attitudes conveyed by the teachers had clearly been successful in encouraging self-respect despite low language skills. Indeed, I think the large, heterogeneous group is a great aid to a strong self-image. Although the teachers are indispensable, my impression is that the greatest minute-by-minute learning goes on with the help of fellow-students, and that the special value of the whole enterprise is in the student interaction.

The opportunity to work with so many with different goals and problems was marvelous, far and away the most satisfying teaching experience I have had in four decades, and the mix of individual and group work was a lift for me, as well as a plus for the clientele. I was also hugely fortunate to have been assigned to a teacher of great good sense, commitment and flexibility who put up with my blunders and eccentricities.

My introduction, formal and informal, to the techniques and directions of adult literacy has been a revelation. As one who had his graduate degree before 1950, I tended to approach teaching as I experienced learning. Trends in education slipped by after unsuccessful, brief attempts at application, and I returned to more or less what I had started with. Now the work done on learning styles, left- and right-brain theory, cooperative learning and, most dramatically for me, schema theory, has been translated into sound, patently practical practice.

Exposure to this body of knowledge could have made my last classroom years infinitely richer. I have disseminated this material to two schools I have connections with, and the reception so far has been enthusiastic. I believe teachers and professors at all levels should be conversant with it.

The most revelatory aspect of my experience with the learners at ECI is the realization of how eager they are for knowledge and understanding for its own sake. I was told in one training session that the goal of adult education, in contrast to the main stream, is the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are immediately practical. Certainly this is what adults who are unable to function in a complex society seek when they seek literacy. And they clearly must satisfy this need.

Yet, a higher need exists as well, and manifests itself as strongly. Here are people of adequate or better intelligence, yet with no access to written or even oral investigation of human issues on other than the most elementary plane. They are not jaded by mass schooling, daily boredom and the skewed priorities of grades. They are fully human, yet unfulfilled; they want to know, to understand, to speak. They almost certainly have been restricted even in this last because of their lack of knowledge, no matter what the setting. They have no body of opinion, no voice. And they are excellent listeners and thoughtful speakers, unbiased, free of ingrained stereotypes and open to any and all ideas.

It is a deep pleasure to talk with them, singly or in groups, certainly a strong stimulus for a teacher. But also, I believe, a mammoth, compelling justification exists for making some search for meaning a regular segment of the curriculum. These are people we wish to go out to a better life. We want, we need, to equip them for material success. But we also have a large, irreplaceable opportunity to foster human growth, to send out sensitive, caring community members who can make Century 21 what its predecessor was not: an era of good sense and good will towards the Earth and

all her creatures. Above all else, above all the elation and satisfaction I have derived and hope to reap, above the polysyllables and the coping skills given and received, there is this inestimable opportunity. I had no notion it existed going in; I celebrate it now and for our future.

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