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ABSTRACT

Based on 4 years' experience in a Goodwill adult literacy program, this handbook offers insights to teachers who want to facilitate student-directed group learning. The handbook is organized in seven sections that cover the following: (1) comments on the nature of adult learning and the philosophy of the approach; (2) thoughts on progressive education and learner-centered education; (3) reading theory; (4) methodology for teaching reading (comprehension, skill building, student-led activities, locating and reworking reading materials); (5) teaching writing (inspiring writing, the writing process, writing to learn); (6) multicultural and class sensitivity (including the use of Black English); and (7) designing lessons for adult beginning readers. Two appendixes include a critical thinking chart and a thinking-about-literature chart. (KC)

DISCOVERY AND RESPECT

A Handbook for Student-directed Group Learning

by Mallory Clarke

Discovery and Respect: A Handbook for Student-directed Group Learning

First Edition • 1991

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the characteristics of popular education is that it is collaborative. This book records my reflections on my investigations and work as a literacy trainer and consultant over the last several years. But also includes the indirect contributions of other educators to either this project or my professional growth. Among those educators are my workmates at Goodwill with whom I am involved in an ongoing evaluation of what we do and what we think about it: Deborah Cole, Rosemary Tatum Reed and particularly, Sandra McNeill. I found other brains to pick on the national "literacy for empowerment" training team of the Association of Community Based Education: Raul Anorve, Carmen St. John Hunter, Hilary Stern and Nan Elsasser particularly, but also Betsy Alkenbrack, Kirin Chaudhuri, and Dalita Gutierrez. I have been charged with training the teachers at Goodwill, but I've always found myself involved in mutual training and I'm afraid I took away more than I gave. Those who taught me most were: Jim Jones, Lou Jurcik, Gracie Williams, Julie Weston, Cindy Hallanger, Charles Brod, Maria Antilla, Baubie Pascual, and Bruce de Ste. Croix. Two people who have influenced my development greatly since 1985 are Guila Muir and Peter Simon. Some of their ideas can be found in these pages. I've also appreciated feedback from readers not mentioned above: Katherine Schlick-Noe, Ellen Kleyman, Ernest Johnson, Barbara Miller, and Wendel Fleet.

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Probably most important, on a list of my teachers, are my students. Their patience, openness, and feedback have done more to educate me in my craft than any other single person or group.

In addition, I appreciate production assistance from Nori Sterling (for many hours at the computer), Melinda Burkey (layout) and Todrick Estelle (for the cover design).

So while it's true this book was written by an individual, it is equally true that it is the product of collaboration. In fact, before I began writing I interviewed several of the people listed above specifically about this project. Teachers at Goodwill wrote reflections on their work at the school on a four page questionnaire. Students were consulted in groups and individually about what should be included and how it should be said. Drafts of the book were circulated to educators and read to students. Their comments were incorporated. I bother to recount all this to show that this project is merely a process. Teacher handbooks can be written and rewritten by anyone involved in teaching. Eventually Goodwill will need to rewrite this book and other teachers will take up the task.

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION: COMMENTS ON THE NATURE OF THIS BOOK AND SOME OF THE WORDS IN IT

This is a book for new teachers at Goodwill Literacy Adult Learning Center. It's based on four years of experience with our program, our students, our teachers and our administration. It represents the current level of solutions we have discovered for our problems. If I were to start work on this book a year from now, I would be writing a very different book because our experiences would be that much more developed. I couldn't have written this book a year ago because we weren't ready. New teachers should not be fooled into thinking that if they read this book they will have the information they need. Becoming a teacher is a career-long process and what one thinks is good educational practice this year will be superceded by what one thinks next year. Therefore, what you hold in your hands cannot be used as a recipe book. It's only a collection and, with luck, a synthesis of experiences. To recreate knowledge, in other words to discover information, evaluate, reshape, and use it, is what good teachers ask their students to do. Simply memorizing someone else's knowledge isn't learning. So, I hope this book can be used by new teachers as a source of information and experience as they try things out and reflect on the results, as they recreate this knowledge for themselves.

Colleagues are indispensable to the growth of a teacher. The training and in-service meeting schedule have been structured to give all new teachers time to talk with each other and with more experienced teachers. Because you are around people all the time as you work, it's possible to think you are not isolated. In most cases though, classes are taught by one person with possibly a student assistant teacher. No one in the classroom, outside the two of you, is thinking about the class the way you must; no one else is trying to develop a teaching philosophy and to perfect a set of teaching skills. You need to trade ideas and to share experiences with other people involved in the same work. This book is not enough.

Most community based programs don't use words like teacher, student, and classroom. So many students (and teachers for that matter) have had such damaging experiences in schools that it makes sense to create learning environments that look and feel as different from the past as possible. Embedded in those words are expectations of authority or

submission to authority that run counter to what we are all about. These are strong arguments for adopting words like facilitator and learner.

I am of another opinion though. I think education is a universal human endeavor that deserves our efforts to reclaim it. Education is in terrible shape in the United States and we, as community based educators, have a lot to offer public educators in the way of challenges and solutions. I don't think we should separate ourselves from the mainstream, but rather make it possible for the mainstream to learn from us. So my using words like "teacher" and "student" comes from a belief that those words can be rescued and education can become a contribution to individual realization of potential and to positive evolution of our society. Contrary to public opinion and salary figures, to be a teacher is to take up some of the most valuable and respectable work available in our culture. We should fight "the authorities" on this issue rather than capitulate to them.

I believe that our students benefit from this effort as well. If we are good teachers and create valuable educational experiences with and for our students, continuing to use these words will rehabilitate the language, will convince our students they deserved better all along.

There is a difference between expecting submission to authority and recognizing the power of teachers. I think this is a point on which the progressive education movement is confused Maybe this is the difference between authority meaning power to command and authority meaning a witness or expert. Teachers will always play a classroom role different from their students; students and teachers are there for different purposes. To ignore this basic fact is to impose an unspoken tyranny: if there is an "authority" and it is not acknowledged, that authority cannot be held accountable.

In some situations, students must teach themselves. One or two learners, individuals who would be in that class as students in any case, are designated as facilitators. Some adult education classes in Nicaragua have had to operate this way. There are many benefits to this kind of set-up and some of the problems faced by more traditional classes are not present, yet students unanimously look forward to a time when they can have trained teachers.

Our classes have a teacher, designated as a teacher, who had better have something to offer students that the students do not have among themselves. If the teacher doesn't, then the students have a right to ask why he or she is taking up their time. Would we want anything less in our own teachers? But that doesn't say what that something to offer is. It might be the personal experience of having recently mastered the material the students signed up to learn. It might be the ability to draw out of individuals a collective perception of reality that can be analyzed and acted upon. It might be experience in facilitating separate individuals to

forge a learning community. What good teachers offer certainly isn't "the answers" or "a better way to live." What they do offer, each decides for him or herself by determining the needs of the current students.

CHAPTER II:
THOUGHTS ON PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

* IMPORTANT IDEAS
* THE SOCIAL CONTEXT
* THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT
* LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION

"We define literacy in its broadest sense. We believe that not knowing how to read and write is primarily caused by social factors. Ultimately, the solution is to build a just society that values and fosters the potential contribution of each of its members, regardless of race, gender or socio-economic position. The work of Goodwill Literacy is to help build that society by providing an opportunity for learning for those who have not had equal access to quality education or who have not been served well by traditional educational institutions. We believe that by improving writing and reading skills, adults can increase their critical thinking, self-reliance and willingness to effect change by becoming advocates for both themselves and their community."

- from the Goodwill Literacy Mission Statement

A Latin American dictator, once commented that he didn't want educated citizens; he wanted oxen. The Heritage Foundation, here in the U.S., once worried that to educate all our citizenry well might mean not having enough people who would take bad jobs at low pay and therefore our economy might suffer. These may be extreme views, but they point up that literacy is a highly political issue. In some times and places, to wrest control of resources for literacy instruction away from governments and school systems has meant flying in the face of the powers that be. The Citizenship Schools organized in the South during the voter registration drives of the 1950's met with brutal resistance. Paulo Freire, whose literacy schools participated in campaigns for social justice, had to flee Brazil into exile. The education taking place in these two examples included at its core an invitation to look at the world with a critical eye. Critical analysis is a central concept of the kind of education we hope to foster.

In our time and place, literacy programs are not considered much of a threat by anyone but the Heritage Foundation. We do not live in the South of the 1950's or Paulo Freire's Brazil. Of course, there is some concern about the "problem of illiteracy" because our country is worried it needs a higher general level of education to compete economically. No one seems too worried that literacy students are asking critical questions, but this doesn't change the fact that the questions are getting asked. We hope the education we provide fosters an analytic approach to the

information read. We hope it also encourages analysis of the world reflected in print. We hope our teachers and students uncover and develop critical thinking ability. (Or apply the critical ability they use in the rest of their lives to what they read and write.)

One of our expectations of education is that it will make social transformation possible. While we don't expect our students to go out and create whole movements for social justice, we do see ourselves as assisting in a process of equipping people (including ourselves) for social investigation, independent learning and community action. We hope to create a safe place for students to talk about issues effecting the course of their lives, and express their views of the social forces at work. You will see that this handbook puts heavy emphasis on themes and class projects. The suggestions we give for using themes and projects follows a process of asking critical questions: identify the problem; investigate it; look for solutions; take action; evaluate the result and then identify the next problem. Whether or not we live in a time or a place of campaigns for social justice, we are learning how to carry them out. We are developing our critical eye, learning the value of joint effort and gaining some of the necessary skills. There is no reason students can't participate in action to transform reality, if they so choose. At times individual problems can be dealt with more effectively by the whole class, community effort can often produce more than an individual can struggling alone. In our classes we are accumulating experience in accomplishing things together.

I trust that with critical attitudes, and with knowledge of how reading and writing really work, our students will make the best decisions about how to direct their lives. When the ebb and flow of U.S. political life produces another situation like the voter registration drives mentioned above or simply a small opportunity to insist on social justice, I don't doubt that some of our students will be involved in some way appropriate for them.

Through this approach we also know our students are accumulating the skills they came to the program to gain. They are learning to read and write, and to use reading and writing in their own lives. Effective education isn't separated from true life. Classroom activities limited to workbooks and curriculum set only by administrators is ineffective. We all know from experience that people learn more rapidly, and retain more of what they have learned, when they are engaged.

We wrote our mission statement to reflect this sense of the importance of the critical approach.

BORROWING AND DEVELOPING IMPORTANT IDEAS

There is often a bias against philosophy among teachers. We are often guilty of wanting to cut the talk and "get to work;" as if "work" were only what happens in the classrooms, as if the exchange and development of ideas were not work. The truth of the matter is that we are a part of an international movement. The work includes helping to develop an ever-changing body of knowledge by applying, in new ways appropriate to our situation, what has been learned in other countries and contexts. It also includes documenting our reflections on that process. We are in debt to Paulo Freire and hundreds of Latin American educators who use and reshape his ideas, to adult basic education instructors in the large cities of the East Coast and to rural community development projects in Appalachia. We have learned from the stories of the Citizenship Schools, the Literacy Campaigns in Latin America and the worker education schools in the 1930s. They have given our West Coast urban school much of the groundwork with which we began. Other schools will learn from what we accomplish.

It is not required that every teacher reinvent the classroom wheel. There are some ideas that other adult educators have found helpful and that harmonize with our mission. The following principles are adapted from a statement by the Council of Adult Education of Latin America. They use the term "popular education" to describe what they do.

> The starting point is concrete; popular education works within popular culture to critically detach the positive aspects from the negative ones.
>
> It's a process of recreating knowledge, of discovering and confirming knowledge for one's self. Its participatory, generative and investigative.
>
> It's alive. It makes the transformation of people's lives possible. It is dialogical, which means that a dialogue among equals is taking place; every one is engaging in the search for new knowledge.
>
> It is collective and encourages cooperation over competitive individualism.

The training team of the Association of Community Based Education (ACBE) lists the following as the central concepts in their definition of popular education.

1. Popular education uses participatory, collective techniques. This means that learners are actively involved in directing and negotiating the education of the group. It also means that learners and teachers are continuously renegotiating their roles. At one level, learners and teachers are engaged in the same practice-the practice of learning.
2. Popular education starts from where the learners are--it operates from a thematic, learner-centered curriculum, generated by the

learners themselves. It uses the learners' language, their words, native language and dialect. But popular education also brings the learners to new ground--it develops their ability to analyze the historical and structural causes that shape their reality. Participants use popular education to create knowledge, and to examine how it is created and transmitted.

3. Popular education is to do something; it is a process for people to take collective action, specifically class, political and cultural action. It is praxis: a process of action-reflection-action.

4. Popular education promotes personal as well as social transformation. It is a process whereby learners empower themselves and each other. Popular educators do not try to "empower" learners or to manipulate them in any way.

5. Popular education models participatory democracy. It is a process for recreating society, starting in the learning setting.

These two sources give us several gleefully large words to investigate.

Participatory education means democracy in the classroom. The content of what is studied is chosen by the students. Their lives form the basis of the curriculum. Teachers may have to learn to involve students as co-teachers. Almost everything you do as a teacher can be turned over in whole or in part to students. Even mainstream education research shows that people often learn more by teaching than they do in the role of student. If we don't turn teaching responsibility over to students, we are subtly teaching lower expectations, passivity and dependence.

Teachers may have to facilitate a process of students learning to accept responsibility for class progress. Adult new readers may enter class convinced by prior experiences that inaction and receptivity are what it takes to survive in school, but if they leave that way, we haven't done much of a job.

To do successful battle against the "classroom training" we have all received, it makes sense for teachers to use lively participatory activities, activities that invite students to contribute and involve themselves in the life of the class. Too many of us are programmed to fall asleep with our eyes open at the sound of a school bell and we need help to remain animated and engaged.

Generative education means curriculum is created by the class. Each classroom is focused on questions that get at the heart of what is most important and/or most vexing to that group, for example parenthood, work/unemployment, or neighborhood problems. It starts by identifying what the group already knows collectively about the subject to be investigated. Group members contribute to decisions about content and how to proceed.

Out of class discussions and projects, important words are often generated. Maybe these words are new to students but describe a concept they are struggling to define. Maybe these words come up frequently because they mean a lot to this particular group. My own class generated "crack," "inferiority," "gentrification," and "African." These generative words form the basis for lessons, not words chosen by a textbook author because they are good examples of particular letter sounds.

Dialogical education is learning in which everyone, students and teacher, recreate knowledge together, uncovering information and analyzing it in light of the particular needs of these students. If a teacher has read about the inner city crack economy before, he or she will still be in need of dialogue with students to truly learn what it means in their lives and what this particular group might do about it.

Transformative education opens the possibility of identifying problems and taking collective action to better our lives. In our culture we don't get much practice in that. Personal transformation may be more accessible as students gain the skills to advocate for their rights and those of their families. Students have gotten themselves off welfare, extricated themselves from abusive relationships and demanded equal treatment for their children in the public schools, all as a result of learning new skills and gaining confidence in literacy classes.

Societal change seems more overwhelming to small groups of people who have come together to simply learn more about reading and writing. But that hasn't stopped them. Students in a Nashville housing project circulated a petition and won a decision to have mail service restored after the Postal Service removed their mailbox because of vandalism. Goodwill Literacy students helped to edit a book on domestic violence written for women who are beginning readers. They also helped create a brochure on AIDS written at the 3rd grade reading level for the People of Color Against AIDS Network. Other students in another program created a child care system so mothers in the group could attend classes, and still others started a job-generating business.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The concept of context is important to popular educators. Every day we face evidence that the social forces of our times alter the life destinies of our students. There are solid reasons that people of color, immigrants and the poor make up the overwhelming majority of our student body. These groups are treated to the worst schooling, the worst health care, and the fewest opportunities compared to other groups in the country. We recognize that social and economic resources are not doled out evenly. Because we all know someone who was able to leave the effects of a crushing childhood behind, sometimes we are tempted to think that anyone could do it, that it's only a matter of will or decision. But that's not true. People who alter their own life destinies are extraordinary people and most of us are not made of that stuff. We are just regular folks. If we are doing well, it's because the conditions of our lives have been helpful enough or because something (or someone) special has happened to us. If we aren't doing so well, it's because we had to face overwhelming social forces alone. For example, children with learning problems like partial blindness or learning disabilities, born to families with resources, have many of their obstacles removed by testing, special tutors and technological assistance. Poor children may wait until they are in their forties before they even learn they need glasses or could benefit from special training. Blaming students for being non-readers or for having difficult lives that get in the way of attending class is being blatantly unrealistic and naive. Blame gets in the way of classroom opportunities for critical thought.

We must resist simplistic ideas about "trying harder" or "positive thinking." All of our lives are the result of complex combinations of individual and social factors. Often teachers and students alike put too much emphasis on the individual factors. Students, more frequently than teachers, blame themselves mercilessly and can't see that with the appropriate help and support, they would have learned to read and write as children. This is fertile ground for critically analyzing reality and taking action to transform it.

This is not to say that the responsibility for making change lies somewhere outside of the classroom or outside of the student. All those hard-nosed self-improvement programs that advise us to take the blame on ourselves and go from there are successful to a certain extent because they do identify the key actors, the people who are suffering from the need for change. What they fail to do is account for the social context of those key actors. They suggest the problems are internal to individuals and attitude change will solve these problems. But the problems are often social and need collective solutions as well.

Paulo Freire began his teaching by focusing almost exclusively on the context of the learners. He saw the paired opposites of things, natural and man-made, as the key problem to pose to his students in

Northeast Brazil. He believed, and he turned out to be right, that once peasants were able to recognize the difference between things in their lives that were natural and therefore unchanging (plants, animals, mountains) and things that were created by humans and therefore susceptible to change (bosses, labor systems, pay rates) enormous energy would be released for learning to read and for change. He gave them a thinking knot to unravel, and in the course of unravelling it his students came to see the world in a new way.

In our context, here in the urban Northwest of the United States, we are inundated by change, and our environment is mostly "man-made." Freire's Brazilian farmer-students lived with a suffocatingly stable culture even if their separate lives were anything but stable. We, on the other hand, wouldn't know what to do with stability if we were ever so lucky as to encounter a smidgen of it. Our neighborhoods, jobs, families, and even our world views change constantly. Flux is our only constant. For us, the thinking knot that might release enormous energy for learning and for improving lives must be different from Freire's because our context is different.

Looking at our culture I believe that the thinking knot we might give our students is the paired opposites of individualism and cooperation. In our culture, we blame ourselves if we fail, even if the forces of the nation are arrayed against us. We believe that the smart individual who tries will succeed. If you or I don't, it can only be because we are stupid or lazy. The myth is that strong. We also believe that if we ask for help, we are cheating and if we join with others to become stronger, we are highlighting our weaknesses. Through exploring the facets of this particularly tangled knot, we might run across the value of working together to accomplish something that benefits individuals in community, something as finite as learning to read or something as large as getting a good education for our children.

DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT

We see the relationship between teacher and students a little differently from more traditional programs. In our role as teachers, we like to think of students as co-conspirators. If I am struggling to create good lesson plans, but they don't seem to be working, it's probably because I'm taking on too much myself and not sharing it adequately with the students. Whatever can be done by students ought to be. Whatever they don't feel ready to do becomes the next lesson. The students are co-teachers.

We take care not to create what Nan Elsasser (a popular educator from New Mexico) calls "teacher junkies," students who have been made dependent on the direction of a teacher. Our classes are only brief moments in a person's total life. We had best facilitate independence as quickly as we know how. In practice this means looking at your every function in the classroom and thinking of ways to teach that skill to the students: proofreader, book finder and chooser, materials organizer, evaluator, chaos controller, or discussion facilitator, for examples.

I've already mentioned that the best way to create curriculum is to take ideas directly from the lives of the students. Take them, also, directly from their language and knowledge base. As adults, our students bring to the classroom with them a richly developed language that five-year-old beginning readers don't yet possess. Adult students also have a vast store of information gathered from life experiences that is an asset in the classroom. (See the section on Language Experience Stories. p. 48, for a simple way to use this resource.) This is not to overlook the fact that many students have missed out on certain kinds of learning and therefore certain kinds of information. But isn't it true that the experiences we survive give each of us certain kinds of wisdom? Then wouldn't it be true that each student's experiences, different from the ones we have had, give that student wisdom we do not share? It's our job to find that wisdom and find a use for it in the classroom.

It's illuminating to remind myself that students will bring more to the class than they will ever take away, and that each student will take away an entirely different experience because what he or she brought into the classroom was so completely different.

I learn from my students. All reasonably good teachers do. The longer I teach the more I learn, a sure sign that I'm beginning to understand the co-conspirator relationship. I can think of five major ways in which I benefit as a student from my work as a teacher. First, I've learned from my students' exploration of the English language and I have a much richer grasp of how the language works as a results of their questions and discoveries. Second, I've learned some of their vocabulary and idioms that were new to me. Third, no matter how much I know about the topic we adopt as a theme, I always come away from the

project with a deeper knowledge. Fourth, I learn the art and science of teaching from the feedback I get from my students. And lastly, I learn personal things. I have grown up socially under their tutelage. I suppose anyone who works around people, will become more socialized, but I have learned things from my students that I've learned from no one else. From my older students, particularly, I've learned about graciousness and how people should treat each other. They've also taught me about pace, showing me it's healthier and more polite to live one's life a little more slowly. From those students who are not like me in age, race or class, I learn about humanity and diversity, and push the limits my own race, class and age impose on me.

These ideas about the philosophy of progressive education are my interpretations of readings, conversations and experiences: What do the people who came before us in this field have to contribute to our work? What's the best way to conceive of the relationship between teacher and student roles? Each teacher will raise these questions again in his or her own classroom and develop individual responses. I hope we get to discuss them.

LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION

Setting the Tone In the Classroom

Because adult new-readers have had such a lousy time in school before they enter our classrooms, we have to convince them that this classroom will be different. We need to create a reality to persuade them that this time they can say what they think and demand what they need. Our aim is to convert them to the belief that they are in charge of this part of their lives and we are the means by which they accomplish their goals. The first day of class is the ripe moment to begin that persuasion. I can't let students go through the first day without strong evidence that my classroom is a safe place and that the learning that will take place will be determined by them.

The room needs to look different than a public school classroom. We arrange the chairs around a group of tables so that people sit in a circle. The teacher has a place in the circle, no different from the students' places. This communicates that students will find each other to be resources in the learning process and that the teacher is a participant as well as a special resource.

The books used in the classroom need to be different from the ones encountered in public school. In the teacher resource area are multiple copies of books created by Goodwill students: collections of language experience stories, poetry, books on specific themes like how to stay in school, and Black Heroes which is a collection of essays written by the GED class for beginning readers. In the library is an expanding collection of books written by new writers like Raised Up Down South from East End Literacy Press in Toronto. Our library collection reflects the African American experience because a large percentage of students at Goodwill Literacy are African American. We have an extensive series of easily read biographies of famous African Americans, trade books on Black cowboys, African American history, and African history. We make sure that the books we have on hand address issues that adults face in their lives. The children's books we have are for students to read to their children or grandchildren. We pay special attention to finding books that address our students' themes and the issues faced by people fighting poverty. By looking at what reading material is available, the students feel valued for who they are and welcomed into the classroom.

On the first day a new class meets, it's a good idea to start out with an activity that clarifies some of the differences between our school and other schools the students have attended. Below are several favorites.

*Ask the students to talk about why they are having to learn to read now, when it would have been better to learn as a child. Make sure they know you don't blame them and want to hear what experiences got in the

way. Tape record the conversation and transcribe it as a Language Experience Story (p. 48). This activity can galvanize a collection of people into a mutually supportive group in the first session.

*Ask the students to talk about times they have been teachers for others, such as children or co-workers. Tape record the conversation and transcribe it as a Language Experience Story.

*Ask them to identify the building in a photo of a school. Then ask them to list what happens inside the building. Usually students will list only pleasant things like making friends and learning subjects. Then ask them to list what happened to them in school buildings and they will list more realistic things, like being ignored by teachers and being hit by other students or even teachers. Having this part of their experience validated, in a classroom no less, often helps students see the current experience more clearly. (We borrowed this one from the Bronx Educational Services in New York.)

*Ask the students to describe all the ways our school is like public school. Then ask them to describe all the ways it is different. Be sure to include things such as it's OK to hug and kiss in our school; it's not possible to flunk out; the students can tell the teacher what to do and he or she will probably do it.

*Ask the students to talk about things that they have learned to do well and how they learned them. Record and discuss how the students learn things. Draw conclusions as a group about how this particular class might go about learning to read and write.

As you gain more experience, you will probably develop other activities to set the tone in your classroom. These experiences are mentioned to trigger your creative thinking.

Creating Thematic Learner-centered Curriculum

If you read no other part of this book, we hope you read this one. The ideas we have developed (in concert with the progressive education movement) about creating learning-centered curriculum is what sets us apart from more traditional programs. We think it is this aspect of what we do that makes the educational experiences we provide meaningful to students. It is also in keeping with our mission statement and philosophy. To base lessons on student-generated themes is a departure from current adult basic education practice; it demands enormous creativity and thought from teachers that pre-designed curriculum does not.

Themes are broad topics that students find highly charged and which consistently evoke lively responses from the class. Themes usually turn out to be problems, goals, or passions that most or all of the students in a classroom share. Some common themes for our students

are "being a non-reader," "public school," "child care," "domestic violence," "effects of drugs and gangs on neighborhoods," "the risk of AIDS," and "relations between men and women." Once a class has identified a good theme, a series of class sessions can be focused on it, increasing participants' interest and providing myriad opportunities for developing specific reading and writing skills.

As teachers, we have to be careful that we identify themes of interest to our students, and not ordinary topics that we think they should know about or that interest us. Many of the themes listed above would likely be themes for any group of adults living in a city. But it's probable that, as charged as these topics are, some of them would not be interesting to some classes. Themes come from students, not from lists in teacher handbooks. Some examples of ordinary topics that I've seen teachers mistake for themes are "nutrition and the four food groups," "pets," "safety," and "personal hygiene." One well meaning teacher was sure personal hygiene was an appropriate theme given that many of the students in her class were often quite a nose-full. Their boredom and even resentment finally led her to realize that personal hygiene was HER theme. By paying close attention she discovered depression and homelessness were really the most likely candidates for her students' themes, and secondarily, causes of the superficial problem she had identified.

One can't usually predict a group's themes without knowing the students well. It's possible that one of the topics listed above could elicit strong responses from a group , but in our experience, they are pretty dry and lifeless. In general, the characteristics of controversy and emotional response differentiate the first list of themes from the second list of topics.

Themes must also be sufficiently broad to encompass nough variety and complexity to last awhile. If we were to choose "reading an AIDS pamphlet," or "how to phone loved ones who are serving time in jail" as a theme, the topic would have most of the characteristics mentioned above but we'd finish the theme almost the day we began. So an additional criteria might be: does the theme reflect a large enough human concern? For example, the two topics above could be expanded to "AIDS" in general or "prison families" in general.

Below are several steps, beginning with choosing the theme, that will help to integrate this concept into your lesson planning.

EXPLORING A THEME		BUILDING SKILLS
Stage 1	Choose the Theme	Identify the skills needed at each stage and teach them in mini-lessons.
Stage 2	Explore Our Ideas	
Stage 3	Research Other's Ideas	
Stage 4	Create a Project	
Stage 5	Evaluate and Plan	

Exploring a Theme

It's probably helpful to think of these stages as overlapping and integrated. Stages one and two are preparation for the next two, which together form the body of the unit. The last stage is not only a wrap-up but possibly the beginning of another stage one.

Theme Stage 1 - Choose the Theme. First discover the best possible options. The best bet is to get ideas directly from the lives of your students. Use hints given to you by students' social conversation, the activities in which they are involved, the topics that make them lively and talkative. Listen well to their answers to your direct questions about what is important to them. Spend classroom time talking about what they want to accomplish in the class. Find out what problems they share. More information on this process can be found in the section below on listening.

Usually the best way to choose a theme is to have students vote a favorite from a list that they have prepared and to which you have added from your investigations. In some cases, students have been too well indoctrinated by previous school experiences and will suggest and vote for schoolish sorts of topics, like "spelling" or "libraries." They may also mistake what you're up to and respond with types of skills, "filling out forms," "writing letters" and the like. In those cases, if you are not able to explain the difference between a skill and a theme, you may have to impose a theme you know to be crucial to their lives for the first go around. Some things, must be experienced to be understood. You would then spend some class time dealing with the schoolish topic or skill they favored, as well. The only inflexible guideline is to make decisions based on the needs of the students.

Let's take an example. In this instance, the class has chosen to explore the issue of housing. Maybe the theme arose out of a discussion about a student's education. Maybe other students are living in shelters, public

housing or are just beginning to look for their first apartments. At any rate it's a hot issue for most of them.

Theme Stage 2 - Explore Our Ideas: Find out what your students know already and what they think about the theme. For beginning readers and writers, you can create a Language Experience Story question to give students an opportunity to talk. Given what you know about your students' relationship to the theme, create a provocative question that will elicit talk from students about their own individual experiences with it. Record this talk for later transcription. The entire transcript or excerpts from it can be returned to students to read and discuss. Students who are learning to write the alphabet can recopy their own section of the transcript for homework. The transcripts can be saved, compiled, reproduced in booklet form, so that each student may have a copy for reference and rereading.

More advanced students may want to discuss the theme briefly and then write. Freewriting, which is uncorrected stream-of-consciousness writing, can be a stress-free way for students to explore their ideas and get them down on paper. Students who are willing can read sections of their freewriting to the class for discussion.

In place of freewriting or Language Experience Stories, you can invent or locate an object to focus the students' attention on the theme and begin discussion. Concrete objects are best: photographs of a specific situation, the thing itself brought to class, but also videos, poems or drawings. You can produce a skit or in some other way create the object together. Paulo Freire calls these objects "codifications," often shortened to "codes." Codes are physical representations of the ideas or issues students have chose to explore. The discussion about the code, Freire calls "decodification." The best choice for a code is one that will elicit the most animated talking. Successful codes usually portray several points of view or sides to an issue. With luck and creativity, teachers can invent codes that draw out students' ideas about the society's contribution to the problem as well as any part the students themselves play in it. Once you have the code, present it to the students and first have them describe it. Next ask questions about its relationship to the theme and about what it means or brings to mind. Finally, ask questions that will help the students address their own situation.

For the housing example, I could choose a poem by Langston Hughes called "Madam and the Rent Man" as a code. But that might limit the discussion to just landlord tenant problems. I'll save the poem to use as a later reading. I could get a Polaroid and have students take photos of their homes. That would elicit a multifaceted discussion, but the time it would take to assemble the photos might mean losing this moment in which everyone is ready to start. I could check out photos from the downtown library that show different kinds of housing situations, or I could take photos myself that depict what I know about my student's

situations. These ideas would work and I might use them, but maybe there is some way to involve the students so I get an educated view of the issue. In the end I decide to announce the photo taking trip as an extracurricular activity and whoever is interested meets at the school and spend three hours and two rolls of film getting the shots we want.

Whether you use oral stories, freewriting or codes, the purpose is to spark a new verbal look at old things. This is a chance for the students to examine in new ways something they have lived with for a long time. During this conversation, your job is to elicit talk, explore diverse opinions and get to the real heart of the matter. Don't settle for the initial and the superficial. At some point, ask questions about the social, political or economic causes. This means asking why. Once you get an answer, ask why they think so. Continue asking why to each subsequent answer until you're satisfied you have gotten to the bottom of what the students think. This helps students explore the larger picture in depth. The point is to uncover information new to both teacher and student.

In the housing example, the photos are first described in detail and we learn the stories behind the details from each other. The cracked door in the hallway was a result of a drug bust last week. The code violations (cracked windows, exposed heating pipe) have been there for years. The shelter dwellers explain the signals in the photos that show that a dangerous situation might be ready to happen. The students talk about what they love about their homes and want to preserve. They also compare it to the mansion and the suburban ranch style house whose portraits we snapped as well. They talk about how much money they pay in rent during their lives and how they'd like to use it to buy a house. An argument erupts about the rights of property owners. Some say the situation isn't fair. Others say if you're smart enough and work hard enough to have the money you should be able to charge whatever rent people will pay. A discussion of privilege and inheritance ensues. The students consider a government's responsibility to protect its citizens from greedy neglectful owners and debate whether housing is a right or a privilege. Key words that surface during the discussion are: privilege, inheritance, disparity and violation. These words will be studied and used to create activities and writing assignments.

In some way, record what the students know about the theme at this point. Individuals can make lists, small groups can brainstorm and report or the whole class can construct a list. After reviewing the record of what is known and discussing it, the entire class can generate questions they would like answered. Some of the questions may be generated to settle disagreements students have about the truth of items on the recorded list. Never do all of the members of any group have perfectly accurate knowledge on any given subject. The list will contain items the students will disagree with after studying.

Theme Stage 3 - Research Other's Ideas: Find out what other people think about the theme. This is the research phase. It becomes our job to locate or create materials that will help students discuss and answer their questions. Experts, or other people with experience on the theme, can be invited to speak. Public library materials could be copied and taped for students to read and listen to. Articles, poems, graphs can be read and analyzed. Videos, recordings, photos, and field trips may all provide information and opinions for the students to discuss.

During this phase, you will want to return frequently to the list of questions the students created to discuss answers. The group may even be able to come to agreement on an answer and can spend time writing it down and clarifying it. Periodically, you will also want to return to the record of what is known and review items for accuracy and to add new ones.

The students send for brouchures from the Seattle Tenants Union, listen to "Bourgeois Blues" by Leadbelly and study the words to the song. They interview other students in the school about their experiences and write up short reports that are printed in the school newsletter. In the case of this theme, like many others the this stage and the next become interwoven. For more description of research carried out see the examples under Theme Stage 4.

Theme Stage 4 - Create a Project. This is what creative, critical, responsible people do: they decide in what way the knowledge they have recreated has changed them. They apply the new knowledge to life. They use the new knowledge to recreate themselves, to solve problems, and, in some small or momentous way to recreate the world.

Our role is to help the students formulate a useful project that will allow them to apply, as a group, what they have learned. We do not impose a project. There is an ethical question here about belief and action. We can't decide for others what their reading of the world should be nor what they should use their time on earth to do. We aren't talking here about classroom simulations or role plays, but of truly useful work.

Ideas formulated by classes for projects include: producing a short play for young people on gangs and drugs; bringing in a series of elected officials to learn from and, in turn, to influence; helping one student get justice from a housing bureaucracy; and affecting public opinion on the theme of getting a decent education for the children by writing letters to the editor and holding public forums. Groups of students have also changed the material conditions of their lives in some significant way related to the theme. Programs across the country have successfully created a child care cooperative, started a housecleaning business, and pushed to have city services extended. Other classes are more than content to write documentation of what they have done for the class that will come after them. Some groups do not choose to take

action on their new knowledge. Asking these students to write about it is a powerful substitute. The housing group might be asked to respond to "In thinking about your experiences as a renter, homeowner, or shelter dweller, was there ever a time when you had to deal with someone else's privilege?"

The group working on housing hasn't really gotten to the point of having a project yet, so they might read and discuss the Hughes poem. The class decides to use the photos and the information they are gathering through research to make a display in the library about housing rights. This is more of a school-type project, so while we are working on it, I'm keeping my eyes open for a more useful real-world project. We read a "fourth grade level" version of the landlord tenant law and the class decides the threatened eviction of a fellow student is unlawful. They decide to do something about it. They begin by researching. Resources are collected by asking social workers and lawyers with whom students are already in contact. We make a list of people, agencies, and written materials that might help. Students take on the different tasks of inviting speakers and sending for pamphlets. We arrange for presentations by a representative of the Seattle Tenant's Union, a lawyer not involved in tenant law but friendly to the needs of poor people, and a landlord who is well liked by one of the students. We prepare a long list of questions for each speaker and decide on a way of recording the answers. We make a field visit to the student's home and to the Seattle Tenant's Union.

Meanwhile the display in the library has turned into an educational tool for sharing what the students have learned about tenant rights and responsibilities with the rest of the school. Other classes are notified to take advantage of it and students offer to give presentations to other classes. The students read and discuss the notices sent to the student by her landlord and brainstorm collective responses. They write drafts of letters and the student who might lose her home composes a letter borrowing heavily from other student's letters. The class critiques and improves the letter and helps to proofread it. I look for reading selections and find some that I rewrite on eviction parties in the 1920s, neighborhood renovation by tenants in New York, and Habitat For Humanity, the international organization that builds homes all over the world. We read excerpts from a play and write a short one of our own to go with the display. The students feel too shy to take it anywhere, but enjoy rehearsing. In the end, a letter from the lawyer friend to the landlord solicited by the students is enough to make him back down. Students write an article about their experience for the neighborhood newspaper.

Theme Stage 5 - Evaluate and Plan: Identify the next step. If the project is completed and celebrated, evaluate it with the students. Reflect on the effect of what you did and what you learned. What would you do differently next time? What did you all learn about the world and yourselves? What do you still want to investigate? Is there another project related to this theme that the students want to take on? Is it time

for a new theme? In the case of the housing theme, I would use the article written at the end of the project as a way of reflecting on the whole project. The evaluation and reevaluation of the project that would go on to get the article written would be highly instructional. I would also list for students the skills they learned. For students who are tightly focused on skill building, I would devise a test on those skills to prove to them that they had learned something measurable.

Skill Building

During the research and project phases of the "unit" students will encounter tasks that are momentarily beyond them due to the lack of a specific skill. For example, do they need to read I.D. cards or books, write dialogue, find telephone numbers and call them, understand or spell certain words, speak in public, interview experts, recite poetry, request information in writing, express themselves in writing, address envelopes? A list of the probable skills to be learned should be made as soon as possible and revised as often as necessary. If you feel it would be useful, have the students assist in identifying which skills they will need. For big, complicated projects your list of skills will be quite long.

Here is a list of academic skills needed by lower level students for the various activities in the housing example:

- reading pamphlets
- looking up numbers in the phone book
  - alphabetical order
  - phone book organization
- interviewing
- writing thank you notes
- note taking
- speech writing
  - organization of ideas
  - categorization of ideas
  - summarization of ideas
- letter writing
- revision of non-fiction writing
- proofreading for specific punctuation, spelling and grammar points
- theater script format
- journalistic writing

The moment that students identify the need for a skill, or the moment you share knowledge that will allow them to do so, is the best time to teach that skill. Break the action for a "mini-lesson" and then return to the project. Adults learn more quickly and more thoroughly when they see a direct and immediate need. It's much more difficult for us to memorize skills that are isolated from each other. The human mind more easily absorbs information that is linked to other information in some way.

Here is a quick reference for creating mini-lessons in the middle of a project.

√ Model- show the students how it goes
√ Teach- directly teach them.
√ Guided practice- help them practice; arrange it so there are very few ways to make errors.
√ Independent practice- allow them to practice with only a little assistance from you. Check to see that they are ready for the next step. (If they aren't ready, re-teach the skill.)
√ Apply the new skill to the project- "Do it for real." This is where the teacher backs off and keeps out of the way.

For more explanation on how to teach specific skills, see the section on Mini-Lessons: The Direct Teaching Model (p.41).

Note taking is a useful skill in the housing theme project because the students will be listening to speakers whose opinion and information will probably conflict. One way to teach the skill of note taking would be as follows:

(1) Model- show the students three or four ways to take notes: by asking several students to talk about an area of expertise while you record notes on an overhead transparency or on paper where everyone can see. Copy down every word and talk about how impossible it is. Use an outline format and discuss the pros and cons. Use mind mapping or clustering by putting the topic in the center of the page and drawing lines and balloons to fill in the details. Ask students to suggest ideas for improving the note taking method that will help them remember the important things the speakers say.
(2) Teach- give a short lecture on a well known topic and walk students through the steps of taking notes-discuss it.
(3) Guided Practice- have students sit in pairs and tell each other about "how to raise a child" and take notes. Circulate and help students with the note taking. Have students report what they learned from their notes.
(4) Independent Practice- Ask students to find someone in the building to interview on a controversial topic or on how to do something. Each reports what he or she learns from their notes.
(5) Apply- each student takes notes on the presenters and discusses them in the next class session.

In the first few weeks of a new class, the teacher and the students typically don't know each other well enough to choose and embark on some elaborate project. It often makes sense to use this beginning time to simply get to know one another through reading and writing. Language Experience Stories, described in more detail later (p. 48), make it easy to incorporate personal stories and class discussions into the skill building that the students so often hold as a priority. Soon enough a theme will emerge from the group and you can then begin to generate questions the students want answered and go looking for a code or a writing question.

Listening to Students To Get Resources

It's very difficult to do much good teaching without knowing your students well. It's necessary to know their strengths and weaknesses in order to have an opinion about what each needs next and how they might be paired or grouped to assist each other. We all bring our past lives with us wherever we go, and knowing the backgrounds of our students will tell us why certain things will work in a given class while others won't. Knowledge of this kind will also tell us which topics are themes for students and which are merely topics.

Listening is not normally a skill people need to study or practice. Most of us do enough of it, well enough, to survive each other's company. In the case of popular educators, on the other hand, the study of listening becomes a life-long pursuit. Information about our students is the material from which we fashion our teaching.

To begin, we need something to listen to. Most students and teachers are more than willing to share their lives with their classmates. Social talk binds us to each other and over the months makes us friends. This back and forth trading of daily events gives us strong pictures of the threads that run through individuals' lives and eventually reveals the threads students share: family, the struggle to learn, dreams, frustrations.

Eventually, we will run into a person or a group unwilling to chat spontaneously about certain things. Then we must ask. Over my years as a teacher, I've become amazed by the power of the serious question. I think I began asking questions in order to confirm my guesses, and since I'm a pretty good guesser, I didn't learn I was doing it wrong for quite some time. Eventually, I discovered I wasn't really open to the answers I was getting; I wasn't really listening. When I finally thought up the idea of asking a question that I didn't know the answer to, it precipitated a revolution in my thinking. The answers I got provoked an enormous spurt in my professional growth (and probably my personal growth as well.) Now, whenever I'm stumped or confused in a class or when I get uncharacteristic responses from people, I ask questions.

used to scramble for answers or maybe just for cover. More and more, I'm able to just ask questions.

Once the answers begin to pour in, you're faced with the process of sorting through them. In general, taking people at face value is a useable guideline, but there are times when messages are sent on a number of channels and need interpretation. With issues as emotional as one's ability to think and learn, people are often unaware of the multiplicity of layers of feeling and thinking. They need to be asked questions in order to sort their own internal messages. These complications require that teachers listen with their ears and also with their eyes. We need to note discomfort or boredom in our students' bodies when they are too gracious to put it in their voices. We need to note enthusiasm for certain ideas or topics in the body language of the class. I'm not able to list all the topics that would be themes for me, but by watching me, a sharp observer could tell from my eyes, body posture, and the speed and pitch of my voice that particular subjects are highly charged for me.

Words and bodies are not the only things worth listening to. It's useful to listen to people's neighborhoods, workplaces and to their homes. Visiting or asking students for photos provides grist for the theme-generating mill. Some students have chosen themes by examining and "decoding" photos they took of their neighborhoods as in the housing example. Issues of police protection, crime, community parks, health care or youth might come from such an activity.

As teachers we need to develop mechanisms to help us listen, to provide us with opportunities to listen. The progress we make on this question is very individual and requires concentrated attention.

Metacognition: Thinking of Yourself As a Thinker

Metacognition is a great word. It means thinking about thinking. I imagine a wispy version of myself floating in the air above my shoulder, watching as I study. The wraith-me is watching what I do to think and learn and is advising me how to do it better. That's using metacognition. Teachers observe how their students approach learning tasks, what their learning styles are, and how well they understand the job at hand. They diagnose the students' strengths and weaknesses and devise lessons to help the students along. When students do this for themselves, they are using metacognition. There is some evidence that, in public schools, the ability to be metacognitive is one of the big differences between good students and students who are having trouble. It's possible that no one has ever helped the "average" and "poor" students learn to think about their thoughts. For some students, a little help in this direction could mean the difference between stagnation and dramatic progress.

There seems to be four parts to metacognition: self, task, text and strategy. To be good at it, you need to be aware of all four and be able to control them. First, you need to know yourself as a learner. Do you get nervous in certain learning situations? When you are tired, are you likely to reverse letters? Are you good at remembering things when you diagram them or when you rehearse them? What's your favorite note taking style and why? Do you like to make dozens of drafts before you show your writing to someone or do you profit from letting people see it after the first draft? When you don't know something or don't understand something, do you stop and notice or do you just plow ahead?

Metacognition requires that you understand the task. Are you writing to collect your thoughts on an issue or are you preparing for essay questions on an application form? Are you supposed to remember everything you read in this chapter or just things about a certain topic? Is the letter you are writing going to be read by a friend or by a potential employer? Are you reading for pleasure or to prepare for an exam?

The third element requires that you understand the different kinds of text. Is this a fiction selection you're reading, with characters and a plot, or is it non-fiction, with chapters and graphs? Are there chapter summaries, photos with captions, or glossaries? Does the author make it easy for you to read the book or does he/she make it confusing by setting up the book in a distracting way? Is it a text book with important ideas highlighted, or is it a story book with no layout to help you along?

The last element of metacognition is strategy. If you don't understand what you just read, do you have ideas for what to do about it? When you run into a word you've never seen before, do you give up, do you ask someone or do you skip it? If you know you are going to use the information in the material you are reading later, what is the best way for you to study it? Can you summarize, question yourself, break it into smaller pieces or skim?

Being a great student means that you fit strategies to the task at hand, monitor what you are doing and how it's going, and adjust the strategies; accordingly. But if you can't do those things or have never thought about them, that advise isn't much good. As teachers, we need to use methods that will help our students learn to be aware of and control their own thinking and learning.

Probably the most helpful method is to develop strategies together and help students practice using them. For example, its common for students to have trouble understanding what they've read. In that case take time out and ask them to brainstorm ideas for "fixing" the lack of comprehension. They might suggest rereading, asking for clarification from you, and looking up words they don't understand. If you have been using pre-reading activities (discussed on p. 34), they may suggest predicting the content from what was understood and rereading to see if

the guesses were correct. If they don't suggested it, you might. These four strategies could be listed on a poster and referred to as needed. Eventually, as students internalize strategies that work for them, the poster becomes unnecessary.

This process of identifying a problem, brainstorming strategies and practicing them should be repeated as often as possible. After several experiences, students will begin to use the process on their own.

In general, begin to watch your own learning and thinking. Keep track of what you do, what works and what doesn't work. Because you are probably an expert reader, metacognition and of strategizing may be automatic. The more you are aware of yourself as a thinker-learner, the more you can model it for the students. Talk about your self-knowledge; narrate what you do so they can see someone encounter problems and decide on strategies to solve them. Provide your students with clear purposes for reading and assist them in identifying their own purposes. This will help them become used to analyzing the task at hand.

Think about having everyone in the class, including yourself, keep a journal in which they write daily about their observations of themselves as learners. Make comments about students' increasing awareness and control of themselves as thinkers, readers and learners. Point out instances of useful metacognition and use of strategies in the classroom. At some point, after many direct experiences with it, you may even want to teach the word metacognition and discuss it directly.

CHAPTER III:

READING THEORY: SOME THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT READING BEFORE YOU START

* EXPERT READERS
* HOW READING WORKS
* THE CONCEPT OF DISTANCE

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN EXPERT READER

Sometimes when my students help each other with reading tasks or mull over their progress aloud, I have learned things about them they would never think to tell me directly. Several times, I have heard students talk about reading as if it were simply a matter of giving letters sounds. Whether or not the resulting strings of noise made any sense didn't seem to matter to them much.

This is a pretty distorted idea of reading and I wondered how widespread it was. I did a little informal research and asked some students what they did when they read. "When you open the book and look at the page, what do you do?" I asked. Their responses were startling. Students who had been with us a while and were not making good progress reported looking for vowels, counting letters, trying to see how the first word differed from words they knew, trying to identify the sound of the letters. Two new-readers who were making faster progress and were at a slightly higher reading level (approximately 4th) talked about looking for information as well as deciphering words and letter sounds.

For comparison purposes, I asked reading friends of mine to answer the same question. I picked people who, at one time or another, had suggested I read one of their favorite books and hadn't taken no for an answer. I figured that qualified them as true expert readers or at least fanatics. Their answers were startling too, but only because they were so different from the students'. They talked about playing with ideas, getting visual or auditory images, arguing with the author, getting smells (!), and interpreting symbols into language that held meaning. The experts had a sense of playfulness and enjoyment that wasn't just lacking for new-readers; it was replaced with forboding and tension.

The largest chunk of language that new readers reported dealing with was single words, though references to them were few. More often they focused on letters. Unless the mention of "symbols" meant letters,

the expert readers never talked of anything smaller than words and only referred to them infrequently. They concentrated on large chunks like ideas, paragraphs and books.

I think I understand why some students might have developed such a limited notion of what it means to read. Most children, who later became good readers, had someone at home or at school who put books in their hands when they were very young. Those children were read to, helped to look up information in dictionaries or encyclopedias, and maybe were encouraged to write and illustrate their own books. Their ideas about reading developed in rich and complicated ways.

We know our students did not grow up in the best of circumstances: busy working parents, highly stressful economic lives, possibly poor health, and certainly poor schools. Maybe there were no adults around who had been able to go to school themselves. Rarely did our students arrive at school with the kinds of experiences behind them I described above. Often their first experiences with reading were in schools that believed in developing important but isolated skills. So much focus is given to phonics instruction in the early grades, it must surely impress on youngsters without reading backgrounds that reading is sounding out letters and blending the sounds, a painful and meaningless drill that must be gotten through.

I was stunned by the possibilities: if expert readers concentrate on meaning, what does it mean that some new readers are silently engaged in letter counting and getting nowhere? I wondered what it meant for teachers.

HOW READING REALLY WORKS

While this question looks terribly obvious, the various answers that are given to it determine vastly different approaches to learning and teaching. For example, if you believe that writing is making letters, then copying letters or filling in blanks in a workbook is a good way to teach writing. If you believe reading is sounding out and identifying words, then learning the sounds of letters and a long list of sight words ought to be sufficient for learning to read.

If you believe, as we do, that reading is making meaning out of print and that writing is communicating meaning to other people through written language, you develop a different approach. Instead of focusing on the minutiae of letters, sounds, punctuation and grammar, or on the rules that organize them, we focus on understanding, analyzing and recreating what we read. We also focus on clearly recounting our thoughts and experiences in ways that will have an impact on other people. In learning how to read and write, using this definition, we discover that there are tools that will help us. Punctuation can clarify meaning in many instances. Unknown words can be decoded and understood so reading can proceed. The specific and isolated skills that are sometimes the central focus of adult basic education, are for us, merely supporting tools.

No one can go back in time and find our students in their third year of life, pull them onto a lap and drag out a string of picture books. Rich experiences with written language cannot be handed out retroactively. That wish gets tossed into the world's huge pile of lost-chances. But we can make use of all the wisdom and knowledge that our students have accumulated over the years and create with them adult versions of those early learning experiences with print. A main task of learning groups is to build up a backlog of experience that impresses students with the usefulness and playfulness of reading and the power of writing. I don't think you can simply tell people these things and expect them to believe you. This is a clear example of the need for the student to recreate knowledge: to discover knowledge for him or herself. Our students must have repeated, convincing experiences that say reading is to find something out and to make life more of a pleasure and writing is to communicate. In the section on methodology, I describe methods that we think can do that.

To get a little more technical about how reading is making meaning, think about what happens when you read the following sentence: "The old ones watched the sun go down." If twenty of us were lined up and asked what that sentence evoked, we would get twenty different answers. Someone with a glorious sunset in her recent past would probably tell us about that. A Seattlite, born and bred, might tell us about a dull glow that sank into gray water. Because I've read too many science fiction and fantasy novels, I would talk about extraterrestrial non-

humans, who are often referred to as "ones" in order to differentiate them from men and women. Even though we read exactly the same words, what went on in each of our heads was different because we combined the words we read with our own individual experiences. That's what reading is: interpreting print to fit and add to what we've already learned about the world. That's why it's so hard for artists to read medical journals, and engineers to read technical discussions about art. They don't have enough data in the memory bank with which to make interpretations.

When we pass our eyes over printed sentences, we're really making interpretations and confirming our guesses. We know how English is supposed to sound, more or less. We've internalized the rules of how the language goes together to make sense. Within that framework, we try to figure out what the author is trying to communicate and make predictions about what's coming up. The following is an example of how we might interpret and confirm our guesses while reading a difficult passage. The reader comes to this sentence:

"The dog bit his _____ and drew blood."

If we are beginning readers the blanked word may be too much for us to get right away, but we know, because we know English that it has to be a noun. We may not even know what the word noun means, but we aren't likely to suggest anything but one to fill that blank. (The dog bit his flinched? The dog bit his rashly? The dog bit his wicked? The dog bit his the?)

We use our general background knowledge as well. We think, "Well if the dog is male, he could be biting his own leg, like wolves do to get out of a trap. It could be "owner" or "master" too, knowing the situation with violent dogs. To check our guesses we might skim backwards to remind ourselves of the context we are guessing in. In this instance we find the previous sentence says,

"The teeth were exposed and were coming at him."

Now we remember the main character must be the being that "his" refers to. We know the dog bit him. We keep "master" and "owner" on the list of possible answers and we begin to think of leg, hand, or other body parts. Then we read ahead to get more information to check our predictions against. The next sentence says,

"He pressed his elbow against his body to stop the bleeding and raised his hands against the next attack."

Now we know it's either his elbow or some part of his torso in reach of an elbow that was bitten. We are narrowing the list of possible candidates: elbow, chest, stomach, ribs, hip. Now, if we look back to the

word that's giving us trouble and locate a beginning or ending consonant or two, we can almost always successfully guess the word: "The dog bit his st_____." After using grammar knowledge, general knowledge and a little phonics, and after finishing the sentence, scanning back and reading ahead we guess the word "stomach" and feel pretty confident we're right. This is the process all good readers use. Fortunately, it takes a whole lot less time to do it than it does to read about. Often expert readers are so quick at this that they don't remember doing it.

In reading we use three criteria to guess and confirm guesses: syntax (or our sense of grammar), semantics (or our sense of meaning), and phonics (the sounds of letters). You experienced it in the paragraph above. Research tells us that readers use semantics and syntax quite a bit and fall back on phonics less often, mostly to check guesses and solve problems. For example, we read at our fastest speed when everything is going well and we are following what the author is saying. We predict and we are right. But if we misread (or mis-guess) an important word, pretty soon things aren't fitting together anymore and we have to retrace our steps and look at the letters more closely to find out what the word really was. You can see how familiarity with the subject matter makes predicting, and therefore reading, easier. You can see why, when we read about things new or strange to us we go more slowly and spend more time looking at letters. Our familiarity with the kind of syntax used in the reading is of some help in predicting also. For example, unfamiliar dialects and works poorly translated from foreign languages are harder for me to read than writing that uses a grammar I'm familiar with. That's why Language Experience Stories are so easy for beginning readers to read; the content and the sentence structure are completely familiar to the reader and therefore highly predictable.

Some methods help teach students to use this prediction meaning-gathering nature of reading. Exercises like CLOZE (described on p. 58) teach some of these skills explicitly. Reading aloud, also described later, helps in a more global way to teach new readers that reading is a process of making sense and extracting meaning from print. Also, when lessons are organized around themes almost everything that happens in classrooms is in order to gather information and analyze it. Classroom activity reflects the process of reading and encourages students to think of reading as meaning centered. Projects provide a context and purpose for reading that highlights information gathering and places discrete skills in a secondary role.

THE CONCEPT OF DISTANCE: MAKING READING EASIER

Distance is the amount of familiarity or unfamiliarity in a piece of writing. It accounts for how hard something is to read. I haven't much of a science background and the medical journals I find casually lying on my kitchen table might as well be written in a foreign language: "Some evidence exists for a gastric lipase which splits medium and short-chain triglycerides." Not really foreign exactly, because I could read that sentence aloud and probably even diagram it, but it gives me no new information. Several sentences in a row like that and I would close the book; on a bad day, I might even tear it up. The distance is just too frustrating for me. The guy who owns the journal has all the right background experience and vocabulary. He sails past that sentence on a breeze.

There are five main aspects of distance over which a teacher can exercise some small amount of control. They are interest, grade level, familiarity, idea density and adultness.

Interest is by far the most powerful of the factors. If a student is driven by some internal desire to find out the information in a reading, many other obstacles evaporate in the heat of the moment. Never underestimate this power and use it to your advantage as often as you can. Find out what it is that moves your student more than anything else and read about that.

Grade level, is a mercurial thing in adults and should never be treated as an absolute. There really isn't any way to determine, with accuracy, the reading level of an adult who has had so many and so many varied experiences. Life may have given one person a large sight word vocabulary with minimal comprehension skills and another person a good ability to sound words out, but not one word known on sight. Adults are so individual in their skill levels that we find people with identical test scores reading vastly different kinds of materials.

With that caveat, the concept of grade level can be of some use. If your students have been assessed, you will have a vague idea of each person's reading level. With information given on subsequent pages of this handbook, you will be able to test reading material for it's grade level, in order to match the two. In conjunction with other factors, the grade level of a piece of writing will help you decide if the distance is too great. If your student reads at the "third grade" level and a piece is very interesting, but written at the "5th grade" level, your student may be able to handle it. If the piece is at the "12th grade" level, you may want to rewrite it, making it a little simpler or discard it for another. You will become an expert on how high your student can stretch on different subjects and you will learn to judge readings by that information.

Familiarity refers to the reader's knowledge of the subject matter in the reading. I will have a harder time understanding space shuttle flight plans than I will letters from my family. An architect will have an easier time with a novel about intrigue among downtown businessmen and city planners than would a sailor. I know what to expect in science fiction stories because of my years of reading them, but a Hmong tribeswoman I know understands them only vaguely, and then in terms of spirits. A student, who speaks an eloquent and heavy Black English, comfortably read The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman although it was several grade levels beyond his own, because it was written in a familiar English. Think about the content, format and language of a piece of writing when deciding what to read. Is this something your student is familiar enough with to overcome the distance caused by other factors? Under Pre-reading Activities (p. 34) you will find some ideas for making subject matter more familiar to your student.

Idea density simply means the number of ideas per chunk of writing. Some writers take two pages to eke out one idea. Others squeeze several into every sentence requiring us to reread and reread to keep up. Watch that you don't present your student with writing that is too dense and frustrating. If you like a reading because the student is interested in the subject but the writing is too dense, you may want to rewrite it to include more explanations and places to rest. Readers can handle more density if they are more familiar with the subject matter.

Adultness is an obvious criteria. We don't want to insult students intelligence with childrens' material. Readings must meet adult needs. Of course, some adults have the need to read to little ones. In those cases, an instructor tutor is blessed with a much wider selection of materials at the student's reading level.

All of these factors join to create distance. The art of includes learning to judge all these factors and how they interact to make a piece accessible or not accessible to your particular student.

The adults studying in our program, like adults anywhere, are thinkers. They examine complex personal and social issues, solve problems and think critically. They haven't had much experience thinking about literacy. Our job is to help students learn to think about reading and writing as effectively as they think about their lives. This section explores several methods to help students work toward clearer and clearer comprehension and analysis of what they read.

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CHAPTER IV:

METHODOLOGY FOR TEACHING READING

* THINKING ABOUT READING: COMPREHENSION
* SKILL BUILDING
* STUDENT-LED READING ACTIVTIES
* LOCATING AND REWORKING READING MATERIALS

THINKING ABOUT READING: COMPREHENSION

Defining A Purpose For Reading: Pre-reading Activities

As a child, did you ever reach for a cup of water only to find after a sip that it was milk? It's a jarring experience, because the milk does not taste like milk. It tastes just awful, until you tell yourself that it's only milk and take another sip. Amazingly, once your mouth is set for the right liquid, what's in the cup turns back into normal sweet milk. Believe it or not, reading is very similar. We need to have our mouths set for the right sort of thing or our minds just won't let us perceive it accurately. As an experiment, read the paragraph below and answer the questions at the end.

"The procedure is actually quite simple. First, you arrange things into different groups. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step, otherwise you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run this may not seem important but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well. At first, the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another facet of life. It is difficult to foresee any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but then one can never tell. After the procedure is completed one arranges the materials into different groups again. Then they can be put in their appropriate places. Eventually they will be used once more and the whole cycle will have to be repeated. However, that is part of life."

How difficult was this paragraph to read?

Did you comprehend it?

What is it about?

If you had known that the paragraph was about doing the laundry before you read it, would you have answered the questions differently?

If students are going to make good use of their brains and their life experiences, they need to know the context in which they are operating; they need to know which memory files to open up and in which categories to begin thinking . Teachers provide this context at the start of a reading lesson by doing several things.

First, prepare: read the selection yourself and decide the author's message, or choose the central idea that your students need to take away from the reading. Usually that main idea relates to your current theme. Look for words or concepts that might give your particular students difficulty so you can prepare activities that will make those words or concepts more accessible.

Second, activate prior learning: begin a discussion on the topic that will be covered in the reading. Most of our students have highly developed verbal abilities and talking is almost always a good place to begin any lesson. Begin the discussion by asking a question that will elicit students' own experiences or ideas on the topic. The best pre-reading discussions are ones that remind the students what they know about this idea. In education lingo, the discussion activates prior information and experience. In some cases, the students will have had no prior experience with the topic. This often happens when a class is in the research phase of a project related to their theme. In this instance, you will need to provide some background information or vocabulary in order to make the reading more accessible.

Third, suggest a purpose: give the students a specific reason for reading. Before beginning the actual reading, ask the students to read to find out specific things. If you are researching a theme, you can simply remind the students of specific questions they want answered that you know are related to this particular reading. If not, have the students read with a question or a goal in mind related to the main idea of the selection.

Once the reading has been completed, direct the attention of the students back to the questions to be answered and discuss what was discovered. You can also stop at points during the reading to discuss answers the class has just encountered in the text. (For a more complete discussion of this method, see "KWL" section in the Goodwill Literacy Tutor Handbook.)

Once the students are comfortable with this process of pre-reading activities, it's probably time to turn it over to them. During pre-reading you provide quite a bit of direction and they need to learn to provide it for themselves. Begin asking the students what they think should be discussed before reading a selection. At first this will be difficult and

students may not be able to provide answers. Give them some ideas to choose from or help them come to an answer through discussion.

A useful activity for activating prior learning is to predict the content of the reading from the title, illustrations, subheadings, and whatever other clues are available at a glance. Before reading a newspaper article, a class of mine decided they would predict the content from the headline "The 2 Worlds of Dr. Roland: Medicine and the Past Meet" and the photo of a young Black man in a jean jacket. They predicted it was about a man who was sick because of bad living habits in the past. They were delighted to find it was about a doctor who was working in a hospital in his old neighborhood. Many predictions will not be accurate, yours included. That's the nature of predicting the unknown. Maintaining a game-like, light-hearted air keeps things in perspective while students hone their skills. The point isn't to be right but to read to see if you're right. With this kind of practice students can teach themselves to predict even when they are alone at home.

To help them find their own purposes for reading, ask them what they think they should be reading to find out. Teach them to write down the questions they have about the content they predicted, so they can refer back to them after reading. In the class mentioned above, we read the first paragraph of the article that explained who Dr. Roland was and then revised our predictions. At that point students wrote down questions they expected to learn the answers to "How did someone from a bad neighborhood pay for college?" "What was his attitude toward the people who live near the hospital?" "What does he think when he is the doctor for one of his old friends?" In this way, each student developed for him or herself a purpose for reading this particular article. If the students questions are not answered by the article, the class can decide to add it to the list of questions for this theme. Other resources can be found to answer it.

For very beginning readers, it makes more sense to fit the reading directly to the students' experiences, rather than going to elaborate ends to prepare them to read something very unfamiliar. We recommend emphasizing Language Experience Stories (p. 48) and other highly accessible selections. For more discussion on this, refer back to the section on the Concept of Distance.

Examining The Results Of Reading: Comprehension Activities

Writing questions

One of the most common ways to help readers better understand what they read is to ask them questions afterwards. Unfortunately, in practice, the greater part of these questions ask for merely factual detail. They aren't the most important but they're certainly not useless questions. I could use more practice on remembering details myself.

Like most people, I have to take notes if I want to remember anything incidental and concrete. The problem is that factual questions are only one level of understanding. Most progressive adult educators speak of three levels. They use various names but generally mean the same thing. We use the terms factual, interpretive and critical/creative to describe these three levels. Two women who do research on children's comprehension, Taffy Raphael and Clydie Wonnacott, call these levels "Right There," "Think and Search," and "On My Own." After reading the descriptions, you can decide for yourself which terms to teach your students.

Answers to factual questions, though not always easy to remember, are usually easy to find. The answer is on the page. For this reason Raphael and Wonnacott call this level "Right There." Some examples of factual questions are: What color was the river? (It says in the second line it was grey-green.) What time did they get home? (It says the time was 8:00.) What was the main character's name? (He introduced himself as Kim.) Why did he believe the women were guilty? (He stated in the reading exactly why he believed they were guilty: he saw them do it.) Help your students learn to identify these questions as factual questions and look for the answers on the page. When students answer factual questions, correctly or incorrectly, ask them to show everyone where on the page they found the answer. This will help teach everyone how to find factual answers and will help correct the incorrect answers.

The answers to interpretive questions are harder. Usually, you must combine some information found on the page with some information in your head. You might have to use some information found in one place on the page in combination with some information found in another (Think and Search). Some examples of interpretive questions are: What time did they get home? (If they came home right after watching the sunset, it must have been evening.) How old was the uncle? (If he is two years older than his sister and she is thirty, then he is thirty two.) What religion was the main character? (Since he stood up when the Baptists stood up, he was probably a Baptist.) Have students identify a question as interpretive before they answer it. After the answer, ask students to explain the thinking that got them to the answer. When students have trouble coming up with accurate interpretive answers, their reasoning will help you see where they took a wrong turn. You and other students can walk them through a more effective set of strategies.

Critical/creative questions are both the easiest and the most challenging. The answer comes from inside the head. These questions require a lot of thinking and decision making. Rather than being correct or incorrect, answers tend to be a matter of opinion. ("On My Own.") Some examples are: What do you think the main character should have done? What are the biases of this author? Does the information in this essay match your experiences in this kind of situation?

In order to use these ideas to help students comprehend better what they read, have them practice identifying the types of questions you have written for simple reading passages. Probably the most fun is for students to write their own factual, interpretive and critical-creative questions.

Thinking Charts

The Critical Thinking Chart below is a comprehension strategy for non-fiction material adapted from one described by Lorna Idol for the July 1987 issue of Emotional and Special Education. We can show students to use the charts and then students can practice independently every time they read. Eventually students internalize the strategy, looking for and evaluating the meaning of what is read on their own. At that point the charts become unnecessary.

Critical Thinking Chart

Important Events, Points or Steps

Main Idea or Lesson

Other Viewpoints or Opinions

Reader's Ideas or Opinions

Importance to Today

You can see that the information needed to fill out the chart requires the kind of thinking generally required of mature readers in natural reading situations. It asks students to understand the author's intent, critique the message, create a personal opinion about it and evaluate its usefulness and importance. (Students should have some experience with finding main ideas before starting this activity.)

Below are instruction for teaching students to use the chart.

1) Read the selection with the students and then model filling in the boxes on the chart. Talk in detail about what you're thinking. Narrate any problems you run into, talking them through to the solutions.
2) After a few reading/modeling sessions with different reading selections, lead the students in deciding what should be written in each section of the chart as you write it.
3) When the students have mastered step two, lead the students to fill in the boxes on their own papers. Have the students report and discuss each section before moving to the next. (If the students are very beginning readers or writers, you can continue acting as the reader and recorder but begin to shift all of the responsibility for deciding what should be written to the students.)
4) Eventually, have the students fill in the charts themselves, only calling on you when they are stuck and need help. (Work with the charts for several months before withdrawing them, but reintroduce them if the students show signs of losing the skills. The students will want to be independent of the chart in the end.)

There are a number of reasons to use the charts. These are some listed by Lorna Idol.

- √ To help the student learn a comprehension strategy that can be used independently.
- √ To help the student remember the appropriate prior knowledge for the selection while reading.
- √ To have the student practice thinking on all three levels of comprehension: literal, inferential and critical/creative.
- √ To give the student practice with the following thinking skills:
  - * Clarify the purposes.
  - * Identify the important aspects of a message.
  - * Focus attention on the major content rather than on trivia.
  - * Monitor ongoing activities to determine whether comprehension is occurring.
  - * Engage in self-questioning to determine whether goals are being achieved.
  - * Take corrective action when failures in comprehension are detected.

The Thinking-About-Literature Chart is identical in purpose to the Critical Thinking Chart but is used with fiction pieces. The information requested by this chart requires the student to understand and explore the elements of a story. It asks students to identify the main character and the development of that character, the plot, the end of the story and the author's message. These elements are often called the "story grammar" and are indispensable in comprehending a story. Not all fiction follows a format that fits into this chart but most does. Unfortunately, almost all fiction written at a level comfortable to our students fits into this simple structure. If you can find unusual stuff, use it and don't let the simplicity of this chart get in your way.

Thinking-About-Literature Chart

Main Character:

Character Clues: What is the main character like?

Reactions: How does the main character react or feel about about important events in the story?

Problems: Name the problems or conflicts. Circle the main problem.

Attempts: How do the characters try to solve the problems?

Resolutions: How does the main problem get solved? or is it left unsolved?

Theme: What is the author trying to say?

For full size copies of the Critical Thinking Chart and the Thinking-About-Literature Chart, see the appendix.

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SKILL BUILDING

Mini-lessons: The direct teaching model

	TEACH	
1st	**Introduce**	Explain what and why
2nd	**Model**	Show how you do it
3rd	**Teach**	Teach how you do it
	PRACTICE	
4th	**Guided Practice**	Teacher or other student helps
5th	**Independent Practice**	Students work alone
	APPLY	
6th	**Return to the Project**	Students apply skill "for real"

Developing a good balance of time spent on skill building is always a challenge. Many tutoring and literacy programs focus all their curriculum on teaching discrete skills. Students come to class asking to learn to spell or to fill out forms and sensitive instructors respond to those requests, sometimes to the exclusion of other kinds of learning. Some programs have set curriculum requiring classes to spend time preparing for standardized exams by getting certain skills under their belts.

Think about the difference between a class focused on discrete skills and one which, as described earlier, revolves around themes. Because they have been denied access to good educations, our students are often lacking certain kinds of information. By discovering or creating information needed to carry out a project on a theme, studentsbegin to fill in gaps left by years of academic neglect. They begin to become independent learners in a community of co-workers. They experience how education can be integrating and sustaining.

We want to teach discrete skills, but we want to do it in a meaningful context. In fact, we've found that skills are learned more quickly and more lastingly when they are taught in order to accomplish immediate tasks that have some value to the students. It's much more difficult to memorize skills or a series of skills that are isolated from each other. The human mind seems more able to absorb information that is linked to other information in some way. For these reasons, we

encourage classes to choose themes and integrate skill learning (and even drill) into the process of pursuing the theme.

When it comes time to teach a specific skill needed in the pursuit of a theme, stop the action for a mini-lesson. We suggest the steps be planned out carefully. These are steps that will insure that the skill is truly learned by everyone in the class.

First Step: Introduce

Begin by explaining what you will be teaching and how it is needed in order to continue work on the project. If the students have participated in the identification of the skills, you need only point out the skill you will be teaching on the list the class developed.

The following is more or less a word for word transcript of a good lesson I witnessed: The teacher opened with: "You've complained that you were confused about how to use capital letters as we were working on our letters to the program director. Everybody finally seems pretty happy with what we've written so it's time to work on cleaning the letters up and making them pretty. Let's start with capitalization. Tell me everything you know about capitalization." She recorded their answers on the board.

Second Step: Model

Show the students how it goes. Give them an opportunity to watch you perform the skill, whether it is looking up a number in a phone book or proofreading a letter you have written for punctuation errors. Narrate your actions with a running commentary, letting them in on what you're thinking. Mention when you have encountered a problem and let them watch you think it through. They will be learning how to perform this specific skill and how to think about solving reading and writing problems in general.

The second step in the lesson on capitalization went like this: "Looks like you all know quite a bit about the rules for capitalization. The confusion must come in trying to apply them. Let me show you a way to be systematic about proofreading for caps." She pulled out a page of writing photocopied on to a transparency and put it on the overhead. (In a small class she could have put the paper in the middle of the table with students looking over her shoulder as she worked.) "First, I'm going through and underlining all the caps. Now I'm going back and underlining all the words that maybe should be capped but aren't. Now one by one I'll go through and decide which rule, if any, applies to this underlined letter. This uppercase "R" is first. Let's see. That's the beginning of a sentence, so I'm right it should be capitalized. This next one is a lower case "m"; it begins the name of a day of the week: Monday. The rule says to capitalize days of the week, so I'll correct this "m" and

make it uppercase." She narrated her actions and thinking aloud for the entire page of writing.

Third Step: Teach

Directly teach the skill to the students. There are many ways to accomplish this. You can ask the students to look at correct and incorrect examples and guess the rules to follow to create correct examples. You can copy teaching pages from workbooks. (For those of you who have lusted after worksheets, here's your chance.) You can walk them through the steps, each at their own place or with one or two at the board. Your teaching style, your students' learning styles and the requirements of the skill to be learned will dictate how it should be taught.

The lesson on capitalization continues: The teacher wrote a sentence from a student's letter on the blackboard and sat down. She asked the students to sit in pairs, with one pair at the board. The sitting students were to follow the instructions given to the two at the board and help them out if they got stuck. The two at the board were asked to underline all the caps and possible caps. The sitting students added any additional possible caps that they had underlined at their seats. Then she said, "Okay, the first underlined letter, is there a rule in the list we made that fits that first letter?" The students responded with yes and pointed it out on the board. The teacher asked them why it fit and they explained. She directed them to each new letter and through the process of rule finding and explanation. Sometimes sitting students would assist in explaining how and why the rule applied to a certain letter. Then the next pair got up and tackled a new sentence from a different student's letter. Eventually students began to explain the reasons for or against capitalization without reference to the list on the board. When most of the students were at the point of having mastered understanding the skill and were on the verge of getting restless, the teacher began using outrageous sentences to keep their attention and focus them on helping the last two struggling students.

Fourth Step: Guided Practice

Once the students have the general idea, they will need to practice. During this step, teachers need to be very knowledgeable about their students as some skills and some students require more practice than others. Repeated drill is deadly to the human mind, but plenty of practice means the difference between temporary memorization and real learning. To start, arrange it so there are very few opportunities to make errors. You can do that by asking them to choose correct answers from options given, by working in groups, or by guiding them to the correct answer before they write it. Some teachers plan several substages to guided practice, beginning with whole group work where students are guided by the teacher to the correct answer. Next they move to small group work that is supported by the teacher's presence. Finally, students work alone on work sheets taken from books or created by members of

the class. These worksheets should give guidance as to which answer to choose.

At the next session the teacher reviewed the rules the students had created. Then she asked students to work in pairs to invent example sentences, using information they knew about each other, to be used by the class for capitalization practice. The first sentence to go on the board was "my best friend in class, marilvn, her kid, sarah, makes her crazy." The teacher quickly made it into two sentences, to focus attention on capitalization rather than sentence structure, and teased the authors for making the rest of the class work on an extra sentence. Individually, the students worked at their seats to capitalize the sentences correctly. When they were finished, the teacher had them discuss what they did and why. Then the next sentence was put on the board. At the end of this session, several students seemed to be able to use capitalization with ease and others were still having difficulty distinguishing between proper nouns and the regular kind. The teacher assigned a strong capitalizer to each of three small groups of students still needing practice. Each group leader wrote example sentences using proper nouns and worked with the group to capitalize them correctly.

Fifth Step: Independent Practice

During this step the teacher sets it up for the student to practice with very little assistance. They work on work sheets that do not make the right answer obvious or they respond to questions orally. At this stage, students are gaining confidence in the new skill and the teacher is checking to see that the students are ready for the next step. If the students are not able to use the skill independently, the teacher needs to return to step three and find a way to re-teach the skill. The best place to start in re-teaching is to investigate. Ask the students what they think about the skill and how to use it. Their misconceptions are usually logical and based on previous learning. Knowing what they think will help you clean up errors. Often students who understand and can use a skill can be very good teachers for those who are still struggling.

The next step in the lesson on caps was to hand out photocopies of the original page of writing and for each student individually to proofread for capitalization, by first underlining the letters and then going back and examining each one. The teacher walked around the room looking for students who needed help.

Sixth step: Apply the new skill to the project

The students are in charge of the project and now is the time to carry it out. The task of the teacher is to back off and keep out of the way. You need to be available for support and consultation, but the students must exercise the new skill in a real situation independent of teacher guidance.

Of course that last step in the capitalization lesson was for the teacher to ask the students to proofread their own letters. She was available for assistance, but sat at her own place at the table working on the next activity.

Another example of teaching specific skills begins on page 21.

Reading Aloud: Learning To Make Meaning From Print

Asking students to read aloud is a traditional learning-to-read activity. Usually it's done with the tutor leaning over the student's book or following along in his or her copy. The tutor's role is to notice every deviation from the book and point it out to the student, often helping the student sound out or guess the mistaken word. We think it best to dispense with that model altogether and focus instead on the amount of sense the student is able to make out of the book. This works best if the teacher does not have a copy of the text to be read, but simply listens to the student the way all people listen when being read to aloud. We expert readers make "errors" all the time. We substitute synonyms or change word order to match our own style of speaking (i.e. small for little). When the student makes these kind of "errors," there is no need to correct. These deviations from the print are not really "errors." The reader is clearly understanding what is being read, understanding so well, in fact, that he or she is able to simultaneously translate into his or her own dialect or speech pattern.

As expert readers, we sometimes misread a word, changing the sense of the print, i.e. predate for postdate. Shortly we realize that it doesn't make sense in context and we scan backward looking for where we went wrong in order to correct it. This expert reader skill is taught by listening to students read and asking for clarification when things don't make sense or when the wrong form of a word is read. If students are not used to subjecting what they read to a strict criteria of sense making, they will often read one verb form for another or leave out smaller, less meaningful words. By saying that we didn't understand what was just read or that it didn't sound quite right and then asking students to explain or clarify it, we communicate the primary importance of meaning. Students will begin to scan backward to give it another try. Many students speak a dialect different from their teacher's, so it's important not to confuse errors with students translating into their own dialect. Teachers must be aware of the dialect each student speaks in order to differentiate the dialect from error.

Another kind of "error" that plagues new readers occurs when they encounter a word they cannot guess from context. They don't misread it, they simply grind to a halt. Sometimes the students can't read the word because they have never heard it before or they are too unfamiliar with it. In that case, the reading lesson takes a turn into a vocabulary lesson.

More likely, the students are halted by words they know that are simply hard to read. These instances are perfect opportunities to practice using context clues. Below, in the section on sounding out words in context, are steps to follow in teaching context clues and in helping a student over a difficult word. You will notice that we ask the student to sound out the consonants of a word only. Students frequently get thrown off by the vowels and we don't normally teach them. In addition, if some attention has been paid to prefixes, most English words can be read in context with the vowels completely missing. (Xf yxx dxn't bxlxxvx mx, trx xt fxr yxxrsxlf.)

Once students are comfortable with this new way of reading aloud, students can read for each other, the reading student having the only book and the rest of the class asking for help when they don't understand or if it sounds funny. It is such good reading practice to follow along on a copy of what someone else is reading that a modification can be made to allow for that. The teacher becomes the only listener without a copy and he or she makes the requests for clarification. This way students not reading aloud practice by following along. It's important that the person designated as the question-asker not have a copy of what's being read, because people with copies who are given the job of asking for clarification will revert to correcting "errors" and focusing on phonics. In those cases, the meaning is lost or at least becomes a secondary consideration. It's also possible for members of the class to take turns listening for sense and asking for clarification. One student reads, one student listens and the rest follow along in the book.

Once students become practiced listeners, they are set up to become expert readers. They are now demanding sense from what they read. At this point you can pair students and have them read for each other. With one book they can pass back and forth, the members of the pair take turns listening, i.e. playing the role of teacher. This way various levels of reading proficiency within one class can be addressed. One pair may be struggling through a third grade level book while two others are breezing through one at the sixth. Paired reading can also be used during the research phase of a project: several different written pieces can be read by different pairs in the classroom; the listener-members of each pair can take notes in preparation for reporting to the rest of the class.

This method of reading aloud is a slightly modified version of one taught to us by Dee Tadlock of Spokane Community College.

Sustained Silent Reading

All of the writing and reading activities in this book are aimed toward a time when students can pick up a book and, without assistance from other people, read to themselves. The activities have been chosen because we've seen them help people learn to read and write and to

think about reading and writing. But I'm convinced that that best way to learn to write is to write and the best way to learn to read is to read. After all, the best way to learn to play baseball is to play baseball.

In every class session, leave time for simply reading for pleasure. Even if it's only fifteen minutes, the habit of reading can grow. You will find that your students will be slower and slower to finish up the silent reading and get ready for the next activity. They will find more and more pleasure in reading to themselves.

Duet Reading

Reading along with someone is called duet reading. In tutoring sessions, tutors read and students follow along aloud. In classes, the entire group can choral read, giving the slower readers a chance to blend into the crowd and still continue reading. I usually seat the slower readers next to people who rarely lose their places and who can run their finger or a card under the words being read. In this way the slower readers can easily keep up. Students often take turns either reading aloud in pairs or reading aloud paired with me. Higher level students gain less from this activity than beginning readers, but this method works well for any group of students who must read material above their grade level. In the reseach phase of a project, students will undoubtedly discover materials that answer their questions but are written at a level that is too difficult. Duet, choral reading and reading to the students are good ways to handle those materials.

Once students have seen this activity modeled or have done it once, they may be paired to practice. Duet reading is a good way for students to get individual practice in a group setting.

This method and the one below help students break any ingrained bad habits of focusing on letters to the exclusion of meaning. It requires that students go quickly enough to keep up with a reasonably good reader, and therefore practice on an unconscious level many of the skills of an expert reader.

Taped Books

Another way for individuals to practice on their own is to work with taped books. Our program has hundreds of books that have been graded by level of difficulty and taped onto cassettes. Students need to be shown how to use the books and tapes the first time and then they can work alone for as long as they wish.

Help the students find a book and tape that is at their level of challenge. Set each up with a tape player, tape and book. Ask the students to listen to the first chapter of the book without reading along, just to get a sense of the story and the language used by the author.

Next ask them to go through the chapter page by page, listening and reading along. Ask them to practice on each page until they can read it without the tape. When they can do that well, ask them to let you or another student listen. Ask them to go on to the next page only after they have proven to themselves that they have mastered the page before.

When the student feels he or she has mastered that level of difficulty and is ready to move up a level, have the student read a page from a book at the current level that he or she has not read before. In other words, have the student do a cold reading in a book at the current level. If this cold reading goes well enough from the student's point of view, he or she should begin taking books from the next higher level.

Taped books are often used at the beginning of class to provide worthwhile activity for students who show up on time while you wait for the others to arrive.

It's possible to reverse this process by having the students read into tape recorders so they can listen to themselves. Students can each keep a cassette with his or her reading on it as a measure of progress over time.

The taped books idea was also a gift from Dr. Tadlock.

Group LES: Generating Language To Use As Reading Texts

If you have tutored before, you know how important Language Experience Stories (LES) can be. You may have helped students who have never read anything but their own names read a hundred words at a time from their own oral stories. You may have seen how using personal stories increases students' interest in learning and changes the students' self-perception from that of a passive learner to that of a creative active agent. If you have read the booklets we've published of oral stories collected from students, you know how enriching an activity it is.

LES eliminates the gap that normally exists between reader and author. In the case of LES the reader has perfect knowledge of what the author was trying to convey and the structure of the grammar on the page is identical to the one the reader carries in his or her own head. This is why non-readers do so well so quickly with this method. Many of the usual barriers have been removed.

LES are very different from stories written by beginning writers. By bypassing low writing skill levels and going directly to oral language, we have access to the rich vocabulary and life experiences that mature adults bring into the classroom. Student writing is important and LES

shouldn't be used as a substitute for writing even with the most beginning students. LES is a reading method that involves beginning students in reading at their intellectual level, not their grade level.

There are several ways to run an LES activity in a group. If you are looking for something worth publishing, then recreate the universal human practice of sitting in a circle trading stories. You, yourself can begin with a story on the theme. Students will naturally volunteer similar stories. Usually, students will keep their stories short and gracefully pass the microphone to the next speaker (if you're lucky enough to have a microphone). Occasionally, you will have a student or two whose social skills are not well developed and you may need to facilitate the storytelling to see that everyone gets a turn and is respected while they're speaking. When this happens you may need to do more editing during the transcription process, cutting out your statements and students' overly long digressions.

My most successful group LES session followed the question, "Can you remember a time when you stood up to an authority?" I began with a story about catching a landlord trying to cheat me out of a damage deposit and fighting him until I got most of it back. Mariah followed with a story about how her husband fought for his rightful place in the longshoremen's union and on the docks and became the first Black man to hold the job that he held most of his life. Ed told us about thoughtfully managing his sobriety in ways that would drive his alcoholism counselor crazy. Mr. White recounted a time he demanded that the boss on a construction site supply the workers with a dry-shack to eat their lunches in. He was tired of his big, beautiful car getting wrecked by muddy co-workers trying to get out of the rain. He was fired, but the union took up his case. When all the stories were told and then transcribed, what resulted was a delightful and interdependent set of readable passage-length stories.

For some purposes, you may wish to collect students' opinions rather then their narrations. In those cases, ask the question but leave the microphone in the middle of the table. Invite the students to contribute their opinions. You will probably need to facilitate the discussion so that everyone has a say. Because this kind of conversation may need more work in the transcription process, I often use a 15 minute tape. Knowing the tape is short helps students stay on the point and encourages them to relinquish the floor. The short tape also ensures that I will not have to face hours and hours of transcription and editing, but can produce usable copy with about a half hour's work.

When you transcribe this kind of group LES, you can either use a theater script format with students' names by the left margin, or you can write transitions statements. Transitions statements such as "Jamie interrupted her and said," and "When he was through, Lilly told us in a quiet voice," mean the students will have to read words they did not say.

It also means that it will be more difficult for them to find their own statements, but it more closely represents the kind of writing they will usually encounter. Theater script format works a little better if students haven't experienced LES before or if the students are lower level readers.

Once you have the transcription, it can be used a hundred different ways. Certainly, the students will want to read what they said. Students enjoy rereading LES selections, which is very helpful in the beginning stages of learning to read. It's not difficult to publish the stories, even if all you have for technology is a typewriter and access to a photocopier. With desk-top publishing capacity, students can have bound copies of collections and can refer back to them as they progress through a theme. Teachers usually devise several activities, some using the whole group reading aloud (chorally and singly) and then others in pairs. Words can be selected from the readings to study in more depth. Because reading one's own story is at one level of challenge and reading someone else's is at a higher level, teachers can begin with students reading their own stories and build up to a point where students can read the entire collection. The idea is to squeeze everything you can out of these rich reading selections.

Phonics For Adult Beginning Readers

A simple working definition of phonics is the system of letter/sound correspondence: learning to read by learning the sounds letters make and then blending them together.

Phonics instruction is the cause of many pitched battles in adult reading education. Having staked out territory, the two camps (pro and anti-phonics) duke it out bitterly; the debate is hard to enter on a rational basis. Each side has developed curriculum and programs, many sold at a profit, and the empires built around each camp require constant vigilance and defense of their respective adherents.

There are those who believe that the only way to help a non-reader is to begin with a (or b) and plow on through to the end somewhere around z. This group rarely cites research and rarely does follow-up on students' progress, preferring to lean on the "logic" of beginning at the beginning and on tradition. They have enormous anecdotal evidence to back up their position. The curriculum they develop often has a kindergarten look to it and is based on drill.

The blind commitment of the anti-phonics folks is a reaction to the fever of the phonics believers. They are angry at the mistreatment of students who are made to drill mindlessly in child-like books. They can cite research and they sometimes do follow-up. Non-phonics programs do help students to progress, but sometimes they claim no phonics is

ever necessary. While there is overwhelming evidence that many of us have learned to read without phonics instruction, there is only slim evidence that we wouldn't have benefited from a little of it at some stage.

In support of traditional phonics programs and regardless of what other experts might say, I have seen developmentally disabled new-readers benefit from long hours of drill on phonics. Many students who fit that description were not put off by the child-like quality of the materials or by the lack of challenging meaning in what they read. I'm not saying they wouldn't have enjoyed and benefited from something else, just that there was little clash between the materials and the learning styles of the students.

In support of non-phonics programs, I would have to note their variety and flexibility. Also, these programs tend to emphasize comprehension of what is read, the main and too often overlooked goal of reading.

The way I approach phonics is probably as irrational as anyone else's, but I like it. This approach focuses on phonics as a strategy to discover meaning in print. We all hope our students develop a whole bag of tricks to get at meaning; phonics is one of them. Phonics are used as clues to words students are having trouble reading in context. It makes sense to use clues from letter sounds when faster, more meaning-centered tricks aren't working. (For more information on this, see the section on How Reading Really Works, p. 29)

After teaching for several years, I developed a method I think works well with adult non-readers. The method is described below. We encourage you to develop one that works for your students, but suggest that you spend only a small fraction of class time on phonics.

For several reason, I wanted a method that dealt only with consonants. First, vowels are such an insignificant part of our orthography. Most English words can be read even when all the vowels have been omitted or replaced with x's. Secondly, our vowels change sounds on us without much warning. Even if one knows the rules for vowel-sound changes there are still enough unexplained shifts to drive even philosophers to distraction. Voltaire contemplated the two words "plague" and "ague" as he struggled to learn the English language. Finding no rhyme or reason as to why the longer word had a single syllable and the shorter word had two, he suggested that the first one should take half the English people and the second one take the other.

The third reason to deal only with consonants will be discussed in more detail in the section on Black English (p. 81). Briefly, many teachers do not speak the dialect of their students and this creates a communication barrier at the level of vowel sounds. Teachers would have to learn their students' sound system or teach theirs to the class

before instruction could begin. The method described below doesn't bother with vowel sounds.

I also wanted a system that saved the names of the letters until the sounds had been identified. A good percentage of our students had developed an ingenious method for decoding words based on their knowledge of the letter names. For example, if you spell out the word "door" in the context of many sentences, the sounds of the letter names will give you sufficient clues to guess the word, because letter names often have the letter sounds embedded in them. For example, "Close the d-o-o-r." Unfortunately, some letter sounds are not related to their names. For example, "f" is often mistakenly given the short "e" sound because it's name begins with that sound. This letter-name method works just often enough to keep one thinking it's a useful strategy. It does not work often enough to truly read. I wanted a teaching method that focused on the sounds and put the names in the background.

Finally, I was looking for a method that didn't isolate the sounds. Letter sounds hardly even exist if they aren't attached to each other. Isolated sounds remind me of heads chopped off their bodies. They make very little sense, disembodied like that. Besides isolated letter sounds are hard to say. Even expert readers will have difficulty sometimes, clearly modeling isolated letter sounds. G, J, L, F, V and R are particularly impossible, and most tutors struggle for months to wean themselves away from "buh" and "duh" and learn to simply say the sounds "b" and "d" without the vowel sound "uh" attached. Since the expert readers can't do it, I figured new readers didn't need to learn how.

Now that you know my reasoning, here's what I developed. This method presents only three consonants at a time, because our students so often have trouble with memory. Below is a suggested order of letters and digraphs. (These combinations of two letters are called consonant digraphs because they make a sound not indicated by either letter alone.) The order is an attempt to separate letters that are easily confused and to not include more than one difficult letter in any lesson.

1) b s j	5) n qu z
2) l m p	6) c t sh
3) r f h	7) k z th
4) g w ph (x)	8) ch y v

If you have students who know many of the letters, you may want to create a new list and order for just the letters they need to learn.

Step 1: Present each consonant as sound first. Start by giving several examples of the sound emphasized at the beginning of interesting words. Ask the students to think of words that begin with that sound. Then ask the students if they know the name of the letter that represents that

sound. If they don't, supply the name and write it on the board for the students to copy.

Step 2: When one session's three consonants have been introduced, ask the students to copy the letter they hear at the beginning of your words. Then give several examples. Check to see that the students' have written/copied the right letter each time before going on to the next consonant. Have them check each other's work, as well. Ask the students to give several example words at this point ,too..

Step 3: In subsequent sessions, repeat the practice activity described in Step 2 until the students are able to get all three consonants correctly on a consistent basis. Then at the following session, introduce the next three and practice in the same way. Do not introduce the "x" at this stage because it is not commonly found at the beginning of words.

Most classes run through the eight letter groups once, as beginning sounds, and then find it unnecessary to either repeat them for memory's sake or to learn the letters as ending sounds. (Consonants can change subtely when used after certain other letters.) Usually, classes learned enough in one run through to boost their improvement rate and to pick up the rest of the phonics system on their own. I would keep my eyes open, though, and watch for students for whom once through is not enough or for whom it may be necessary to explicitly learn to identify ending consonants. If you do teach the consonants as ending sounds, you can include the "x" at that time.

It helps some students to remember the sounds if they have key words associated with each sound. For these students, find emotionally charged and memorable words and help them copy them onto lists for safe keeping. Pictures or sentences can be used as memory joggers next to the lists.

Inevitably, a student will present you with an example word that has the correct sound at its beginning, but is correctly spelled with some other letter. For example, you might receive "city" when looking for the "s" sound. The only comprehensible answer for a person who is just beginning to learn letter sounds and names is "That's exactly the sound we are looking for. It's spelled with a different letter but we'll study that later." There will be plenty of hours in which to discuss the vagaries of English spelling. At the moment, sound, not orthography, is the priority.

I think the key to the success of this method in our context, has been the playful, leisurely time spent encouraging students to come up with example words. This is very difficult for non-readers at the start, but with encouragement to scan for good examples among the names of their family members as well as objects in the classroom, students can become quite good at it. We practice a three letter group for weeks, if necessary, not moving on until it's truly known.

Because memory drill, particularly memory of small things, is wearisome, we don't suggest that this part of your lessons take more than ten or fifteen minutes of a two-hour class. It's a good idea to repeat memory drills every time you meet, but it's not a good idea to beat it to death. Some classes do it for ten minutes toward the beginning of class and for ten minutes toward the end, particularly if there are students in the class who have memory difficulties. Experiment to find how your students' memories work best.

It is also helpful to review past consonants by occasionally pointing out sound/letter relationships in the other reading you are doing. For more specific examples of this method, see the "Phonics" section in the Goodwill Literacy Tutor Handbook.

Learning To Use Context Clues To Sound Out Words

If a student stumbles or stops on a word while reading:

First: Ask the student to skip the word and finish reading the sentence.
Ask if he or she knows the word now.

Second: If not, ask the student to reread the sentence, skipping the word.
Ask if he or she knows it now.

Third: If not, ask the student to reread the sentence, sounding out the consonants of the troublesome word and finishing the sentence. It might be helpful for the student to lightly underline the consonants in the word with a pencil before he or she begins.
When this task is completed, ask if he or she knows the word now.

Fourth: If not, read the sentence yourself, sounding out the consonants in the word. The student is free to concentrate on simply listening.
Ask if he or she knows it now.

Fifth: If the student still does not know it at this point, the word is probably not in the student's vocabulary and should be explained.

STUDENT-LED READING ACTIVITIES

All of the activities described above can be led by students also, but it is no easy thing to start right in asking students to take responsibility for complex procedures. If the teacher has not had a lot of experience with students in the role of teacher, or if the students voice initial objections, it might be best to work up to it by getting used to the activities described below. They are tailor-made to provide co-teaching experiences to beginning students and teachers.

Sight Words

Working with sight words in tutoring sessions is fairly familiar to most literacy workers. The idea is to locate highly charged, unknown words from the student's own language and present them again to the student in sentences, and then on cards out of context. The idea is to help a student become familiar enough with important words that they can be recognized in any context, even a confusing one. The card imitates a situation in which the context is so confusing or unfamiliar that it provides the students with virtually no clues.

In working with groups of students, the process becomes a bit more complicated. Lists of words must be kept for each student because not all words are equally charged for all students. The group as a whole can keep lists related to the theme on which the class is working. In fact, often the most powerful sight words are words shared by a community.

Once they are recorded on cards, standard tutoring practice is for the tutor to present the words one at a time to the student. In classes, this knower/unknower dynamic can be broken. By pairing students of comparable levels, they can drill each other on the sight word cards. We've found that even students of widely varying skill levels can be of help to each other in this activity. On the backs of the cards, the students can write sentences that use the sight word in context. This practice is particularly helpful for pairs that are not matched by reading level. If the word is unknown and out of context, it may be figured out in the context of a sentence. Pictures to jog the memory can also be put on the back of the cards. The teacher is the back-up resource if neither member of a pair nor their neighboring pairs can crack the code on a specific word.

One student can also hold the cards for the whole class to call, taking the role of teacher or leader. In that case, the leader needs to think about everybody getting a turn and about helping the students who can't name the word learn to do so. It is possible that the leader won't know the word and will have to elicit help from other students. The leader can ask for sentences to put the word in context or for those who have learned the word to talk about how they remember it.

Games for Sight Words

Sight word games that one finds in tutoring manuals often work better in groups. Concentration, a game in which players try to locate the matching pairs amid pairs of face-down sight word cards, works much better in groups of three or four. If you have more than four students, split them into small groups so time between turns isn't boringly long. Students can contribute several of their own sight words to the game, increasing everyone's exposure to important words.

Another sight word activity that makes more sense in groups is sentence construction from stacks of sight words cards. A team of three or four students can combine sight word cards and see how few sentences they can create with the fewest number of cards left over. These rules produce long, unwieldy sentences as students try to use up all their cards. When the sentences are read to the class, they almost always get laughs. Students play with the concept of sentence-sense, reinforcing the idea that the words we read must make sense or the author can be accused of breaking the rules.

Analyzing Word Patterns

"Word patterns" is another common method employed by literacy tutors. It's used to help students learn common chunks of words by sight and to help students break down larger, more difficult words into more manageable and meaningful bites. With a list of prefixes, suffixes and roots, a teacher can break large words into their meaning parts and students can learn their meaning, spelling and begin to read them.

homo = man or human
cide = to kill or cut — homicide = human killing human

in = not
act = to do something
tion = state — inaction = state of not doing anything

For very beginning readers, who struggle with single syllable words, tutors often teach three and four letter word patterns to help with word recognition. Usually the tutor provides a common pattern such as - "at," and asks the student to read a list of words the tutor has created using the pattern and several initial consonants: bat, cat, fat, hat, mat, pat, rat, sat, etc. In groups, it's possible to pair students or to arrange groups of three or four to practice this skill. Make up cards that have patterns like "-at", on one side and a key word like "hat" with a drawing depicting it on the other. Choose several patterns (-at, -ake, -ite, -ip, -ob, -oke for example) to be placed on cards, and designate a single key word with an easily recognized drawing to be placed on the back of each one. Then make a set of cards showing all the consonants, consonant digraphs

(e.g. ph, th, ch, sh, qu) and possibly all the consonant blends (e.g. bl, tr. sp, str, etc.).

For example:

b	at
th	ake
sp	ip
tr	oke

To use the cards, ask the students to take turns constructing words from the two sets, putting "tr" in front of "ip" and pronouncing "trip", for example. When a student is able to create and read such a word he or she recopies it onto a sheet of paper as record of that student's score. Some combinations will be pronounceable but will not form words. These are to be discounted. Partners can help decide if the combinations mean anything in English. Other pairs or the teacher can be called in to offer opinions in case of questions. When a student is stumped, the partner directs the student to the back side of the pattern card, to help him or her say the key word and to assist in isolating the pattern and blending it with the new beginning sound. Partners might need to be instructed to help each other work on the unknown word in place of giving the answer. This is our version of a phonics teaching system used at Bronx Educational Services in New York.

Spelling

Most students are very concerned about their spelling ability and want to practice on a regular basis. Some classes want spelling tests on a weekly or monthly schedule. Repeated testing gives students concrete short term goals to shoot for and, over time, helps reduce test anxiety. If spelling words are taken from a student's own writing and from work done as a class on a theme, it is more likely the student will use the words often and practice spelling them informally. As with sight words, you will need to keep a list for each student and a list for the class as a whole.

To formally practice for tests, pair students and ask one to read the spelling list of the other while the second student writes the words down. Often the student taking the practice test is familiar enough with his or her own list to assist the student giving the test in reading the words correctly. The reader will make a close guess and the test taker will remember the word and repeat it correctly for the reader. After the test, the two can review the list together to see if any words need more practice. The

practice-testing can go on as long as it is necessary for both students to learn their lists. Some students with memory problems need to take the formal test directly after practicing. Since students, taking the role of teacher, can give the test to each other, the tests can be given to individuals on their own time schedules.

Many students benefit from using several "modes" or learning styles in studying spelling words, e.g. looking at the word, saying the spelling, writing the spelling, picturing the spelling in the mind's eye or doing several of these simultaneously. Each person will develop a system that works. Your task is to reveal the options and to get students to discuss their strategies with each other.

Student-created Worksheets: CLOZE

As a tutor you undoubtedly wrote CLOZE exercises for your student to help him or her learn to guess words from context. CLOZE teaches new readers to guess from semantic (meaning), syntactic (grammar) and phonics clues, depending on how the exercise is set up. Below are examples of exercises that teach each type of clue.

Semantic:
She was so pregnant that by the time she had climbed five _____ her breath was gone.
mountains/steps

Syntactic:
Ponce de Leon was _____ for the fountain of youth.
look/looked/looking

Phonic:
The Jesuit retired to a sp_t under a dead tree to sm_k_ and meditate.

Some students find CLOZE activities easy to understand. Other students, usually with very limited exposure to written language, have a hard time understanding what they are supposed to do. For these students, it's best to break the activity into its smallest steps. Begin with a familiar LES sentence written on the board. Delete only one word. Write the word on a card and ask the students to place it in the blank and read the resulting sentence. When everyone has seen this done, begin increasing the complexity of the task. First, add sentences and cards so that students must find the correct answer from among other possible answers. In the beginning, limit the number of choices to ensure success. When that level of difficultly has been mastered, increase the number of choices. Eventually, provide no cards and ask students to choose words from their heads to fill the blanks.

(Breaking learning into smaller pieces, as was done above, is an important concept for teachers to learn and use. Breaking down activities into manageable steps' and then building back up to the more complex activity as mastery increases, is the heart and soul of teaching specific skills.)

Continue the campaign to turn students into teachers by teaching the students to write CLOZE exercises for each other. It's not necessary for students to know the different kinds of clues. It's more important that they learn to delete words that are guessable, distinguishing between words that have sufficient clues and those that do not. Give students familiar passages and have them work in pairs or individually to delete three or four words. Provide correction fluid for the deletions and then photocopy the results. When every one has a copy of one of the worksheets, work through it together. Have students talk through their guesses, both correct and incorrect, so each can learn the successful and unsuccessful strategies others have come up with. When students are more proficient, they can create CLOZE worksheets on unfamiliar passages and work them individually in class or for homework. Think of rotating the responsibility among students for bringing in weekly worksheets from passages read in class.

For more discussion of CLOZE exercises, see the CLOZE section of the Goodwill Literacy Tutor Handbook.

LOCATING AND REWORKING READING MATERIALS

One of the most arduous responsibilities of teaching is to keep a continuous stream of literature moving through the classroom. It's demanding for two reasons. First, it's just plain hard to find enough materials on every new subject the students identify as interesting. Second, our students have developed brains and underdeveloped skills. What is at their reading level is usually beneath them intellectually, making most things inappropriate for one or the other reason. There are ways to get around these obstacles, but none of them is perfectly satisfactory.

Let's begin with the first problem, need for sheer quantity. The best way to deal with the constant need for materials is to become a collector, a fanatic newspaper clipper, an owner of file drawers devoted to nothing but short things to read. You have some idea of the kinds of things your students will be wanting to read about in the future, so never let an opportunity go by where you might clip or photocopy or beg.

My files contain offensive place mats from Tennessee truck stops, poems from Latin America, prayers found in phone booths, propagandistic advertisements and everything I myself have ever written. I keep letters from past students, group essays, and anything students write on a theme. I file them by subject: drugs, education, family, housing. I don't bother with cross referencing because I go through them often enough to keep my memory of them generally active. Any short story, paragraph or quote that I come across as I read for my own pleasure goes into the files as well. I'm getting better and better at recognizing a good selection and remembering to do something about it. Other teachers are a great resource as well. Photocopy anything really good that you find and share it with your co-workers. They will do the same for you.

Now for the second dilemma: low level materials' lack of challenging content. There isn't much you can do to make lower level reading materials more stimulating for adult minds. Sometimes there are adult purposes for reading children's literature like investigating stereotypes in elementary texts or preparing to read to children. Outside these rare occasions, we are left with making difficult but interesting materials accessible to low level readers. The easiest way to do this, is to choral or duet read the material. You can also read it to the students. This gives the students enormous moral and skill support that will often be sufficient. If the material is too long or the level is much too high, you can rewrite it to be more in reach. Rewriting requires attention to three things. First, you must identify the main points and retain them in your rewritten version. Secondly, the vocabulary you use must be within the reach of your students, but reserve a few new words from the original to stretch vocabulary development. Finally, take care with the sentence construction. Neither short choppy sentences nor sentences with

embedded clauses makes for easy reading. Don't make the mistake that textbook writers often make. They need to write text that's acceptable to a computer program that computes grade level by counting sentences and sentence length. To make the grade, they shorten sentences by cutting information the reader needs in order to understand. Also, remember that anytime you use your students' grammar structure, you drop the level of difficulty automatically.

Because rewriting is time-consuming, I often read a selection to my students and together we rewrite it. This is an outstanding method for working on listening comprehension as well. Once it's rewritten, it goes into my files.

There are materials that have been written with our students in mind. The center's library contains many of the best of these. The public library has a good selection as well. Other literacy programs have published their curriculum materials or the writings of their students. These have been the most helpful to me. A collection of my favorites is included in the bibliography.

CHAPTER V:

SOME IDEAS ABOUT TEACHING WRITING

* INSPIRING WRITING
* THE WRITING PROCESS
* WRITING TO LEARN

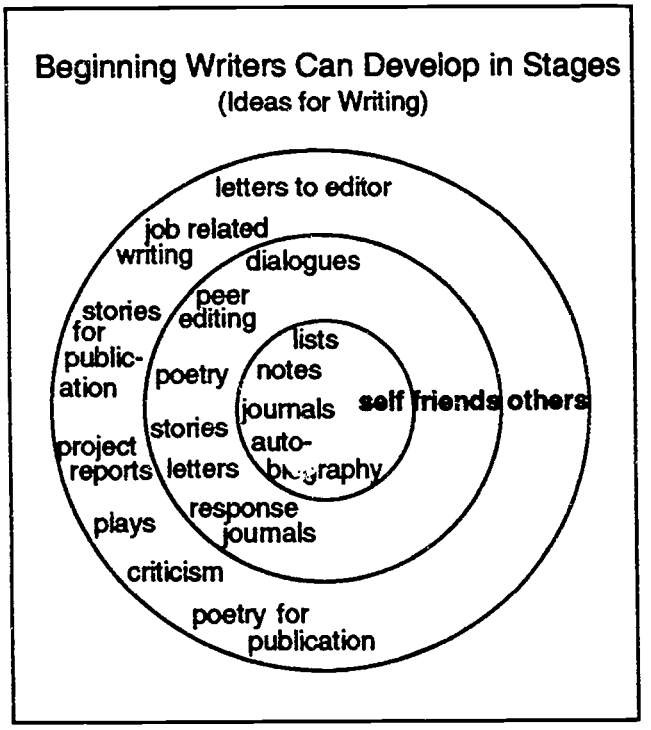
Several months after conducting my informal survey of new and expert readers about what they thought reading was, I ran into an article in which a college instructor reported the descriptions expert and struggling writers gave to the question, "What is writing?". I wasn't surprised to find the experts talking about the art of communication and creative expression and the struggling writers talking about pencils making marks on paper. Somewhere our students were subjected to narrow lessons in writing mechanics and told they were learning to write. Likely, they were drilled on spelling and given mounds of worksheets on punctuation. Of course they would develop a concept of writing that was limited to what could be answered by multiple choice. The cost of this teacher error is very high. Like singing and dancing, writing is a performance art. A little piece of your soul gets put on display for all the world to see and if it's returned to you with the spelling corrected in red ink, you learn to keep the lid on your soul. Our students learned to not write, to be worried about correctness and not at all worried about communicating the ideas they have.

The obvious antidote is a new definition of writing and a safe place to write copiously. Beginning writers need to find out that writing is sharing their ideas with readers. They need to lose their reverence for the neat, clean page. They need to learn about revision and editing and to find out what a help other people can be in getting the final version to say exactly what they want it to. Experiences in the classroom need to convince them of these things.

These experiences can begin with the self and expand steadily to the wider world. We think of this process as having three progressive and overlapping stages: self, friends and others. Both the audience and the subject matter can be focused to support the new writers in their development. In the first stage, students concentrate on writing personal experiences and on topics close to home. As soon as they become more comfortable, they begin to write fiction and on topics that are less familiar. Eventually, they write about new knowledge. The audience shifts in much the same way. At first students write to please themselves. Later they write for each other and for family members. Finally, they produce writing to be read by strangers. This is a helpful way to think about the development of writing expertise, but shouldn't be used in a static way.

Often students show up the first day needing to write for legal or business reasons, and students will always relish writing autobiographical pieces.

This chart was inspired by Peter Simon.



INSPIRING WRITING

Be' w are several writing activities designed to heal students' sense of themselves as authors. The teacher should do all of the writing activities asked of the student. Mostly, it's just more fun to write than to watch someone write. Also the teacher is offering a model of a writer who, though experienced, struggles and can't think of what to write and scratches out and rewrites and adds sentences in the margins. This true-to-life model will help the student form a realistic and expanded view of what writing is.

Activities for Early Stages of Writing

Redefine writing: Most students come to us with a definition of writing that is putting letters down on paper with no mistakes. If you have ever written anything that was meant for public reading, you know how many versions it's possible to go through before you have what you want. You wrote quite a bit before you put letters down on paper without mistakes. Ask students to define writing in small groups and make reports. Discuss

the results. Students can also survey expert writers to see what they would say.

Write about writing: Ask the students to write about their good and bad experiences with writing. Read and discuss them. Validate their criticisms of bad experiences. Ask the students to write about what they know about good writing. Read and record a list. Analyze the list. Ask students to write about what is easy and what is hard about writing. Discuss why the hard stuff is hard.

Freewriting: Ask the students to write without interruption and without stopping to correct or cross out. Time the freewrite. Five minutes is a good duration for starters. Make sure the students have a provocative topic to write about and are welcomed to choose their own topic if they wish. Have volunteers read excerpts. Students can keep track of how many lines they are able to produce in the five minutes, watching themselves increase their capacity.

Positive response: Organize the class so that students can respond to each other's writing. Pairs, small groups or the whole group can listen to a student read and then comment on what it made them feel or think about. Students can ask for more detail and indicate where it is needed, or they can simply say why the piece pleased them.

Collect student writing: Organize a system for students to maintain files of their writing projects. It's gratifying to students to be able to see concrete proof of the progress they are making. A final writing assignment might be to create a table of contents for the collection, with titles, dates and a brief comment for each entry. Near the end of the class you can ask students to choose several favorites for publication.

Journal writing: Suggest students keep a journal of their own private writing. You can give them special assignments for the journal, ask them to review what they've learned that day or leave it entirely up to them. Some teachers read the journals periodically. Others arrange for pairs to share and others maintain the students' privacy by never reading them.

Activities for Later Stages of Writing

Once students are writing more or iess freely and some of the terror of letting others see the writing has subsided, you can begin to create completed pieces. Here are some examples of writing activities that could be used in the later stages of mastering writing. All of these exercises can be used in conjunction with a theme or introduced separately as a break from a theme.

Write from quotes: Collect provocative quotes on subjects that interest your students. Copy one onto the board and discuss it. Students can rewrite the quote using other words and read them to each other.

After examining how the new versions are different, talk about why the author might have chosen the words he or she did. Ask the students to write a response to the quote.

Write from models: Give the students copies of poems, letters, journal entries or short stories. Read and analyze them as a group. Note an important feature of the piece and ask the students to write their own version using that feature. There are examples modeled after Langston Hughes poems in the Goodwill Literacy Tutor Handbook.

Write letters to one's self: Ask the students to remember themselves in a bad childhood situation. Suggest they write a letter of comfort and advise to that child from the point of view of the adults that they are today. This exercise can be profoundly emotional and, as with most of these suggestions, some students may not want to do it.

Write a letter to a famous person: Have the students discuss in pairs the impact a famous person has had on their lives. Ask them to write a letter to that person. Suggest they mail the letters if they wish. Students sometimes like to write to the authors of books they've enjoyed or disagreed with. Students might also like to write to not-so-famous people that they have neglected to thank for some important act or influence.

Short stories: Ask the group to brainstorm the following items: a place, two people's names, and a conflict. Begin the story as a group by composing the first paragraph on the board, then have students finish it individually. Any other items could be brainstormed for different results.

Dialogues: Brainstorm pairs of story characters as a group and ask student pairs to pick a couple and write a dialogue between them.

Write in response to pictures: Show a slide of a painting or interesting photo or pass the picture itself around. Ask the students to write down and then read a list of the things they see in the picture. Discuss guesses as to why the painter or photographer put certain items in the picture. Suggest several names for the painting or photo. Ask the students to write a story about what happens just after or just before the scene in the picture takes place. The students could write a story about one of the characters in the picture. What happened on the person's sixth birthday? What happened the day he was supposed to get married? What happened the first day of 11th grade?

Write in response to music: Play a recording of instrumental music and ask the students to let their imaginations wander. Then ask them to write about the images that came to them. Listen to songs with lyrics and discuss them. Suggest the students write their own lyrics to that tune or write additional verses.

Write with hats on your heads: Ask the students to bring a favorite hat to class. Put them all on a table and have the students pull one out. Wearing that hat write an "autobiographical piece" about the character that would wear that hat. Expand the exercise to have students write dialogues in pairs from their hat characters.

Develop skits and transcribe them: Brainstorm the setting and the characters and the general problem for a skit. Volunteer students can play the parts several times. When the skit looks good to the students they can transcribe it in script format as a play. This activity is often used in the second stage of theme development: Explore Our Ideas (p. 17).

Write group stories: Have each student write an opening line on a sheet of paper and then pass it to the left. The next student writes one or two lines and passes it on. When the stories return to their originators, they are read aloud and assigned a title.

THE WRITING PROCESS

To help students to get a feel for the process of writing, help them take a piece of writing through drafts and revisions to a final version. The students will spontaneously want to develop and polish some writing pieces. You can provide reasons to finish others by suggesting they each choose several for publication in a class booklet at the end of the year. Theme projects that require publication or public presentation of writing will also create opportunities for taking a piece of writing through the writing process steps.

Explain that every piece of published writing goes through steps. None of the famous authors they have read has ever written a poem or story by sitting down and pecking it out on a typewriter the first time. If you have some writing of your own with the editing marks still on it, bring it in to show them. Spell out the steps authors use and discuss them.

Writing steps
Choosing What to Write About
Rehearsal
1st Draft
Revision/Editing Advice
2nd Draft
Proofreading
Publishing

Suggest a small project, a poem or paragraph, for the first experience with the writing process. Guide the students through the steps, discussing the writing, but also discussing the steps as you use them. If you write the steps on butcher paper, you can refer to them as you move from one to the next and no one will become lost.

Writing Process Step One: Choosing What to Write About

Many writing topics will be suggested by the theme you and your students are investigating. Others can be gotten from the list of activities above. The Language Experience Story questions listed in the Goodwill Literacy Tutor Handbook also make good writing ideas. Any autobiographical question will work as a suggestion for writing, though many students cannot write about their truly upsetting pasts. Controversial statements taken from the day's newspaper can inspire passionate writing. Surprisingly enough, some questions from workbooks for preparing for the GED essay test can be quite interesting to students.

Writing Process Step Two: Rehearsal

Once an idea is chosen, the students and the teacher rehearse it by talking it through. They can work in the whole group or in pairs, telling each other what ideas they have about the topic and asking each other for information. The teacher can ask clarifying questions and probe for details as well. For many writers, this is a good time to organize their thoughts into a format to use while writing, particularly when writing expository or non-fiction pieces. Drawing a cluster diagram of what the finished piece might look like is a good way to organize one's thoughts. Our students often find it helpful because of their lack of familiarity with how a longer piece of writing goes together. (See the Goodwill Literacy Tutor Handbook for examples of pre-writing cluster diagrams.)

Freewriting is an alternative to verbal rehearsal. Some writers use it in addition to verbal rehearsal. With a time limit of five or ten minutes, the students writes whatever comes into their heads while thinking about the subject. Often this technique will alter what the author has chosen as the topic. Through freewriting, the ideas for the piece can change dramatically. The technique also gives the student a cache of good ideas to draw on while writing the first draft. If the student feels they have nothing to say on the topic freewriting will often convince them differently. If the student keeps writing, eventually, the brain begins to let go of it's creative material.

Writing Process Step Three: 1st Draft

When rehearsal is finished, students use what they generated to write the first draft. Paragraphs can be constructed from ideas in a cluster diagram. Words, sentences, or whole paragraphs can be lifted from the freewrite to copy onto the draft.

After the students have successfully handled several writing projects, begin asking them who the piece is intended for, to whom is it going to be written. If the students know the answer to that question, they can begin to write with an audience in mind.

Peer comments and suggestions can be incorporated as the students write and think and share what they have written. In this step, the students should be encouraged to pay attention to saying what they want said and ignoring the mechanics. If spelling is a problem, students can write down what letters they can guess and draw a line for the rest of the word. The teacher or other students can provide the spelling at a later point.

Writing Process Step Four: Revision/Editing Advice

Revision is the process that leads to the final draft. In this step the students look at the piece again: re-vision. They consider it in the light of

other people's responses. Now that the piece of writing has a shape they can stand back, look at it, and see if it's what they want.

After the drafts are completed, ask the students to read them aloud. This can be a frightening experience for new writers (old ones too!) and every care needs to be taken to ensure peoples' experiences are good. These experiences must never add to the students' already burdensome bad feelings about their own writing. Only volunteers need read to the whole group. Rules might be made about the conduct of the class while someone is reading: respectful attention, each thinking about questions to ask. After someone has read, help the students learn to think about writing by asking the author questions about things they didn't understand or would like to know more about. These questions will help the author find out what his or her writing really means to readers and make any changes that are called for. Hearing it aloud helps students to check to see if their meaning has been communicated. Before they receive any feedback, students will often catch words that have been omitted, improve explanations and descriptions and adjust wording so that it sounds more like spoken English.

After a volunteer or two has presented their work and received the feedback of their peers, students can pair up for revision conferences. In these conferences, students read their work to each other and talk about it. With experience, students will learn to give each other helpful feedback. You or another student may read the piece aloud to the author for a second check on how it sounds to them. Be careful to read the work as it is written, so the student can make any necessary changes.

Peter Simon's Suggestions
for revising in pairs or small groups:

1. The author reads aloud with pen in hand.

2. A partner reads silently over his or her shoulder, calling attention to words left out, garbled meaning or if the author reads something other than what's written. The author puts a check mark next to the problem but doesn't stop to deal with it until after the reading.

3. Partners listen and give feedback on:
   * ideas (Does it make sense?)
   * detail (Where are more needed? Where do the details already work well?)
   * structure (Non-fiction: intro and conclusion, flow. Fiction: sequence of events, climax, etc.)
   * impact (Does the writing grab you? Why? How?)

Positive feedback is important to new writers. Provide some structure for recording of feedback. Some instructors have students collect their work in folders and they use the folders themselves to write messages to the students. Others write on students' papers or attach notes. I maintain a dialogue journal with each student, discussing the course of the writing with each of them. However you organize the feedback, let the student know how the piece makes you feel and what you find striking. Often students use beautiful or engaging turns of phrase. Descriptions can be hilarious or evocative. Subject matter is usually profound and teachers often learn something new from their students' writing. If there are places in the writing that are unclear to you or places where more detail or explanation is called for, make a suggestion to add more writing. Some students may want to give their pieces to other people to read for feedback. Goodwill Literacy staff, family members or friends can serve this function.

Writing Process Step Five: 2nd Draft

After hearing feedback, students might want to rethink the piece to make a phrase stronger or add to the description of something. Show the students how to use the caret (^) and the asterisk (*) to insert additional writing. Model the process yourself by cutting out paragraphs, drawing arrows to rearrange the order of things and making word substitutions. If you have access to an overhead projector, all the students can watch how you revise your work.

Your students may want to write several drafts, but most students will be ready to finish. Let your students choose how long to work on each writing project. It may be that a piece will lose its importance and the author will want to work on a new piece, never finishing this piece at all.

Writing Process Step Six: Proofreading

This focus on the art of writing does not mean that your student's interest in mastering the mechanics of writing is out of place. For our students, error-free writing means being taken seriously. Too much has been denied them thus far because their writing proves their lack of formal education. Learning spelling, punctuation and grammar should not be confused with learning to write, but learning these things is a significant goal.

We think that there are three stages of writing correction that often emerge in waves. They parallel the stages students pursue as their writing develops. (See circle chart, p. 63.) At first the student writes to communicate something to him or herself. Sal records the words he

wants to practice at home. Henry writes out a shopping list. Mae writes down her homework assignment and enjoys journal writing. The reader is the judge of the writing. If the student can read his or her own work, the writing is perfectly successful.

Later, the student will want to communicate with the teacher, with other students, or with friends and relatives. Now the writing is subjected to a larger set of standards. Can someone else read it? Are the words spelled well enough to be figured out? Are enough of the words there that the writer can be understood? Did the writer pick words that communicated what he or she really meant to say? The more unfamiliar the writer is to the reader, the more the writer will have to increase the "correctness" of what he or she writes. If the student writes for the in-house student newsletter for example, he or she will have to work pretty hard to be understood. In class, or at home, with people who are familiar with the student's writing style, less work would be needed to communicate.

The third stage arrives when the student is ready to write for less sympathetic audiences, for strangers. Now the student must communicate in the standard manner acceptable to employers, companies, and bureaucracies. The punctuation, spelling and grammar must be flawless. The writing style must be clear enough to be understood by all.

If your students are at the very beginning stages and need to learn to make letters, we recommend they copy typed Language Experience Stories rather than write line after line of each letter of the alphabet. Repetitive copying of letters works, but it's boring and our experience is that students learn something about reading as they are laboring away at copying familiar sentences.

Being aware of which stage of writing a student is using helps teachers adjust their level of expectation. Understanding stages helps teachers know what to demand of students to help them progress to the next level. It wouldn't make sense to run a red pen down a shopping list if the reader understands it perfectly. On the other hand, it would make sense to focus on something as otherwise insignificant as capitalization if the student is working on a cover letter to a potential employer. (Actually, I don't think the red pen treatment is ever very helpful. To me, pages corrected in red ink always look like they're bleeding.)

When the pieces have made it through the previous steps and are in their final form, it's time to proofread them for spelling, punctuation and grammar. Your students will be interested in having every error corrected by you. That's the system that was used in public school and they will probably expect you to use it. You will have to disappoint them. A page of correction marks doesn't teach your students anything, except,

possibly, that they can't write. No one, least of all a beginning writer, will be able to absorb corrections for all the errors that, inevitably, will be made. Instead, look for the patterns of error your students make. What is it they understand and what hasn't yet been grasped? Of those things that are still out of reach, which one would seem to be the easiest to learn next? Your job is to locate a single, often repeated error and focus on that.

The rule for proofreading is one correction at a time so that each can be thoroughly learned. Once you've chosen a correction to teach, use the model discussed under direct teaching: explain, model, practice and apply. Show your students, on the board, how it goes when used correctly. For example, many students write plurals with an apostrophe. (She bought two magazine's.) They need to be shown several correct examples and maybe be given an explanation of how apostrophes show possessive. Give your students enough practice, with your help and then without it. For the plural example, you might ask the students questions that you are truly curious about and that require plurals in the answers. (How many granddaughters and grandsons do you have? How long did you work as a shipscaler?) Have the students write the response with attention to the plurals. Finally, return to the written piece and ask your students to find the instances of that error and correct them. For most students, this is too much to ask without first marking the lines the errors can be found in. Put a dot in the margin opposite each line that contains this error.

If this particular error is located and corrected, ask your students to add the name of the correction to a proofreading list for future reference. For example, "Plurals don't use apostrophes." In the future, as you come across plurals in your readings, point them out and discuss them. When you begin the proofreading step the next time, review the first correction on the list, mark dots in the margin and have the students do the correcting. Then review the second correction on the list. This systematically gives the students the responsibility for correcting the errors they have already learned to spot. Writing mechanics are usually learned slowly and after interminable practice. Have patience and offer lots of opportunity for practice and review.

If the students need a perfect copy of the writing for some purpose, (letter to employer, legal reasons, publishing) you may need to make all the other corrections and have the students copy the corrections. This is where a word processor comes in handy. Beginning writers may have trouble recopying accurately and may end up with a new batch of errors in the final version. With a word processor, errors can be corrected without creating new ones.

If a perfect copy is not needed, the world will not crack if the writing pieces are left incomplete. Some day, the students will have the skills to return to the pieces and proofread, if they still have any interest in them.

Until then, one or two proofreading skills taught per writing project is plenty. You will need to review endlessly to truly make corrections a part of the students' writing repertoire. The number of hours it would take to teach and learn each of the corrections a student needs would consume all of your class time for years. Your students must have time for learning to read, write and think about both, as well as learning the mechanics of writing. Keep a list for yourself of the errors you do not focus on. You can use it in the future to make choices about which errors are most common in your students' writing.

Also have students keep track of misspelled words. Once you know how many words your students can learn in a week, you can assign that many from the list for study. When a word has been learned, have the student record it on a list to be used in proofreading in the future.

Through this process your students are developing lists of corrections and spelling words that form the basis for their independence in proofreading.

Proofreading

1. Review the proofreading and spelling lists
2. Put dots by lines containing known errors
3. Give the students time to make the corrections on their own, going down the lists item by item.

Writing Process Step Seven: Publishing

The ultimate goal of writing is to have others read our words, to share our ideas with readers. If it is not built in by the theme or project you are pursuing, this final step needs to be consciously incorporated. When the students wish, it is appropriate to publish the work in some form. The most traditional is to send the writing to a publisher for inclusion in a periodical or collection. This avenue is the least likely to produce success, but shouldn't be overlooked. Newspaper's editorial pages, publications for new writers, other student literary magazines, and church newsletters are the most likely to reprint student work. Goodwill publishes a newsletter and periodic collections of student writings. We are often accepting submissions so check with the staff to see what sorts of writing on what topics are currently being sought.

Publication needn't mean formal printing and distribution. In some instances, mailing the letters the students wrote or delivering the writing to the person for whom it was intended constitutes "publication." In other instances, reading it at gatherings sponsored by the literacy center or at

church gatherings is a wonderful way to share the writing. Other teachers and tutors are always looking for pieces for their students to read and respond to. Check with them to see if their classes might serve as a forum for your students' writing. You and your students will undoubtedly invent other forums for "publication" as it becomes appropriate in your projects.

WRITING TO LEARN

Not all writing is for the purpose of creating a finished product. Writing can also be used to clarify thinking, report to the teacher what was really learned in a unit, or create new thoughts. Students' journal entries can trace the development of their thinking as their understanding of an issue grows. Below are writing suggestions that can help students increase their learning.

Checking in: At the end of a mini-lesson, ask the students to write a paragraph or two about what they learned and how they intend to remember it. Collect the papers to learn what it was you really taught and later return them to students for inclusion in their journals.

Focused writing: Ask the students to write a response to an opinion question on the concept to be studied. How do you feel when you read poetry? Would you defend democracy? Why? Why do you think reports of child abuse are increasing? What has the crack epidemic done to urban family life? What is good writing? Read responses and discuss them before beginning to study the concept.

Getting inside a story: Write questions framed in everyday language, using everyday examples, asking for the students' opinions about someone's conduct. Take the questions from difficult literature the students are about to read. After the students have written their responses to the everyday examples, they can apply that thinking to the more foreign content of literature. (To use a familiar children's story as an example, questions for "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" include: How would you feel if your husband asked you to marry him because you were so pretty, but now your step-daughter was growing up to be even prettier than you and everybody knew it? If your foster parents told you over and over not to talk to strangers and insisted you stay in the house and do chores all day, what would you do if a nice looking older women came to the door selling pretty things?)

Metaphorical questions: Ask students to think metaphorically about what they read. If this poem were the cure for some disease or personality disorder, what would the disease be? If the main character in this story were an animal, what animal would she be? Why did you pick that one? If this short story could change the weather, what would it change it to?

Journal writing: Ask students to write in their journals on topics they choose or on suggestions like the following: Begin your entry with "I remember when . . ." or "When my child was born . . ." or "The most difficult thing in my life is. . ." or "The one change in this country that would make my life better is. . ." Write a letter to a scar or your hands or some other body part. Explain how you know if something is true or not. Make a list of your most prized possessions.

Four column journals: Ask students to set up several pages in their journals in columns. They can draw verticle lines down the middle of each page to get four columns across two pages. Ask them to record in the first column, anything that strikes them while they read. The first column will be mostly quotes and observations of the reading. Ask them to put thoughts in column two about the items in the first column. Here they might write questions, insights, and arguments. Have the students trade journals, read their partners comments and then write their responses in column three. The journals are returned and the students read and then write final comments and responses in column four of their own journals. For different results, the headings for each column can be changed to elicit different kinds of information or thinking.

CHAPTER VI:

MULTI-CULTURAL AND CLASS SENSITIVITY

* DIALOGUE
* ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS
* BLACK ENGLISH
* MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM

DIALOGUE: A KEY FEATURE OF THE DIVERSE CLASSROOM

This year saw a number of events that exemplify where our country is going in terms of human relations. Racist violence increased, thousands of Iraqians were bombed to death, roaming anti-gay gangs appeared, women's rights were assaulted. To add insult to injury, instead of a national dialogue we were treated to chatter on the question of "Political Correctness." It seemed more like a campaign to make it hard to call people on bias than an attempt to save free speech. The obstacles to reasonable interactions among people with differences are accumulating more rapidly than at most other periods of our history.

Our literacy classes are a refreshing respite from all the turmoil. People from different language and ethnic groups and from dissimilar life styles, committed to the same goal, work collectively around one table. An ongoing conversation takes place that is a rare and important event.

The teacher has enormous power to influence the course of this conversation. Maintaining dialogue in a school room is very difficult because teachers tend to get in it's way. Usually we make one of two kinds of mistakes: clamp down or go limp. Probably the most common is the former, when a teacher becomes the parent, the police. Instead of working as equals, teachers on some level may think students are at fault for what they haven't learned yet. This subconscious blaming usually stems from a lack of respect for the students' race or class background. In this situation, teachers tend to think like social workers and wish to "fix" students. They clamp down and the class becomes controlled by him or her so as to create a therapeutic environment for the group. We are working toward creating academically healing surroundings, but we are not trying to "heal" race or class characteristics.

Sometimes teachers who share background characteristics of race or class with students blame themselves for what feels like inadequacies and, subsequently, their students get to share that blame. Called internalized oppression, it sometimes makes us uncomfortable

enough that we end up controlling the classroom to combat the effects of classism or racism on our students.

Teachers can fall the other way too, and go limp by abdicating responsibility for the progress of the class. This is the second kind of mistake. If the teacher does have respect for the students, but believes she or he has nothing to offer, it's possible to come to the conclusion that teachers should play only the most minimal role, leaving the students to flounder and attempt to reach their goals alone. If we don't read critically, we can find convincing evidence in progressive education literature to back us up in this conviction. Dialogue could mean chatting about whatever students are talking about at the moment. Participation could mean acting as if you were a student and never risking a guess, yourself, as to what students might need next. However, as good teachers we must think about the group and act on our thinking. Jonathan Kozol made an often overlooked point in his book Free Schools when he suggested one of the failures of the Free Schools Movement was in assuming students will always ask to learn what they want to learn. "How can you ask for a ticket to Rio, if you've never heard of it?" he wrote. As the ACBE principle states, "popular education brings students to new ground." Getting there is a collective process involving both students and the teacher.

All teachers find themselves making these mistakes at one time or another. It comes with the territory. The only way to avoid these problems is to avoid the risk of teaching. Our students often encourage us to act these ways because they have come to expect it or because they were formed by the same societies we were. Watching for these problems is part of gaining experience as a teacher. You can suspect something fishy is happening when the dialogue in your class stops and the discussion begins to sound like recitation. That's a good clue a little self-reflection and restructuring is in order.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

In the event that the teachers reading this handbook do not possess backgrounds similar to that of students in our program, we recommend that they consider doing some of the following activities. The activities provide teachers with a general idea of what conditions are like in the lives of our students. We know there is no way anyone can really know what it is like to walk in another's shoes, but we hope that these experiences will bring our teachers closer to understanding what trials our students face and where they get their strength on a daily basis.

◊ Do your laundry at the laundromat at Rainier and Hudson or 23rd and Jackson.

◊ Read every issue of "The Facts", "The Medium" or "The Skanner" for two months. They can be picked up in front of most supermarkets in the Central Area.

◊ Take the #42 or #7 bus to the end of the line and back.

◊ Call the volunteer coordinator at Northwest Harvest and volunteer at a food bank in the Central Area for a few hours. Their number is 625-0755, Monday through Thursday, 8:00 to 12:00.

◊ Listen to radio stations KRIZ 1420, or KFOX 1250 for 30 minutes a day for a week.

◊ Call Central Area Youth Association (CAYA), and ask when the next home game is scheduled for whichever sport is in season: 322-6640.

◊ Call the Union Gospel Mission and volunteer in the kitchen for a few hours: 622-5177.

◊ Go sit in the Employment Security Department office for an hour or two, 2531 Rainier Avenue South. Bring a book or sit and chat with the other people who are waiting.

◊ Attend the Black Community Festival during the summer. Goodwill Literacy usually has a booth and teachers can volunteer to staff it.

◊ Go to the public assistance office (3600 South Graham), pick up an application and sit in the waiting room to fill it out. Talk with the other people waiting.

◊ October through March, attend an energy assistance orientation at CAMP firehouse, 722 18th, near Cherry. The sessions are held Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at 9:00, 10:00 and 12:00 in the morning.

◊ Arrange for several people to take the tour and see the introductory movie at Douglas-Truth Library.

◊ Attend one of the following churches' Sunday Service:

Mt. Zion Baptist 1634 19th (near Madison) 8:00 am and 10:45 am
New Covenant 7930 Rainier Ave S (near S. Kenyon)
First AME 1522 14th (near Pine) 8:00 am and 10:45 am
Immaculate Conception 820 18th (near Columbia) Sat. 5:00 pm, Sun. 8:00 am, 9:00 am, and 11:00 am
Seattle Filipino-American Baptist Church 9065 Martin Luther King Way S. (near Henderson)

◊ Check the papers to see what the lowest going rate is for a two bedroom apartment in the Central Area. Then spend an afternoon visiting landlords and seeing what is available.

◊ Spend an hour or two in the emergency room lobby at Harborview Hospital (329 9th). Please be unobtrusive. Take a book.

BLACK ENGLISH IN THE LITERACY CLASSROOM

When I ask literacy students what they want to learn, I always get answers as varied as the students and their interesting and unusually trying lives. Some things come up over and over again, though, and one of those things is grammar. This is a problem for me. I don't want to teach grammar. I want to spend time on getting more and more meaning from printed words and critically evaluating that meaning. I want to work on communicating powerful ideas and images through writing.

Literacy students are often very good at communicating powerful ideas and images verbally. Most of my students are speakers of what is called Black English dialect (BE). When my students ask for grammar instruction, they are in part asking to be taught how to speak "correctly," i.e. Standard American English (SAE). I think most of my students speak beautifully and communicate incredibly subtle messages with intricate verbal and non-verbal play. BE tends to be filled with highly imaginative and figurative language, skills college English teachers plead for students to achieve.

If my Black English speaking students are not only proficient in the language of their community, but actually expert in some areas, why should I mess with formal grammar instruction? If it ain't broke, why fix it? Unfortunately, I can think of two reasons. The first is that they asked me to. That matters a lot. The second is that my students would like to be able to write so that a relatively hostile world will take them seriously; they would like to avoid discrimination in job interviews and to get reasonable treatment from bureaucracies. For historical and social reasons (not linguistic or scientific) BE is considered a low prestige dialect in the United States. Students have every right to classroom opportunities to master their society's high prestige dialect.

There might be a third reason. Some researchers believe they have found evidence that speaking BE interferes with learning to read SAE, and because most of what is published in English is in SAE, that means it interferes with learning to read, period. There is by no means any agreement among researchers that this interference exists, but there is a debate that we should pay attention to.

These are all pretty good reasons and as reluctant as I often am, I know we have to deal with the question of grammar in our classrooms.

History of the Research

A good place to start is to look at the historical development of our understanding of Black English. In the 1960s the nation became more aware of the disparity between white children's achievement and that of Black children. This situation had been going on since public school had

been mandated, but only under the civil rights agitation of the sixties did it become politically intolerable.

Researchers began to examine the problem. Some of their first "discoveries" were that BE was "a nonlogical form of expressive behavior"; that Black children were understimulated verbally and cognitively and therefore culturally deprived; that genetic factors may account for deficiencies in language; that poor families used a "restricted" language code while middle class families used an "elaborated" one; that BE speakers' language was mere description and speakers were, therefore, restricted by it from using abstract thought; and that the "closed" BE language system did not allow for creativity and flexibility. Those reseachers even got away with it for awhile.

These researchers made two major theoretical claims. The first was that the young BE speaker's models, the people from whom he or she learned language, were deficient in language themselves. They painted a picture of poor Black families as almost non-verbal. The second claim was that given the above, working-class Black children must be formally taught a language from the ground up. (This is a particularly amazing conclusion to come to since it's true of no other group of human children on the face of the earth.) These researchers, known collectively as deficit theorists, started from an assumption of deficiency on the part of Black English dialect speakers. Their ideas were widely accepted and spread in the form of language intervention programs to the public schools.

In response to the deficit theorists, other researchers began to look at the question. They re-examined deficit research methods and assumptions and began to do new research. They questioned the tests that had been used. Few of them could stand up to rigorous evaluation by other scholars. Also, the way the testing was done was clearly unscientific. A large white business-suited male researcher who puts a tape recorder in the face of a terrified Black five year old, trapped in a strange room, is going to have his biases about non-verbal Black children confirmed.

Refreshingly, the new researchers began by defining what they were trying to study. Report after report was published describing Black English as it is spoken in the U.S. They were able to show that by all existing linguistic standards, BE is a complete and rule-governed language that is more than adequate for communicating all forms of thought, including abstract ideas. Not a big surprise to speakers of BE or anyone who has held even a five minute chat with a speaker of Black English, but it was a major breakthrough in the fight against misconception and misinformation. For the most part, it became accepted, at least among specialists, that Black English was not inferior but simply different.

The difference theorists were able to establish that working-class Black families are highly verbal and in fact verbal one-upsmanship and performing is highly regarded in the Black community. Researchers, Marsha Delain, P. D. Pearson, and R. C. Anderson documented delightful verbal conventions perfected in Black English including the following:

- idioms ("putting your foot in it" -adding your own special contribution)
- proverbs ("a hard head makes for a soft behind" -being stubbom and not listening will mean you will pay a stiff price)
- folklore (Bro' Rabbit being only the most famous)
- signifying (indirect words or gestures to imply, beg, goad, or boast)
- marking (parody and exact replication of nuances in playing characters when telling stories to an informal audience)
- sounding or playin' the dozens (ritual insult: "You mama so ugly that when the doctor removed one of her warts, he threw her away and kept the wart!")

This expertise with figurative language is a benefit in the classroom, if teachers know about it and can capitalize on it.

The most recent researchers are going beyond the difference model. Some are looking at the process of acquisition of language as the child grows. Others are exploring the relationship between dialects, including the importance to immigrants in eastern cities of learning Black English in addition to SAE. The issues of bi-culturalism and bi-dialectism are also getting more attention.

The "difference" researchers, and those who came after them, were fairly successful in redirecting attitudes of teachers and social workers. Unfortunately, because of racial prejudice, many people still remain unconvinced or at least uneducated. That includes literacy teachers like ourselves. We still need basic information about dialects and about what to do in the classroom; how to remove them as obstacles and be able to use them as resources.

What is Dialect?

Keep in mind that everyone speaks a dialect. Everyone belongs to a regional and/or ethnic group and to a social class. These memberships, in concert with our family histories, determine which dialects we speak. Also keep in mind that dialects don't exist in an ideal form in real life. Just as SAE is never spoken by real people without the addition of elements of other dialects or without "errors," we can expect any particular speaker of Black English to deviate from perfect BE. For example, when I speak informally, one can hear my northwest regional

dialect (confusion of further and farther for example); the influence of my Canadian ancestry (use of "ay?"); and pronunciations and constructions I learned while living in New Orleans as a child ("ya'all"). Speakers of BE are no exception and will speak with a mix of, at least, BE and SAE. Most Black English speakers do what is called code switching. They are able to move from BE to SAE and back again, depending on which is more appropriate in a given situation. It's more accurate to think of dialects as continuums and speakers as having places on several continuums at once.

It's obvious that not all Black people speak Black English. It would be applying good information badly to assume every dark skinned person will communicate in our classrooms with Black English. There are regional variations of Black English as well. A good source of examples of regional variations of BE can be found in Zora Neale Hurston's book There Eyes Were Watching God. The story's main character, Janie Crawford, moves from place to place as her life goes through major changes. Hurston was a master ethnologist and her characters accurately reflect the changes in dialect as Janie traverses the South.

The Politics of Dialect

The very existence of Black English is a deeply political fact rooted in history. Starting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch began prowling the coast of Africa first as traders and explorers and then as slavers. Local versions of these European languages were spoken by African people who were in contact with foreigners. Black English began in the same way, with British contact. The ancestors of most Black people in the Western hemisphere came from the West Coast of Africa where there were hundreds of languages with similar sound and grammar systems. The tendency in second language learning is to fit the new vocabulary into the familiar grammar structure of one's own language. Therefore the English of Africans from different tribes was relatively similar because of the similarities in the West-African languages.

Black English continued to develop in the Western hemisphere after millions of Africans were brought to the new world in cargo holds as slaves. The U. S. versions developed differently than Central and South American and Caribbean African English and today some of these dialects are so distant from British English as to make it a challenge for us to communicate. Language historians believe the characteristics of Black English can be explained as carry-overs from African languages, just as other American dialects can be traced to the original languages of voluntary immigrants.

As one might expect, there is controversy over the words used to label different ways of speaking. SAE is often called "Broadcast English"

or "Cash English." My favorite term and the one which I think is the most descriptively accurate of SAE is "Upper Class Dominating English." This term was developed by Paulo Freire and Ira Shor in A Pedagogy for Liberation and besides being playful, it clearly pin points the most negative uses of discrimination by language type (class or economic domination). One of the most rigid markers of social class and of status in our culture is speech. I have chosen to use the term Standard American English because I wanted speakers of that dialect to be open to the information I am presenting. I also chose that term because it refers to America and implies there might be other mainstream kinds of English in other regions (for example, British English and Caribbean English with all their many dialects).

So, now we know there is intrinsic worth to a "non-standard" dialect. There may be a question of social acceptability within the dominant culture, but we should not confuse that with questions of linguistic correctness. To say, "She is always pretty." rather than "She be pretty." clearly wins the speaker no extra linguistic points. In fact, if points are being given out, an argument can be made that the system of verb tenses in Black English is more highly developed because it can indicate degrees of pastness and futurity that can not be conveyed simply by verb tense in SAE. But points are not being given out. We have to eradicate any conscious or unconscious ideas we've held about the relative value of kinds of speech. As teachers, it's our job to look for the language strengths in our students and capitalize on them in preparing our students to thrive in a diverse world. It's no one's job to judge and prioritize kinds of English.

What to Do in the Classroom

The most common suggestion given to teachers of students who speak dialects different from theirs is to respect the students' language. Little learning of any kind can take place if the teacher communicates to the student verbally or otherwise that the student's language is inferior. To judge someone's language is to judge the person. One way to limit unintentional judging is to make it the students' business to choose if, when and for what purpose they will learn SAE. When students ask to learn grammar, ask them to clarify what they mean. If they are asking about instruction in SAE, make sure they know you have respect for Black English and that they witness concrete examples of that respect as you compare and contrast it to SAE.

Every teacher of BE speaking students must have a basic working knowledge of the main features of Black English. Without it one cannot distinguish something as basic as reading miscues from instances of dialect use. Toward that end, teachers need to study the oral language of each of their students until they can identify its common characteristics.

Capitalizing on students' strengths is almost always a good method of overcoming academic difficulties. In the case of BE speaking students, some of the strengths are likely to be: figurative/creative use of language; and comfort with verbal performance and friendly competition. Relationships count for a lot in the Black community and teachers can take advantage of this by arranging for small group work, pairing and class-wide feedback to written or oral work.

There are a number of things you can do to reduce instructional barriers for reading students who speak BE. The most widely recommended is to accept translated oral reading. In other words, allow students to read in their own dialect. Their words will deviate from what is on the printed page, conforming to their grammar rules and pronunciation. In fact, if you find your students doing this, you have reason to rejoice. They are showing you concretely that they comprehend what they are reading. They couldn't translate without comprehension. Therefore it is imperative that teachers learn what is acceptable in the dialects their students speak.

There is great controversy over the use of dialect readers, books written in Black English for beginning reading instruction. Advocates say they remove the extra obstacles dialect speakers face when attempting to interpret print which is in SAE. The books are intended as a transition step, they argue, and all students will eventually be required to learn to read SAE. Critics fear the segregation of Black students and that students will fall behind. The dialect reader idea has been generally dropped because of the outpouring of resistance on the part of parents, teachers and administrators. No doubt there is some conscious or unconscious disdain for Black English among the critics as well.

It's not necessary for literacy instructors to get bogged down in this debate. We already use the language of the student as a reading text by using the Language Experience Approach. We recommend the method, at least in the early stages of learning to read, for several purposes. Reducing the complexity of the reading task for dialect speakers is just another reason.

Researchers also recommend that in place of emphasis on the mechanics of reading, speaking and writing, teachers concentrate on the meaning that is understood and expressed. They recommend we make use of the students' prior knowledge before reading begins. Pre-reading activities that relate the students' experiences to the reading selection are generally a good idea and especially good for students who speak a dialect different from the one used in the text. (Examples of pre-reading activities begin on p. 34.)

It's also recommended to de-emphasize phonics. If the student and the teacher do not pronounce letters the same way, it will be quite difficult for the teacher to impose a written representation of his or her

pronunciation. At the very least, successful phonics instruction would require the teacher to be highly familiar with various BE letter sounds. We do not recommend that phonics be ignored, but it would make sense to limit instruction to initial consonants which are for the most part shared by most dialects. Problem letters or letter combinations encountered later in the reading process would also require instruction time.

Writing instruction is often the most problematic for teachers. In written work the standards of SAE are more harshly imposed. Rarely does the mainstream culture consider it appropriate to write in dialect. We are obligated to teach our students the conventions of writing accepted in the wider society. Fortunately, there is no need to do this in any other fashion than we normally use for teaching writing mechanics. Think about holding a discussion on dialects before you begin to work with mechanics. Explore the creative use of dialect by established authors and play with its uses in class. Writing dialogues and theater pieces as a group helps everyone to see interesting uses for both dialect and "broadcast" English.

Improved oral communication may or may not be a goal of your class. If it is, you have a lot of strength on which to capitalize. Storytelling, poetry, and joke or insult contests would be fun for all students, but are often favorites of Black students.

If the students ask for instruction in oral SAE, some of these activities might be appropriate:

- √ Do a unit on dialects.
- √ Study and discuss the concept of registers (registers is the level of politeness and formality in speech determined by the social situation)
- √ Observe people talking (T.V., radio, daily life). Who uses what register when?
- √ Tape record conversations and listen
- √ Practice pronunciations and grammar constructions in pairs
- √ Work with mirrors
- √ Role play extreme characters with different registers (e.g. snooty social worker talking to a teenage street person)
- √ Produce TV news broadcasts for videotaping

Most of the ideas given here are not only good ideas for classes attended by speakers of Black English but for all students in inconsistent classrooms.

BANKS' APPROACH TO MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM

In 1988, James Banks, a scholar in education, developed a way to look at and analyze "approaches to the integration of ethnic content into the curriculum." He identified four levels and explained the draw backs and benefits of each. Below is a brief description of each level.

Level One: Level one is called **The Contributions Approach** or the Heroes and Holidays Approach. At this level, information about different cultural groups is covered at special times during the year. It's relatively easy for teachers beginning to explore muiticultural curriculum to use this approach. In this approach, students become more knowledgeable about the contributions of other groups and are encouraged to take pride in the contributions of their own. The problems at this level have to do with the isolated nature of the information. Ethnic groups seem exotic and the success of members seems to reinforce the hard-work-equals-rags-to-riches myth. This approach does nothing to alter the point of view of the rest of the curriculum which remains a reflection of the dominant culture.

Level Two: The Additive Approach is the next level up. In this approach educators add a book, a class or a unit to an existing curriculum. While this may be the first stage in a more thorough restructuring of the curriculum and is also relatively easy to accomplish, it too falls short. Again the information is isolated and serves to point up the mainstream perspective in the majority of what students study.

Level Three: Level three is **The Transformative Approach**. In this level, the entire curriculum is changed to take in the perspectives of all cultures. Banks gives a revealing example in his 1988 article. He wrote, "A unit called 'The Western Movement' is . . . Euro-Centric because it focuses on the movement of European Americans from the eastern to the western part of the United States. . . The unit might be called 'The Invasion from the East,' from the point of view of the Lakota Indians. An objective title for the unit might be, 'Two Cultures Meet in the Americas.'" Unless curriculum reform examines this kind of built-in bias, ethnic curriculum remains Additive.

Level Four: The Decision-Making and Social Action Approach includes all the elements of the Transformation Approach. In addition, curriculum at this level hopes to teach thinking and decision making, to empower students and to help them gain a sense of political effectiveness. Students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve problems.

Often these four approaches are integrated by teachers to meet the needs of particular students. By becoming familiar with the history and literature of the groups represented by the students in our classes, we prepare ourselves to respond to their needs in more developed ways.

Frequently, students would like to learn about groups not represented at the center as well. The Center has a number of bibliographies of works for new readers and of general audience books that may be of use to you.

Dr. Banks' article appeared in the Spring 1988 issue of the Multicultural Leader, Volume 1, Number 2. It's published by the Educational Materials and Services Center.

Chapter VII:

PUTTING THINGS TOGETHER: DESIGNING LESSONS FOR ADULT BEGINNING READERS

Now you have a sense of all the various pieces that go into making up high quality lesson plans. What's left is to put them together.

Lesson plans are driven by the theme the students have chosen to work on. Reading materials, writing topics, and skills taught are all related to making progress on the theme. This actually makes it easier for the teacher to plan lessons. The themes and the projects suggest reading selections and skills to be taught.

Another aid for teachers, particularly new teachers, is a lesson plan framework. These are patterns of activities that teachers develop for themselves to ensure that all the various bases are covered and that no category of learning gets left out. It also makes decision making easier when it's time to plan a specific session. Here is an example of such a framework for a three-hour class:

Minutes	Activities
25	Taped books/silent reading/wait for late comers/call folks at home who don't show
35	A short activity to focus everyone's attention on the theme again. Then a longer activity that involves discussion and makes use of the resources the students bring to the classroom: background knowledge, developed adult vocabulary and language ability, opinion, etc.
5	Break
30	Activities that practice reading/writing mechanics: sight words, spelling, phonics etc. These activities are often requested by students.
30	Writing.
5	Break
50	Skill teaching or other work directly related to carrying out the project.
10	Agree on homework assignments, evaluate the class.

Below are some examples of lesson plans for a 3 hour Reading/Writing 1 class (pre-reader to third grade reading level). The lesson plans use the framework above and follow a class over several weeks in the development of a theme.

Day One:

Minutes	Activities
25	Taped books/silent reading/wait for late comers/call folks at home who don't show
30	Discussion of new code and recording of LES question. Theme: quality of education available to students' children and grandchildren
5	Break
10	Sight word practice in pairs
15	Phonics practice as a group
25	Pre-reading activity then choral and duet read letter to the editor criticizing public schools
15	Students write comprehension questions for the letter (Two students assigned to each level of question: literal, interpretive and inferential. Beginning writers are paired with better writers.)
5	Break
15	Students answer the questions individually (lower level writing students' answers are recorded on paper by the teacher)
15	Class goes over the answers together and discusses the answers and how students went about getting the answers.
10	Get volunteer student to make a CLOZE worksheet on the letter for homework. Beginning writers copy over questions and answers. Evaluate the class.

Day Two

Minutes	Activities
25	Taped books. Silent reading. Wait for late comers. Call folks at home who don't show.
15	Choral and duet read part of the LES from last class. New sight words identified for group list
25	Discuss the issue, looking for a project and for questions the students want to explore. (Students decide they want to have an effect on the up-coming school board election mentioned in the letter to the editor.)
5	Break
10	Do student's CLOZE worksheet and discuss.
15	Phonics practice.
10	Sight word practice in pairs.
25	Pre-reading activity and then choral and duet read an essay on inner-city problems in schools.
25	Rewrite essay as a group so that it is readable by lower level readers. Identify and retain the main points. New sight words identified.
5	Break

10 Freewrite on "What I want to know about the public school crisis." Beginning writers tell the teacher who records the ideas.
15 Volunteers read freewrites and list on poster paper the questions that are identified.
10 Get volunteer student to make a CLOZE worksheet from the new essay. Remind students of monthly spelling check at next class. Beginning writers take LES home to copy. Evaluate the class.

Day Three

Minutes	Activities
25	Taped books. Silent reading. Wait for late comers. Call folks at home who don't show.
10	Choral and duet read the remaining parts of LES. New sight words identified.
25	Begin research stage of theme by giving the students a typed version of the questions identified last time, as a group list next to each question ideas for resources that would help in finding the answer. Beginning writers copy from their neighbors. Assign any resource gathering that the students wish to do.
5	Break
10	Spelling check in pairs.
15	Phonics practice.
10	Do student CLOZE worksheet and discuss.
10	Freewrite what student would like to say in a letter to the editor on schools.
15	Read and discuss.
5	Break
30	Read and discuss resources identified by the group that are close at hand. Use predicting content as a pre-reading activity. New sight words identified.
10	Remind everyone of their resource gathering assignments. Beginning writers take rest of LES home to recopy. Evaluate the class.

Day Seven (planning stage)

Minutes	Activities
25	Taped books. Silent reading. Wait for late comers. Call folks at home who don't show.
10	Do and discuss student's CLOZE worksheet of essay written by the group on problems of teachers in public schools.
35	Discuss ideas and make plans for how to carry out the project: having some effect on the school board elections. (Students decide they want to educate all the candidates to be sensitive to issues of non-reading parents. They also want to inform the other students at the school and register them to vote.) Students identify skills they think they will need that they don't have or don't feel confident in. (Teacher and students will add to this list as time goes on and needs become clearer.)
5	Break
10	Spelling check in pairs.

15 Phonics practice.
10 Sight words practice in pairs.
10 Students freewrite on what they would like candidates to know. Beginning writers work closely with teacher.
5 Break
15 Read and discuss freewrites.
10 Students rewrite.
15 Read and discuss (Students decide to publish a booklet of their writings to give to candidates in addition to holding discussions with them.)
10 Student will continue to rewrite essays for homework, evaluate the class.

Day Eleven (project in full swing)

Minutes Activities

25 Taped books/silent reading/wait for late comers/call folks at home who don't show
20 Final proofread of individual essays for booklet. Students work in pairs using list of punctuation and grammar points developed in past weeks. Students know the teacher will find a highly accurate proofreader to do final preparation of copy.
10 Evaluate project so far and redesign plans.
5 Break
10 Spelling check in pairs.
15 Phonics practice.
10 Sight words practice in pairs.
25 As a group write interview questions for candidates. (Next week they will practice interviewing and the following week the first candidate will visit for a presentation to the entire school. These students will interview her for a half hour before opening it up to the other students for questions.)
5 Break
40 Since all students wanted to participate in setting up interviews with the candidates, they identified how to look up numbers in the phone book as a skill they wanted to work on. There were really two skills to be taught: alphabetical order, and the set up of a phone book. They are now at the point of being directly taught the second skill. Step one (introduce): teacher points out the features of a phone book and (steps two and three, model and teach) demonstrates looking up her own number, describing her thinking aloud as she goes. Step four (guided practice): students identify which phone book they would use to locate their own names. From small photocopied and blown-up portions of a phone book page students locate names and numbers of the mayor, the program director and one of the students. Using phone books, the students locate the page numbers for several guide words. Together the students tell the teacher step by step how to look up one of the other teachers' names. Then (step 5, independent practice) students look up their own names or names of the people who have the phone that they use the most. If students can do

this, they move on to the final step. Step six (apply): each student looks up a name of a candidate and copies down their phone number. Next week they will rehearse phone calls and make them from the school.

10 For homework, students will look up phone numbers of people who have been identified as good resources on this theme. Evaluate the class.

Here are other examples:

Two Hour Class

Minutes	Activities
15	Read to the students from a novel
35	Work on theme activities and mini-lessons
15	Break
30	Students work individually on reading and writing projects
15	Evaluation of the class and journal writing

Two and a half hour class: Monday

Minutes	Activities
20	Students plan work for the week and divide up tasks
30	Research is conducted so individuals can carry out tasks
10	Break
15	Revaluation and finalization of plans
30	Writing groups meet to write and read to each other
15	A student present current event and class discusses

These are only suggestions for ways lessons could be organized. Lesson planning is highly idiosyncratic and each teacher develops his or her own style and framework. It might be helpful to use a similar format at first and then branch out into your own style as you become more comfortable with the process.

POST SCRIPT

So, there you have it. This is our best effort at compiling what we know about teaching basic reading and writing skills to groups of adults. It's certainly not enough, but it's what we have so far. We assume you will agree with a lot of what I've written and make use of it in your own way. But we also expect you will find some of the things in this book to be less than perfect and will create new approaches and techniques. It's those things we want to hear about. What you do and discover as a teacher in our program will comprise the revised editions of this book in the years ahead.

VIII:

APPENDICES

* CRITICAL THINKING CHART
* THINKING-ABOUT-LITERATURE CHART

Name_____ Date _____

Reading _____

Critical Thinking Chart

Important Events, Points or Steps

Main Idea or Lesson

Other Viewpoints or Opinions

Reader's Ideas or Opinions

Importance to Today

Name _____ Date _____ _____

Story _____

Thinking-About-Literature Chart

Main Character:

Character Clues: What is the main character like?

Reactions: How does the main character react or feel about about important events in the story?

Problems: Name the problems or conflicts. Circle the main problem.

Attempts: How do the characters try to solve the problems?

Resolutions: How does the main problem get solved? or is it left unsolved?

Theme: What is the author trying to say?