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ABSTRACT

                This report provides a 5-year perspective on the adult
literacy education (ALE) system in the inner city of San Diego, California.
Chapter 1 introduces the research. Chapters 2-5 in part 1, "The Struggle To
Learn," contain the following: information about the difficulties of
determining how many adults might benefit from basic skill education;
introduction of the practice of having adult literacy students perform as
researchers to discover barriers to and ways to increase participation in
ALE; what happens after adults decide to go back to school; and how various
instructional factors affect learning and the transfer of learning to the
home and community. Chapters 6-8 in part 2, "The Struggle To Teach," include
the following: reports by two teacher researchers on hardships of teaching
and learning and insights of 17 teachers about the educational system; a
teacher researcher's experiences in trying to change instruction in an
English as a second language class and how the dynamics of students' lives
and classroom turbulence affected her work; and challenges to teaching posed
by diversity in a classroom due to cultural factors and different language
and literacy skill levels. Chapters 9-11 in part 3, "The Struggle To Be
Better," cover the following: activities federal policy makers and officials
have undertaken to try to improve the ALE system nationally; activities in
California to improve the ALE system; and rebuttals to news stories about the
low intellectual abilities of disadvantaged youth and adults. (YLB)

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Passports to Paradise

The Struggle to Teach and to Learn on the Margins of Adult Education

January 1998

CWELL San Diego Consortium for Workforce Education & Lifelong Learning

2

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The Struggle to Teach and To Learn on the Margins of Adult Education

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January 1998

4

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

6

Executive Summary

*"Just another beautiful day in Paradise!"*That's the refrain you hear almost daily in San Diego from radio talk show hosts, clerks in stores and passersby on the sidewalks. Each year thousands of people from hundreds of countries and various states within the U.S. migrate to San Diego. But when they arrive, they do not find themselves in Paradise.

Instead they find themselves living in an inner city community characterized by higher than average crime rates, more unemployment, lower incomes, higher teenage pregnancy rates and lower high school graduation rates than the city that surrounds them. Tens of thousands of these adults find themselves socially and economically marginalized because they lack important passports to Paradise. The foreign born may lack the ability to speak English well enough to get a job and support a family. Thousands of marginalized native speakers of English lack good basic educational skills in reading, writing, and mathematics or a high school diploma, or both.

In search of educational passports to Paradise, thousands of the newly arrived migrants, from abroad and from other states, and the undereducated native adults of San Diego seek help from the adult literacy education programs provided by the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education.

This report provides a five-year perspective on this adult literacy education system located in the inner city of San Diego, California. As used here, *adult literacy education* includes instruction in English as a second language (ESL), adult basic education (ABE), which includes literacy and mathematics education below the 9th grade level, and adult secondary education (ASE) at the high school or General Educational Development (GED) level.

Overview of the Report

This report includes 11 chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the research and an overview of the remaining 10 chapters in the report. The report is divided into three parts, the contents of each part are briefly described below.

Part 1, The Struggle to Learn . This includes Chapters 2 through 5. Chapter 2 provides information about the difficulties of determining just how many adults in the San Diego area might benefit from additional education in the basic skills of English, reading and mathematics. Chapter 3 introduces the practice of having adult literacy students perform as researchers to discover barriers to participation in adult literacy education and what might be done to increase participation in adult literacy education. Chapter 4 continues the discussion of the struggle to learn by considering what happens after adults decide to go back to school. The final chapter in Part 1, Chapter 5, deals with the issue of how various instructional factors such as class size, erratic attendance, and turbulence affect learning and the transfer of what is learned in class to the home and community beyond the walls of the school.

Part 2, The Struggle to Teach. In Part 2, Chapters 6, 7, and 8 focus on the voices of teachers and their reflections on the struggle to teach in a marginalized education system. Chapter 6 includes reports by two CWELL ARC teacher researchers on the hardships of both teaching and learning and it presents insights that 17 teachers have about the educational system in which they work. Chapter 7 presents a case study of one teacher's experiences as a CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher in trying to change instruction in an ESL class and how the dynamics of students' lives and classroom turbulence affected her

work. Chapter 8 looks at the challenges to teaching posed by great diversity within a given classroom due to cultural factors and different levels of language and literacy skills.

*Part 3, The Struggle to Be Better.*Three chapters deal with activities to try to make the adult literacy education system more effective. Chapter 9 reviews some of the activities that federal policy makers and officials have undertaken over the years to try to improve the adult literacy education system nationally. Chapter 10 focuses on activities in California over the last two decades to improve the adult literacy education system. Finally, in Chapter 11 rebuttals are offered to news stories in the *New York Times, Washington Post, Washington Times* and the *San Diego Union* about the low intellectual abilities of disadvantaged youth and adults.

Major Findings and Recommendations

Adults' Self-Perceptions of Educational Needs Differ From Needs
Identified in National and International Adult Literacy Surveys

On the whole, San Diegans score well on international literacy comparisons with other nations. They rank 4th after Sweden, Germany and Netherlands, while the U. S. as a whole ranks 8th out of ten comparisons (Chapter 2). But some 60 percent (750,000) of adults in the San Diego region are below national literacy standards set by the National Governor's Association and could have difficulty competing for higher wage jobs in the region. Over a third (about 690,000) of San Diego area adults think they could get a better job if they could read or do mathematics better. About one in six San Diego area adults said that they sometimes get help from others in reading at work. The differences between test scores and self-perceptions of work-related skills may be one of the reasons why more adults do not seek adult literacy education. They do not perceive their need for it.

Recommendations. Adults need some way to confidentially and accurately gauge their literacy and mathematics skills to determine their personal needs for increased skills and their needs for skills to increase their competitiveness in the local, national and global economies.They need non-threatening, informational and counseling sources that can make them aware of resources available to them to help them increase their skills. Employers could take the lead in providing these types of informational resources to employees, but other community organizations, e.g., hospitals, grocery stores, etc. could also provide this type of information in window displays, on grocery bags, etc.

The national television networks could devote a number of broadcasting hours per year to adult knowledge and literacy self-assessments that could let adults (and K-12 students for that matter) determine their personal skill levels and what they might do to improve their skills if they think they need to. Statewide telephone surveys like the one used by the CWELL ARC in the San Diego area (Chapter 2) could provide a relatively inexpensive way to measure the knowledge levels of adults, their self-perceptions of their need for adult literacy education, and their actual participation rates in adult literacy education.

Turbulent Lives Lead to Turbulent Classrooms With Low Participation,
Low Attendance, High Dropout Rates and Low Achievement

Fewer than ten percent of the adults in the San Diego area who think they could benefit from education in reading and mathematics actually attend classes (Chapter 2). Barriers to attendance due to hectic life circumstances, work schedules, poor child care, lack of transportation and lack of social support from relatives, friends, and employers stop many adults from attending education (Chapter 3). Of those who do attend, two-thirds leave before completing a semester of school, half attend fewer than 30 percent of the

available hours of instruction, and there are large numbers of adds and drops producing over 200 percent turbulence during a semester (Chapter 4). Most adult students are functioning as lower literates (i.e., with reading skills below the 7th grade level) both when they enter and when they leave adult literacy programs (Chapter 8), yet most feel they have improved their literacy skills (Chapter 5).

Recommendations. Adult literacy Student Researchers recommended that the media become more involved in encouraging adults to go to school (Chapter 3). This might be done in conjunction with television or radio shows that offer game-like methods of self-assessing one's skills and information about skills, their competitive advantages, and how to locate educational opportunities. Adult Student Researchers also thought that greater social encouragement by family, friends, community organizations (i.e., churches, social clubs, etc.) and employers would be useful in increasing adults' participation in continuing education.

*A Need to Reexamine Policies and Educational Approaches in the Adult Literacy Education System.*The effects of turbulence due to numerous adds and drops call for a reexamination of the general policy called "open entry/open exit," in which adults can enroll in or drop out of classes at any time (Chapter 10). Other states are exploring other approaches to managing student enrollments and their efforts should be monitored.

One positive effect of the State Department of Education's activities to implement competency-based adult education (CBAE) in California is that there are now data for over a decade to track how well the adult literacy education system that receives federal funding is doing. The data show that retention rates and learning gains have held constant over the last decade, while reports of goal attainment by adult students have shown a 66 percent drop (Chapter 10).

The precipitous drop in goal attainment and the fact that retention rates and learning gains have not improved over the last decade calls for an evaluation of numerous State Department of Education activities costing millions of dollars that have been and are being carried out to improve the adult literacy education system. We need to know if these activities have the potential to improve the adult literacy education system and are in need of increased resources, or if the activities are inadequate to improve the system and new approaches are needed.

The Adult Literacy Education System Is Marginalized
and Needs to be Mainstreamed to Achieve National Education Goals

The adult literacy education system in California is a marginalized system by virtue of (1) the low levels of funding it receives per full time equivalent student (FTE) (about one-half what the community college gets per FTE, one-fourth what the California State University gets, and about one-8th what the University of California system gets), (2) the use of 80-90 percent part-time teachers, (3) malevolent, incorrect cultural beliefs about human intellectual abilities and when they can be developed, and (4) the almost total absence of attention to the adult literacy education system by the media, the state Legislature, Governor, and Superintendent of Instruction which amounts to a dereliction of caring (Chapter 11). This is an educational system that few outside the system know about or care about. It begs for attention by the media and the elected officials who are supposed to provide oversight on behalf of the general citizenry.

Recommendations. The media should act as citizen caregivers and provide the degree of investigative oversight to the adult literacy education system that it gives to the K-12 and higher education systems. The Legislature, Governor, and Superintendent of Public

Instruction need to care more about this statewide system that spends almost half a billion dollars a year of taxpayers' money.

Returns to Investment in Adult Literacy Education. Too often the adult literacy education system is considered as a *remedial* system and it is thought that moneys are better spent on *prevention,* which generally translates into institutional programs for preschool or early childhood education. This is a misperception because adult literacy education is both a developmental education program to increase adults' educational skills throughout their life spans *and* a prevention program to prevent learning problems and school failures among children. Data show that investments in the education of adults can improve the educability of children and produce other multiplier effects that bring large returns on investments (Chapter 11). Because it contributes to our efforts to accomplish all eight of the national education goals while increasing an individual adult's personal competitiveness and the productivity of the workforce now, instead of a generation from now through K-12 reforms, the adult literacy education system should change from being *marginalized* to being *mainstreamed* .

A Need for Human Resources Research and Development

California has millions of undereducated adults with a huge range of education and training needs, yet there is almost no investment by California's state or local governments, businesses or private charitable foundations in *research and development* that could lead to improvements in California's adult literacy education and workforce education training systems. This is unconscionable given all the information presented in this report that shows the importance of adult literacy education to both the improvement of K-12 education, the improvement of workforce competitiveness, and the general improvement of the quality of human life.

It is also unconscionable that California's great teacher training institutions, most notably the California State University system, provide little, and most campuses no, preparation of teachers for undereducated, marginalized adults.

Recommendations. This lack of research, development, and teacher training to improve the education of undereducated, marginalized adults are the same findings reported almost a decade ago by the California Workforce Literacy Task Force. Based on its findings that Task Force recommended:

> "That the Legislature establish a network of field stations for action research and evaluation on adult education in association with campuses of the California State University and Community College system, oriented to ... the development of improved methods of education and training for non-college bound youth and adults; further that the Legislature require the California State University and Community College systems to establish a formal program to educate and train a cadre of adult educators that can work with the spectrum of education, language, and learning needs of California's undereducated youth and adults."

The establishment of the CWELL Action Research Center in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, and a new graduate education program at the San Diego State University for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning Specialists (WELLS) demonstrates that the recommendations of the California Workforce Literacy Task Force can be implemented. We need now to care enough for the adult literacy education system to provide the planning, resources, research and teacher training to create an adult literacy education system for California that moves from the margins to the mainstream of our educational systems and provides a model of adult education for the nation and the world in the next century.

Chapter 1

Marginally Literate Adults and Their Struggle for Educational Passports to Paradise

"Just another beautiful day in Paradise!"

That's the refrain you hear almost daily in San Diego from radio talk show hosts, clerks in stores and passersby on the sidewalks. The great weather, the laid back lifestyle of Southern California, and the promise of the high-tech future give San Diegans cause to think they are living in Paradise.

Each year tens of thousands of people from hundreds of countries around the globe fly into port cities around the United States, pass through the turnstiles of the immigration service, show their passports and go on to catch flights to San Diego. But when they land, they do not find themselves in Paradise.

Joining the new immigrants from abroad are tens of thousands of migrants from other parts of the United States who are searching for Paradise. When all these immigrants get to San Diego, they find that even many thousands of San Diegans are also looking for Paradise. Theirs is not the life of the radio talk show hosts, the proud newspaper editors and writers, nor the many thousands of San Diegans who are living in the mainstream of the good life in San Diego.

> **In their community punctuated by the cacophony of police sirens and voices speaking dozens of languages, a multicultural mixture is tied together by one common thread . . . its people are living on the margins of Paradise**

Instead, hundreds of thousands of the foreign immigrants, out-of-state in-migrants, and native born San Diegans find themselves living in an inner city community characterized by higher than average crime rates, more unemployment, lower incomes, higher teenage pregnancy rates and lower high school graduation rates than the city that surrounds them. In their community punctuated by the cacophony of police sirens and voices speaking dozens of languages, a multicultural mixture is tied together by one common thread, a majority of its people are living on the margins of Paradise.

With the admixture of cultures comes an admixture of those without other important passports to Paradise. For the foreign born, the inability to speak English well enough to get a job and support a family is a passport they lack. For tens of thousands of marginalized native speakers of English, the passport they lack are good basic educational skills in reading, writing, and mathematics or a high school diploma, or both.

In search of educational passports to Paradise, thousands of the newly arrived immigrants, from abroad and from other states, and the undereducated native adults of San Diego seek help from the adult education programs provided by the San Diego Community College District.

For most of these adults, it is a struggle for learning. They take classes while attempting to meet the daily demands of adult living, sometimes under conditions of deprivation,

and for others, personal trauma due to catastrophes in their native land, or abusive living circumstances in this country.

The San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education

In the city of San Diego, the Community College District operates the Division of Continuing Education to provide adults non-college credit vocational training and education in English language, basic literacy and math skills, and high school completion with a diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalency certificate.

Unfortunately, like the marginalized adults they serve, the adult continuing education schools find themselves at the margins of adult education in California. For each full time adult student, the University of California gets some $16,000 in state money, the California State University gets around $6500, the two year Community College gets around $3600, while the Continuing Education non-credit programs get about $1700.

Like their marginalized students, the adults' teachers are marginalized educators. Given the low levels of support for adult basic education, the daily struggle to teach bears down heavily on a cadre of mostly part-time teachers, mostly women, who find themselves without medical or retirement benefits, and at risk daily of having their class closed if there are not enough students to keep it open.

The CWELL Research Project

For five years researchers from the Action Research Center of the San Diego Consortium for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning (CWELL) listened to the voices of adult students, their teachers, and administrators of one of the largest educational systems for new immigrants and undereducated native adults in the nation. We spent hours in classrooms, observing teachers and their students at work. We read dozens of reports about adult basic education in San Diego, California and nationally. We attended and gave numerous workshops, conferences, focus groups and other meetings looking at various facets of adult basic education.

> In search of educational passports to Paradise, thousands of new immigrants and native San Diegans seek help from the adult education programs of the San Diego Community College District

> The daily struggle to teach bears down heavily on a cadre of marginalized teachers, mostly part-time, mostly women, who find themselves at risk daily of having their class closed if there are not enough students to keep it open.

This report summarizes a number of the results of these activities conducted over the five year period. It summarizes our understanding of the adults who struggle to learn and the adult educators who struggle to teach in four adult continuing education centers that serve the educational needs of the most disadvantaged adults in San Diego's inner city.

The San Diego CWELL

The San Diego Consortium for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning (CWELL) was formed in 1992 with funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Consortium included the San Diego State University, College of Education, Department of Educational Technology; the San Diego Community College District, Continuing Education Division; and the Applied Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences, Inc.

A major goal of the CWELL was to seek ways to improve the education and training delivery system for out-of-school youth and adults in the San Diego area, especially those who do not plan to go to college. These are the youth and adults who will form a majority of the United States citizenry, parents and workforce of the foreseeable future. Many have stopped seeking work, or if they are employed they work in low-paying, low-skill jobs. Many are undereducated and score in the bottom half on any number of academic, "life skills, " or literacy achievement tests. Large numbers are minorities, immigrants and recent refugees from political and/or economic oppression.

Origins of the CWELL

In 1989, the California State Legislature, with leadership by Senators Ralph Dills and David Roberti, created the California Workforce Literacy Task Force. Following a year - long study of the system of education for out-of-school youth and undereducated adults in California, the Task Force noted that a large number of educational organizations offered basic skills (reading, mathematics, writing, English language), vocational, and work-related education in the State. Over $800 million taxpayer dollars were being spent on these activities, but there was no system of accountability in place.

What little information was available indicated that in many programs students completed only a relatively few hours of instruction and made little, if any, improvements in learning as measured by California's Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). No information was found on how well new skills were used by adults to meet their needs.

The Task Force also noted that although many of the youth and adults being served were in the category sometimes referred to as "at risk," defined as among the most difficult to educate and train, the large majority of administrators and teachers serving this population were not professionally trained for such work. For instance, there were over 1,000 organizations providing adult literacy instruction and most made use of part-time teachers and volunteers.

> **In 1990 the California Workforce Literacy Task Force found over a dozen state programs spending $800 million a year on non-credit adult basic skills (3 R's & ESL) and work-related programs, with no accountability across programs, most adults did not complete 80 hours of basic skills instruction, and most entered and left programs functionally illiterate.**

Based on its findings, the California Workforce Literacy Task Force recommended:

> "That the Legislature establish a network of field stations for action research and evaluation on adult education in association with campuses of the California State University and Community College system, oriented to developing information about California's workforce skills needs, abilities of the non-college bound workforce, and the development of improved methods of education and training for non-college bound youth and adults; further that the Legislature require the California State University and Community College systems to establish a formal program to educate and train a cadre of adult educators that can work with the spectrum of education, language, and learning needs of California's undereducated youth and adults."

In 1991, after reviewing the California Workforce Literacy Task Force's report, officials at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation saw value in the foregoing recommendations. A grant was provided to the Applied Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences, Inc. to prepare a report showing how the Task Force's recommendations could be implemented (Sticht, McDonald, & Huie, 1992). Through a second, three-year grant in 1992, the Consortium for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning (CWELL) was established.

In 1995, a grant from the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund to the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education permitted the CWELL to continue its work for a full five years and to focus on the teaching of English as a second language (ESL), which constitutes the largest share (over 80 percent) of adult basic education in San Diego and the entire state of California.

Overview of the CWELL Action Research Center (ARC)

Among other things, the Consortium for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning (CWELL) conducted research and development to better understand and meet the needs of new immigrants and undereducated youth and adults for non-college credit education and training.

To carry out the research of the CWELL, the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education (SDCCD/CE), which serves the education needs of over 50,000 new immigrants and undereducated adults yearly, implemented the California Workforce Literacy Task Force's recommendation to establish "field stations for action research." In the SDCCD/CE, the field station was called the " CWELL Action Research Center (ARC)." The ARC office was located in the Mid-City Continuing Education Center in the heart of San Diego's inner city, underdeveloped community.

The CWELL ARC Community

The CWELL ARC aimed at providing information that could lead to improving the education and training of youth and adults in the central part of San Diego.

The ARC community is embedded in the greater San Diego area. There are four SDCCD/CE centers that serve the ARC community: Mid-City where the ARC office was
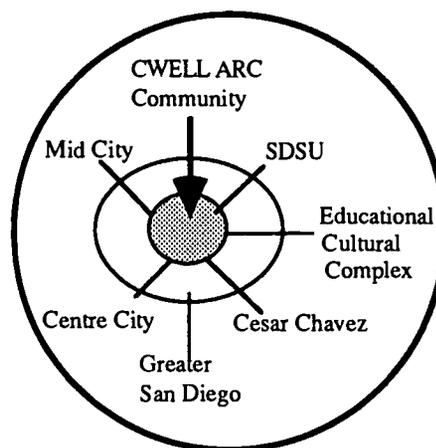
located, Centre City with a great deal of vocational education, Cesar Chavez which serves a large Hispanic population, and the Educational Cultural Complex (ECC) which houses the SDCCD/CE Provost's office and conducts vocational and basic skills programs.The San Diego State University, where a new graduate program to become a Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning Specialist (WELLS) is offered, forms part of the network that roughly circumscribes the ARC community.

The ARC community includes over 200,000 people out of the total population of some 2.5 million in the greater San Diego area. It is a more ethnically diverse area than the greater San Diego area with a large population of minorities, many of whom are refugees; it has a lower median income (in 1990 about $23,630 vs. $33,720 in the greater San Diego area); lower educational attainment (six percent of San Diego area adults vs. 20 percent of the ARC community adults have nine or fewer years of education); higher crime rates, teenage pregnancy rates, unemployment rates, poverty and welfare rates. In general, the ARC community is socially, educationally and economically depressed compared to the greater San Diego area.

Because of its socioeconomic characteristics and the fact that there are four SDCCD continuing education centers serving it, where thousands of students attend classes each year, the ARC community provides an ideal site for a field station for action research on the education needs of out-of-school youth and adults seeking to learn English as a second language (ESL), to develop their basic reading, writing and computation skills, or studying for a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Research Approach of the CWELL Action Research Center

The research approach of the CWELL ARC was premised on the belief that the best way to genuinely understand an educational delivery system as large as the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education was to directly involve those indigenous to the system as researchers and reporters. For this reason the CWELL ARC engaged both adult students and teachers as researchers.

> The CWELL Action Research Center engaged both adult students and teachers as researchers.

Adult Students as Researchers. Altogether, in the five years of the CWELL ARC over 200 adults students served as researchers. To initially engage adults students as researchers, the CWELL ARC sponsored a number of writing contests. In these contests adults were asked to think and write about educational issues, to conduct interviews with family and friends in the ARC community and write reports of their interviews. Winning reports were published in the CWELL newspaper, *the Community Exchange.*

Additionally, adult students conducted surveys of other adult students, they participated in focus groups regarding how they thought the delivery system of adult education could be improved, and what adults should know and be able to do to perform well in their roles of parents, family members, citizens, and workers. Throughout this report the voices of adult students portray a vivid picture of the struggle to learn that characterizes those marginalized adults who are in search of passports to Paradise. Or, as expressed in the voice of one adult student, "I want that life you always hear about!"

Teachers as Researchers . During the five years of operation of the CWELL ARC, over two dozen teachers participated as researchers. Their research ranged from in-depth case studies of their adult students' lives, hopes, troubles and good fortunes, through curriculum development and evaluation, to surveys of hundreds of adult students across all four Divisions of Continuing Education centers in the ARC community.

Technical reports of many of the teacher's research projects have been produced by the CWELL ARC (McDonald, Hofstetter, & Sticht, 1995). Additional technical reports are in preparation. For the present volume, several research projects by teachers are incorporated that reveal the many barriers to teaching that these teachers encounter and cope with on a daily basis. They also illustrate the dedication and commitment to improving their work that characterizes these teachers of adults.

Overview of This Report

This report defines adult literacy education to include instruction in English as a second language (ESL), adult basic education (ABE) which includes literacy and mathematics education below the 9th grade level, and adult secondary education (ASE) at the high school or General Educational Development (GED) level. It provides a perspective on the adult students, their teachers, and the institutions that made-up the adult literacy education system in the CWELL ARC research community. Additionally, it takes a look at how policy makers and researchers at the national and state levels have attempted to improve adult literacy education over the last thirty years.

The report is divided into three parts, the contents of each part are briefly described below.

Part 1, The Struggle to Learn . This includes Chapters 2 through 5. Chapter 2 provides information about the difficulties of determining just how many adults in the San Diego area might benefit from additional education in the basic skills of English, reading and mathematics. It includes data on how well San Diegans perform on state, national and international adult literacy test surveys, and it provides the results of a telephone survey of San Diego adults to find out how well they think they read and perform mathematics.

Having looked at how many San Diegans might benefit from adult literacy education, Chapter 3 then asks why it is that more adults do not participate in adult literacy education and what might be done to get more adults to participate. This chapter introduces the practice of having adult literacy students perform as researchers. In their own voices, adult students discuss three major categories of barriers to participation in adult literacy education. *Situational* barriers include baby-sitting problems, work schedules, transportation problems and so on. *Dispositional* barriers stem from the psychological, personality, and attitudinal make-up of the student, and their beliefs about their abilities to learn. *Institutional* barriers involve the instruction, policies, practices and requirements of programs. These same categories are then used to sort activities that adult students think might be useful in increasing participation in adult literacy education.

Chapter 4 continues the discussion of the struggle to learn by considering what happens after adults decide to go back to school. Here we find that the often hectic lives of marginalized adults lead to lowered levels of *persistence* to complete a semester, to low *attendance* rates, and to high rates of *turbulence*, that is, large numbers of adds and drops from classes during the semester. Data are presented to test the hypothesis that when both the focus of an adult's interests for going to school and the focus of a course are highly congruent, persistence rates will increase.

The final chapter in Part 1, Chapter 5, deals with the issue of how various instructional factors such as class size, erratic attendance, and turbulence, the constant adding and dropping of students, affect the outcomes of instruction. The focus of discussion is on three major perceived outcomes of ESL instruction: (1) students' perceptions of instruction, (2) students' and teachers' perceptions of improvements in learning, and (3)

students' perceptions of the extent to which they use or transfer what they learn in class to contexts beyond the classroom. The voices of both adult student researchers and a teacher researcher are heard as they discuss the difficulties in transferring what is learned in class to the home and community beyond the walls of the school.

Part 2, The Struggle to Teach. In Part 2, three chapters focus on the voices of teachers and their reflections on the struggle to teach in a marginalized education system.

Chapter 6 includes reports by CWELL ARC (Action Research Center) teacher researchers on the hardships of both teaching and learning. Two teachers who served as CWELL ARC Teacher Researchers present the results of their projects. One report illustrates the importance of the local community context for understanding the lives of adult students and why they may or may not attend adult education classes. A second report explores the difficult lives of five Latina women in conversations in small group meetings that helped both the teacher and the students better understand the hardships that accompany teaching and learning when life gets tough. The chapter ends with the results of a survey of teachers that reveal the depth of commitment of teachers to their students and the telling insights that teachers have about the educational system in which they work, generally part-time, day-in and day-out.

Chapter 7 presents a case study of one teacher's experiences as a CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher in trying to change instruction in an ESL class and how the dynamics of students' lives and classroom turbulence affected her work. In this chapter we listen to the voice of an imaginative, committed ESL instructor in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education as she describes an attempt she made to introduce an innovative curriculum into her ESL class. Working on ideas gleaned from a wide-ranging reading about adult literacy education, this teacher grappled with serious social and psychological problems that accompany many adult ESL students when they set-out to learn English as a second or other language. In the course of her work she came up full-square against problems resulting from turbulence in the open entry/open exit classroom.

In Chapter 8, factors that influence the ability of teachers to teach beyond those identified in earlier chapters are discussed. Earlier chapters show how teaching in the turbulent classroom is a constant struggle to keep track of who has quit coming, and must be dropped, and to cope with the learning needs of new students who may enter anytime, including the last week of class in the semester. But turbulence is just one of the many factors that make the teacher's job a constant struggle. Chapter 8 first looks at the challenges to teaching posed by great diversity within a given classroom due to cultural factors and different levels of language and literacy skills. Then a project by a CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher is summarized to show how teachers can develop instruction to cope with turbulence and diversity, and meet one of the focal goals that adults frequently have for enrolling in adult literacy education - getting a job.

Part 3, The Struggle to Be Better. In this final section of this report, three chapters deal with activities to try to make the adult literacy education system across the nation and within the state a better, more effective system.

In Chapter 9 we review some of the activities that federal policy makers and researchers have undertaken over the years to try to improve the adult literacy education system nationally. In reviewing these activities, we look first at a series of three studies done over the last 30 years by the federal government to evaluate adult literacy education systems that incorporate the use of federal funds. Next we discuss a series of three research, development and dissemination efforts spear-headed by federal and state governments that

introduced the policies and practices that are called CBAE (competency-based adult education) into the adult literacy education system. The chapter ends with a discussion of six major issues identified by the review of evaluation studies and CBAE projects that need to be addressed if current activities to reform adult literacy education across the nation are to be successful.

Chapter 10 focuses on activities in California over the last two decades to improve the adult literacy education system. In this chapter we first consider the open entry/open exit policy and why it is considered so important for adult literacy education in the state. After that, we review the competency-based adult education (CBAE) policy that has guided the state's instructional philosophy for the last decade and a half. Extensive quantitative data on retention, learning gains, and attainment of goals are presented. These data lead us to suggest that despite almost two decades of formulating and implementing the CBAE approach to adult literacy education, involving thousands of hours of work by dedicated staff and teachers and the expenditure of millions of dollars for test and staff development, the data do not support the inference that the approach has been successfully implemented and that California's adult literacy education system is better.

In Chapter 11, the last chapter in this report, we argue that the adult literacy education system is a marginalized system by virtue of the low levels of funding it receives, the large use of a part-time cadre of teachers, the almost total absence of attention to the system by the press and other media, and the lack of attention by the state Legislature and the Governor. We suggest that the marginalization of adult literacy students and the adult literacy education system is based, at least in part, on incorrect commonly held beliefs about the development of human intellectual abilities. We offer rebuttals to news stories in the *New York Times, Washington post, Washington Times* and the *San Diego Union* about the low intellectual abilities of disadvantaged youth and adults. Data are presented to show that investments in the education of adults can improve the educability of children. Adult education can have other multiplier effects and produce large returns on investments.

We conclude this report with arguments that instead of being marginalized, the adult literacy education system should be mainstreamed in our efforts to accomplish all eight of or national education goals (National Education Goals Panel, 1997). This is an educational system that few know about or care about. It needs to be better understood and the media, Legislature, Governor and public at large need to care about this statewide system that spends almost half a billion dollars a year of taxpayers' money.

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Chapter 2

How Many of San Diego's Adults Need Literacy Education?

If the person isn't interested in learning, he isn't going to do it. They don't consider going to school in their free time because they believe that it is better to spend that time in other activities which they consider more important. (I., adult student in Beginning ESL class)

How many adults are there in San Diego who might benefit from taking adult literacy education courses? While there is really no way to answer this question in a definitive manner, one way that has been used to estimate how many adults need to attend adult literacy education is to find out how many have not completed 12 years of education (high school completion). Using this method, the 1990 U.S. census indicates that some 18 percent of San Diego's adults 18 years old or older have not completed high school. This indicates that around 350,000 adults could benefit from returning to school to complete their secondary education.

However, as numerous assessments of adults' literacy skills have shown over the years, the number of school grades completed is not a very accurate indicator of adults' literacy levels (Sticht & Armstrong, 1994). For this reason the present chapter discusses two different approaches taken by the CWELL Action Research Center to estimate the need for adult literacy education in San Diego. First, we relied on standardized testing methods used in the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) of 1993 and the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) of 1995. These assessments provide estimates of the numbers of low literate adults in San Diego, California, the United States and several other nations.

A second method we used to estimate the need for adult literacy education among San Diego's adults involved surveying adults by telephone to obtain their self-perceptions about how well they thought they could read. We also asked adults if they thought they could get a better job if they improved their basic skills of English, reading or mathematics.

Test Scores: How Many of San Diego's Adults Meet National Literacy Standards?

The report of the results of the 1993 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) produced headlines across the nation that half of America's adults are functionally illiterate! This was based on the fact that almost half of the more than 26,000 adults tested scored in levels 1 and 2, the lowest of the five literacy levels that the NALS defined (Kirsch et. al, 1993).

Going door-to-door in a national sampling scheme, the NALS staff assessed skills in three areas: prose, document and quantitative literacy. However, this type of sampling and testing is very expensive. The NALS cost over $10.8 million dollars for the national sample, and several states paid an extra $300,000 each for special testing of the state's adults. California was one of the states.

To overcome the high costs of door-to-door surveys, and to make it possible to estimate the literacy levels of adults in different counties, or zip codes, Dr. Stephen Reder, a cognitive scientist with Portland State University in Oregon, developed a mathematical formula for estimating people's scores on prose, document and quantitative tests, and on a combined

scale made up of all three tests. His estimates have been been shown to produce almost the same scores as actually testing people (Reder, 1994).

Reder (1995) produced estimates of literacy scores for adults in 13 U. S. Census areas called Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAS). The area encompassed in these PUMAS ranged from Oceanside and Camp Pendleton in the north, east to include Escondido, Valley Center and Pauma, south to include Sweetwater, Chula Vista , South Bay, and all the other localities in between these areas.

As Figure 2.1 shows, the need for adult literacy education is not evenly distributed in the San Diego region. In PUMA 2, which includes 244,572 adults living in the CWELL ARC community of Southeast San Diego, Mid City, and National City, Reder estimated that on the combined prose, document and quantitative scale for the National Adult Literacy Survey, 25 percent of adults over the age of 16 were in the lowest literacy level (Level 1) and 35 percent were in Level 2. Altogether, some 60 percent of adults in PUMA 2 were estimated to score below the national literacy standard of Level 3 on the National Adult Literacy Survey.

Figure 2.1

San Diego
Public Use
Microdata
Area (PUMA)

Percent of Adults
In San Diego Area
Below National
Literacy Standards
Set By The
National Governor's
Association

Percent of Adults Below Literacy Level 3 of
the National Adult Literacy Survey of 1993

PUMA 1: Central San Diego, Peninsula, Coronado; 2: National City, Southeast San Diego, Mid City San Diego; 3: Kearny Mesa, Elliot Navajo; 4: Coastal, University; 5: Del Mar-Mira Mesa, North San Diego, Poway, Miramar; 6: Sweetwater, Chula Vista, South Bay; 7: Jamul, Lakeside, Harrison-Crest, Alpine, Ramona, Palomar-Julian, Laguna-Pine Valley, Mountain Empire, Anza-Borrego Springs; 8: Spring Valley, Lemon Grove; 9: La Mesa, El Cajon, Santee; 10: San Dieguito, Carlsbad; 11: Oceanside, Pendleton; 12: Escondido, Valley Center, Pauma; 13: San Marcos, Vista, Fallsbrook.

As a general trend, it was found that as one moves north from the   Mexico   border,   the percentage of adults in the lower two levels of literacy declines along the coastal areas above central San Diego (PUMA 1) then increases in the northern county in PUMAS 11, 12, and 13. This reflects the use of English in the literacy assessments. In PUMA 4, which includes 101,464 adults living in the La Jolla coastal area and University City with the University of California at San Diego, only 4.2 percent of adults were in literacy Level 1. Still, almost 14 percent were in literacy Level 2.
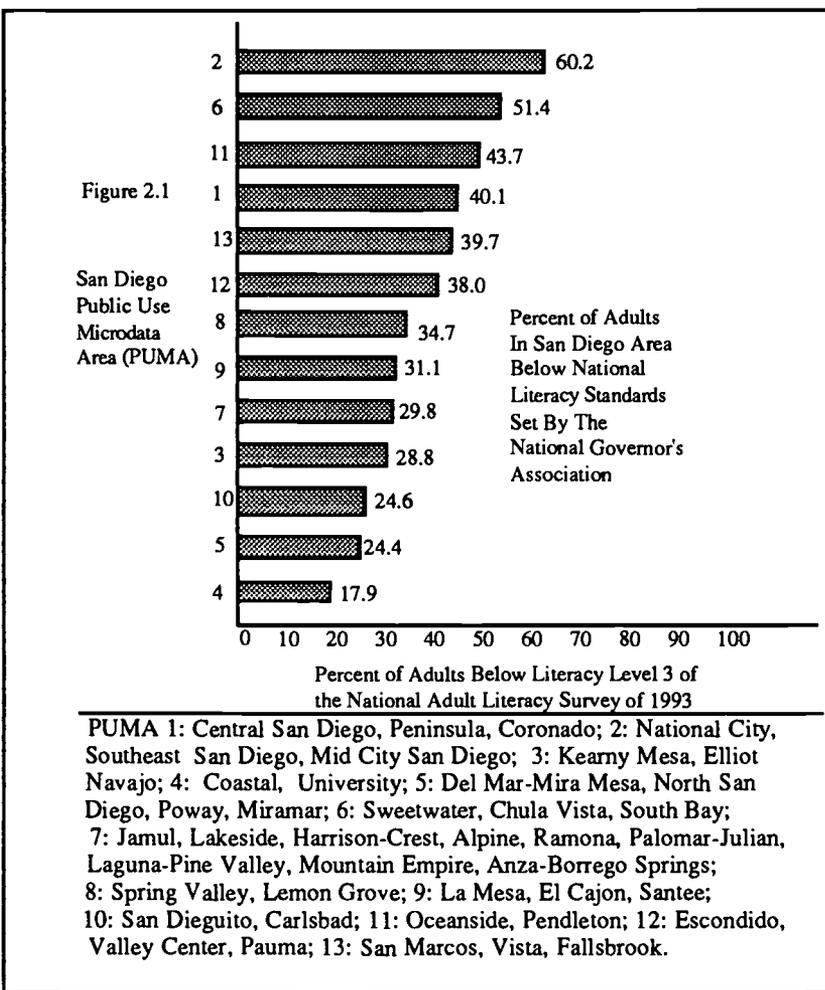
Figure 2.2 shows that, overall, the San Diego region fares better than California or the nation as a whole, with fewer adults in the lowest literacy level and some 60 percent of adults at levels 3 through 5. Still, altogether, some 15 percent (276,710) of adults in the 13

20

PUMAS scored in literacy Level 1 on the combined scale, and 25 percent in Level 2.

If the national goal for adult literacy development is to get all adults to score at Level 3 and above, as suggested by the National Governor's Association's annual reports on progress towards national education goals for the year 2000, then almost three quarters of a million adults (40 percent) in the San Diego region are below standards in literacy.

Figure 2.2

Almost three quarters of a million adults in San Diego are below the national standards for literacy.
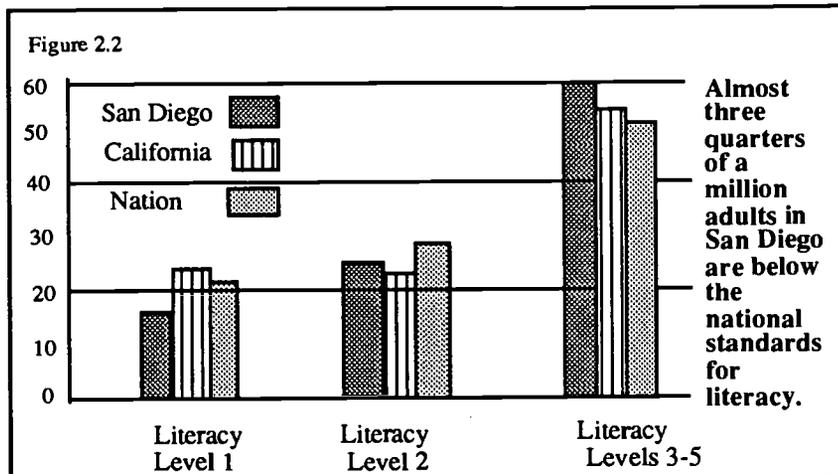
Percentage of adults in the San Diego Region, California, and U. S. in National Literacy Levels 1, 2, and 3-5.

The Literacy Skills of San Diego's Adults in International Perspective

In 1995 the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Statistics Canada, an office of the Minister of Industry in Canada published the results of the first International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (OECD, 1995, p. 57; OECD, 1997). Though carefully adapted to be consistent with different national cultures, the IALS tests were based on the same types of functional literacy tasks, psychometric scales, and five literacy levels as used in the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) developed in the United States.

Because of the similarity of the NALS and IALS scales, we can compare Reder's estimates of adult literacy in the San Diego region given in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 to the estimates of literacy in the United States and eight other European nations. This comparison is given in Table 2.1.

The data in Table 2.1 show the percentage of adults in the lowest level of literacy, Level 1, in each nation and San Diego averaged across the three different literacy scales of prose, document and quantitative literacy. In the OECD report, separate data are given for French and German speaking Switzerland. In Table 2.1 those data have been combined and averaged to make one entry for Switzerland.

Table 2.1 San Diego's rank in percentage of adults in the lowest level of literacy on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).

Rank	Nation	%
1	Sweden	06.7
2	Germany	10.0
3	Netherlands	10.3
4	**SAN DIEGO**	**15.0**
5	Switzerland	16.3
6	Australia	17.0
7	Canada	17.2
8	U. Kingdom	20.0
9	United States	21.8
10	Poland	42.3

Sources: Reports by OECD in reference section for Chapter 1.

Clearly, though San Diego adults as a whole are quite competitive in terms of literacy in the United States, Australia and the European market, one in six of San Diego's adults are found in the lowest level of literacy and their personal competitiveness in the local and global economies is poor.

Adults' Self-Perceptions of Reading Abilities

In an internet message posted to a listserv sponsored by the National Institute for Literacy, a well-known adult literacy researcher recently noted that, "I played with the NALS data for a summer. I was struck by the fact that many of those who scored at level one in NALS reported that they could and did read." In fact, the NALS report said that 66-75 percent of those in Level 1 and 93 to 97 percent in Level 2 perceived themselves as being able to read or write English "well" or "very well" (depending on which of the three literacy scales, prose, document, or quantitative, was considered) . Only 14-25 percent in Level 1 and 4-12 percent in Level 2 (depending on which of the three literacy scales was considered) said they got a lot of help from family members or friends with everyday literacy tasks.

The NALS data indicate that people's self-perceived literacy abilities may differ from the way researchers who measure their abilities end up classifying their skill levels. Their self-perceptions of need, rather than government estimates of population needs, is probably more important in determining whether or not people will choose to go to adult literacy education. For this reason research was conducted to find out more about how adults in the San Diego region perceived their own reading abilities.

As a part of a larger study, a telephone survey of San Diego residents asked a number of questions about the respondents' reading skills, their need for reading on their jobs, and whether they thought they could do better at work if they received reading and/or mathematics education (Sticht, Hofstetter, & Hofstetter, 1996). The respondents were 18 years old or older, and only speakers of English were interviewed. This requirement excluded some 5 percent of those contacted through a random digit dialing technique which permitted contact with newly listed numbers and unlisted numbers. The resulting sample of over 500 San Diegans was very similar to the 1990 U. S. Census, except that education levels were higher and minorities were slightly underrepresented. These factors make the following estimates of perceived needs conservative.

General Reading Skills. Regarding adults' perceived general reading skills, respondents were asked the following question; the data obtained are summarized immediately after the question.

"Many people tell us that they have difficulties in understanding what they read. In general, would you say that you sometimes have trouble understanding what you read (1), you understand most of what you read (2), you understand nearly all you read (3), or you understand all you read (4)?"

	Mean	SD	n	1	Frequency (%) 2	3	4
Average rating:	2.95	0.88	522	6.7	21.5	41.8	30.1

These data indicate that about seven (6.7) percent of San Diegans "sometimes have trouble understanding" what they read and about one in five (21.5) "understand most of what" they read. If we apply this figure to the 1.8 million San Diego regional adults over the age of 16, then some 120,000 adults would "sometimes have trouble" understanding what they read. If we assumed that the non-English speakers reached in the telephone survey would all fall into the category of those having trouble understanding what they read (in English), then an additional 5 percent or 90,000 San Diego metropolitan area adults would be added to the 120,000, making a total of 210,000 with perceived literacy difficulties.

Getting Help With Literacy Tasks. To further probe the extent of reading problems that adults might have, they were asked a series of questions about specific kinds of literacy tasks they might have to perform and whether or not family members or friends help them with these tasks. Questions and obtained data are presented below.

"In general, how frequently do family members or friends help you with the following activities? Never (0), annually (1), monthly (2), weekly (3), daily (4)."

	Mean	SD	n	0	1	Frequency (%) 2	3	4
a. Filling out forms	0.58	0.91	517	64.4	19.9	10.3	4.4	1.0
b. Reading or explaining newspaper articles or other written information	0.52	0.95	521	72.0	11.9	8.8	6.7	0.6
c. Dealing with government agencies, public companies, business, medical personnel, etc.	0.70	0.94	514	56.6	23.3	15.0	3.9	1.2
d. Writing notes and letters	0.44	0.96	518	79.0	7.1	6.6	5.6	1.7
e. Helping you with things you need to read at work	0.29	0.77	479	85.0	6.1	5.2	2.7	1.0

These data are consistent with the previous question in indicating that some 4-7 percent of the adults reported getting help in literacy tasks on a weekly (3) or daily (4) basis.

Job Related Reading Skills. As indicated above, adults' perceptions of their own reading skills and their statements of how much help they receive in performing literacy tasks indicate a fairly high degree of self-perceived skill in *general* literacy tasks. Next we turn to questions related to reading for work. First we asked about how "connected" or important they thought reading was to how well they could do their job.

"How connected would you say reading ability is to how well you do your job at work? Not at all connected (1), not very connected (2), somewhat connected (3), very connected (4)."

	M	SD	n	1	Frequency (%) 2	3	4
Average rating:	3.53	0.80	471	4.5	6.2	21.4	67.9

Interestingly, about five (4.5) percent of adults reported that reading ability is not at all connected to how well they do their jobs, and over six percent said that reading ability was not very connected to how well they do their jobs.

The responses to the next question showed that very few adults thought their skills were not as good as they should be or not adequate. Over 96 percent thought their reading skills were adequate or more than adequate to do their jobs.

"In terms of what is required for your occupation, how would you rate your own reading skills? Not at all adequate (1), not as good as should be (2), adequate for job (3), more than adequate (4)."

	M	SD	n	1	Frequency (%) 2	3	4
Average rating:	3.52	0.58	499	0.4	3.0	41.1	55.5

Further probing about the conditions under which reading skills might suffer at work revealed that about 10 percent of the respondents thought that their reading skills were fragile enough that if there were distractions or they were under pressure then they might not be able to read well enough to do their jobs.

"For each of the following statements, just tell me whether you agree strongly (1 point), agree (2 points), disagree (3 points), disagree strongly (4 points)."

	M	SD	n	1	2	3	4
					Frequency (%)		
d. I can understand what I read well enough to do my job well even when there is a lot of distraction.	1.82	0.61	467	29.1	60.4	10.1	0.4
e. I can understand what I read well enough to do my job well even when I am under a lot of pressure to meet a deadline.	1.80	0.60	468	29.5	61.1	9.2	0.2

Improvements in Reading Skills Might Help. Though self-perceptions of reading abilities revealed that San Diego's adults generally regard their reading skills as adequate or more than adequate to do their jobs, almost half agreed or strongly agreed that if their reading skills were improved, this could lead to more respect on the job (46%), better job performance (55.1%), and more money (45.5%).

"For each of the following statements, just tell me whether you agree
strongly (1 point), agree (2 points), disagree (3 points), disagree strongly (4 points)."

	M	SD	n	1	2	3	4
					Frequency (%)		
a. If I understood what I read better, I would get more respect where I work.	2.51	0.88	452	14.4	31.6	42.3	11.7
b. If I understood what I read better, I would be able to do better at the job.	2.36	0.91	454	19.4	35.7	34.4	10.6
c. If I understood what I read better, I would be able to earn more money.	2.50	0.83	457	13.1	32.4	45.7	8.8

As a final question about adults' perceptions of the value of improving their basic skills, they were asked directly whether they thought additional education in reading or mathematics would benefit them.

"Do you think you could get a better job if you received additional training in reading or writing English? "

	M	SD	n	Yes	No
				Frequency (%)	
Average rating:	1.67	0.47	483	33.3	66.7

"Do you think you could get a (better) job if you received additional training in mathematics? "

	M	SD	n	Yes	No
				Frequency (%)	
Average rating:	1.62	0.49	484	37.8	62.2

As these data show, about a third of the adults, some 600,000 San Diego area residents thought that they could get a better job if they received additional education in reading

and/or mathematics. Adding the estimated 5 percent or 90,000 of non-English speakers contacted in the survey gives 690,000, a figure not too distant from the estimated 750,000 of Reder's study (Figure 2.2) using estimates of National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) scores on the combined prose, document, and quantitative scales.

How Many Adults Participate in Adult Basic Education?

A 1993 study sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education studied participation rates in federally supported education programs in the United States for adults studying English as a second language, adult basic education (skills in literacy and mathematics), and high school completion (Development Associates, 1993; Young, et. al, 1995).

The data from the national survey states that there are 46.2 million adults who qualify for education under the Basic States Grants section of the federal Adult Education Act. But only about 1.8 million or some 4% of those who qualify actually enroll in adult education in a given year. Further, for those who enroll, far too many (17%) leave before receiving any instruction, and most leave their programs with too few hours of instruction to make them much more proficient than before they enrolled.

Some 36% of new adult students left before completing 12 hours of instruction. Half of the adult students stayed with their courses of study for 16 weeks. By the end of forty weeks, only one in eight (12.5%) remained in the programs.

The average hours of instruction received by those who persisted for up to 40 weeks of classes was 86. The median number of hours of instruction completed was 43, indicating that half of the adult students received only 43 or fewer hours of instruction before leaving the programs.

At the national level, then, participation rates in adult literacy education (including English as a second language, basic literacy and mathematics, and high school completion) are very low, lower even than the numbers that would be expected on the basis of adults' perceived needs determined by the NALS (about 10-15 million adults).

Participation in Adult Literacy Education in
the San Diego Community College District

Each year the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education serves some 50,000 to 60,000 adult students. In a given year, about 50 to 60 percent of these students will be enrolled in adult literacy education, mostly in English as a second language programs, with about ten or so percent in basic literacy and mathematics or high school completion programs. The others are enrolled in several non-credit programs such as vocational training, parenting, and courses for older adults.

While the number of adults who enroll in adult literacy classes is impressive, there are still many thousands of adults in the city who are below the national standards for literacy who do not participate in adult education. In Reder's study, in PUMAS 1 and 2 combined, which make-up the largest part of the city of San Diego served by the San Diego Community College District, some 215,000 adults were estimated to score below Level 3 of the NALS, the national standard for literacy.

Like the national data, San Diego data on enrollments are one thing, but data on how much instruction adults actually participate in are quite another. Research by the CWELL ARC indicated that over a third of the adults in several English as a second language classrooms completed fewer than 28 hours of instruction in a 270 hour-long semester. This research on

attendance is discussed at greater length in Chapter 4. For now it is sufficient to make the point that the total numbers of adults who enroll in adult literacy education programs is not necessarily reflective of how many adults actually participate long enough to benefit much from the program.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter we have considered two major questions regarding the needs of San Diego's adults for adult literacy education: how many adults might benefit from such education and how many actually participate.

How many adults might benefit from adult literacy education? We found that the answer to this question depends largely on the methodology that one follows in trying to answer it. On the one hand, using statistical methods to estimate adults' scores on the National Adult Literacy Survey, we found that three quarters of a million adults in the thirteen Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAS) comprising the San Diego region fall below the national literacy standard of Level 3 on the NALS. In the PUMAS making-up the service area of the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, around 215,000 adults were estimated to be below the national literacy standard.

The NALS methodology estimates literacy scores for both English and non-English speaking adults. When only English-speaking adults were asked for their self-perceptions of their reading skills using a telephone survey, only seven percent thought that they "sometimes have trouble understanding" what they read. On the other hand, when the adults were asked whether they thought they could get a better job if they received additional training in reading or mathematics, a third, representing about 600,000 adults, said "yes."

In the PUMAS served by the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education there are some 414,157 adults over the age of 16. If seven percent thought they could benefit from better literacy, this would give about 28,000 in the service area. If a third believe that they could benefit from additional education, then about 136,000 adults make-up the population in need of adult literacy education in the CWELL ARC community.

It is clear from the CWELL ARC findings that the extent of "need" for adult literacy education depends upon the method that is used to make the estimate. Further, it seems reasonable that people's self-perceptions of need are better indicators than estimates of test scores of whether or not they may volunteer for further education. For this reason, it would seem that efforts to inform the adult population about the various demands of home, community, and work for literacy and the development of self-assessment tools for use in the mass media could be useful in giving adults greater insight into their needs for adult literacy education.

How many adults participate in adult literacy education? The San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education enrolls in the neighborhood of 25,000 to 35,000 adults annually in adult literacy education, including English as a second or other language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE) basic reading and mathematics up to the ninth grade level, and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) leading to high school completion or the General Educational Development (GED) certificate (McDonald, Huie, Sticht, & Grimes, 1994, p. 24).

Far and away, the largest numbers of enrollments are in ESL (about 90 percent). Basic reading and mathematics education for adults below the high school level (ABE) makes-up

only about 3-4 percent of the enrollments, while high school completion makes-up the rest. If the data from the telephone survey of English-speakers can be trusted, there are many people who think they could benefit from basic reading and mathematics instruction who do not enroll in school, while the smaller percentage of non-English speaking adults enroll in large numbers.

The relatively large participation in English as a second language education among non-English speakers likely reflects differences in the perceived criticality of the skills to be learned among the English-speaking and non-English speaking populations of San Diego. It is obviously apparent to non-English speaking residents, particularly new immigrants, that they have difficulty speaking and understanding English.

Unlike weak literacy or mathematics skills among native English speakers, the inability to speak English is not only evident to oneself, it is evident to employers, teachers, physicians, and others, too. Thus, while native English speakers may not have a well founded comparative basis for judging that they could use stronger literacy skills, there is considerable basis for the non-English-speaking adults to perceive that it would be useful for them to enroll in adult education.

But there are large numbers of non-English speakers, too, who do not enroll in adult literacy education programs. Why don't more adults participate in adult literacy education? What can be done to stimulate greater participation in adult literacy education? These are the questions addressed in Chapter 3.

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28

Chapter 3

Overcoming Barriers to Participate in Adult Literacy Education

The reason I do not go to school because I am 18 years old and I have a son that's 7 months old. I can't pay someone to keep him. My mother is too sick to help me. I don't have money for transporation. If I had someone who could babysit my son at my house, and if I could get help with money for transporation. Then I can go to school without a care. (Q., GAIN/ABE)

My friend thinks that because he is old he doesn't have the capacity to learn. Since he didn't learn much as a child, there would be less probability for him to learn when he was older. Also, he doesn't have time to study." (N. , Beginning ESL)

Alex told me he cannot go to school. He said, 'Working is most important than school.' He tried to go to school two years ago but felt disappointed. His class was crowded, and the teacher did not ask him any questions or allow him to participate. He felt he was wasting his time. (R. G., English)

The foregoing are samples of comments from reports prepared by adult students who served as researchers in the CWELL Action Research Center's studies of participation in adult education. They illustrate the barriers that marginalized adults must overcome to bring themselves to participate in adult literacy education. As their words reveal, deciding to go to school to learn English as a second language (ESL), or basic reading and writing, or to get a high school diploma or GED as an adult is not an easy decision to make.

Adult Students Do Research On the Struggle to Learn in the ARC Community

Writing some 25 years ago, Sticht (1975, pp. 163,165) stated that, "A critical problem for job-related (and all other) ABE is the recruiting and retention of students (the "outreach" problem). (p.163). ...In this regard, it will probably be important to depend heavily on the unemployed themselves as indigenous recruiters and program operators...(p.165)."

Following-up on this recommendation, the CWELL ARC engaged adult students as indigenous members of the community in the study of the participation of adults in adult literacy education programs. One goal was to determine if adult students could serve as researchers into the educational challenges facing members of their community. A second goal was to obtain information that might be useful in helping the Continuing Education Center and other adult education providers reach a greater number of those in need.

To find out what kinds of problems adults must overcome to participate in adult education, the CWELL ARC sponsored a research and writing contest for adult students in the ARC continuing education centers. Students had to ask two friends who were not attending classes two questions, (1) "Why is it that many adults do not participate in education?" and (2) "What can be done to encourage adults to take classes?"

The adult student researchers wrote summaries of their interviews, and presented their own recommendations on how to improve student participation in school. This activity prompted the students to become "participatory researchers" and to become more involved

in studying issues that affect them directly and to find ways to address community problems and issues.

Fifty-three entries were received. ESL students submitted over half of the writing entries (27), followed by ABE students (19), Computer Literacy (5), and one student each from Bookkeeping and College Sociology. The results of the adults' research projects yielded interesting findings regarding the reasons adults do not participate in education and what can be done to encourage adults to take classes.

"Why Is It That Many Adults Do Not Participate In Education?"

Many barriers were found that make it difficult for adults in the ARC community to pursue education. These barriers are summarized in Table 3.1 categorized according to a scheme proposed by Cross (1981) in her studies of participation in adult education. She identified three major categories of barriers. *Situational* barriers include baby-sitting problems, work schedules, transportation problems and so on. *Dispositional* barriers stem from the psychological, personality, and attitudinal make-up of the student, and their beliefs about their abilities to learn. *Institutional* barriers involve the instruction, policies, practices and requirements of programs.

The findings of the adults who were members of the CWELL ARC community are similar to those in research studies by university-based researchers (Beder, 1991, pp. 67-98). This is important be-

Table 3.1. Reasons for why adults do not attend adult literacy education and numbers of adult student researchers citing a given reason.

Reason for not attending adult school	Number citing
Situational	
Too busy with work/family	29
No child care/baby-sitter	12
Work two jobs to support family	09
No money for transportation	04
Don't need school to work	04
	58
Dispositional	
Too old to learn, bad memory	16
Lack of self-esteem/shyness	10
No motivation, lack of interest	10
Lack of family/peer support	06
Prefer to watch TV & party	03
	45
Institutional	
School not relevant for needs	08
Frustrated/discouraged about school environment	06
Lack information about school	05
	19

cause, as mentioned earlier, one of the goals of the CWELL ARC was to determine whether adult literacy students, as indigenous members of the community, could serve as valuable resources for the improvement of the adult literacy education delivery system. The results of the participation study indicate that adult students can, indeed, serve as active participants in the conduct of research needed to learn more about their community, its members, and their perceived needs for educational programs and situational support.

Voices From the Community-Part 1:
Why Adults Do Not Participate in Adult Literacy Education

The quantitative data of Table 3.1 provide a summary of the findings of the adult student researchers. But as is typical with statistical data, they lose the qualitative context that provides a basis for a deeper understanding of how adults feel about participating in adult literacy education. To recapture some of the contextual qualities of the research, this section provides samples of the adult students findings stated in their own voices. The samples are grouped roughly by the three categories of situational, dispositional and institutional

barriers based on our judgment of the major theme of the comments, but there is clearly some overlap of categories within the various comments.

Situational Barriers. One of the common explanations given by adult education teachers for the lack of consistent attendance in adult education programs is that "adults in these programs have chaotic lives." Some of the adult student researcher's findings support this notion. Many students talked about how busy these adults are, how tired they are after work, and how many obstacles there are to attendance. [Editors Note: These are unedited, uncorrected student writings.]

> "Many adults don't really have time to study because they are the only ones supporting their family. Sometimes they are too tired after work. They have economic or family problems." (T., Beginning ESL)

> "Most people can't participate in school because of financial and time limiations, and having to work one or more jobs. Other obstacles included children, babysitters, and transportation to and from school. An imporant way to encourage adults is to making it affordable." (S., GAIN/ABE)

> "Some single adults [do not go to school] because of economic problems in America so they go to work to pay for their medical and their car insurance. The problems are they go to work, sometimes they have to work overtime until seven o'clock. They just arrive home. So they don't want to take the next two hours class in school. Because they are already frustrated by working all day." (T., Advanced ESL)

Even in the best of situations, many adults in San Diego need to work two jobs in order to support themselves and their families. In the ARC community, it must be assumed that this is also the case. In addition, there is some expectation that school will cost money, that advancing through education will be more costly than can be afforded.

> "Glenda dreams of someday pursuing a career in a legal area. She had some formal training in this area, but had to quit before completing her studies. After having resolved some personal issues, she feels she is not capable of returning to a classroom curriculu. As of the date of this interview, she is not enrolled in any courses. She fears the cost of education is too high. She cannot afford it. She states 'I imagine that it will cost $2,600 or so.'" (L., ABE/Independent Study)

In addition to having to work to support the family, there is also the challenge of finding transportation and child care in order to go to school. Again, this is a common thread among working adults in San Diego, and those with high paying jobs and the money to take care of these issues still find this a tremendous challenge and balancing act, one that can change at the last minute and require an adjustment of plans. For those in the ARC community, these challenges sometimes feel insurmountable.

> "The reason I do not go to school because I am 18 years old and I have a son that's 7 months old. I can't pay someone to keep him. My mother is too sick to help me. I don't have money for transporation. If I had someone who could babysit my son at my house, and if I could get help with money for transporation. Then I can go to school without a care." (Q., GAIN/ABE)

> "I can't go to school because I don't have trustworthy sitter to take care of my newborn baby." (G., GAIN/ABE)

Dispositional Barriers. Some students find that adult education is not going to help them. Maybe they didn't like school as children and they have that memory of it. Maybe they can't imagine a school situation that they would like and find meaningful. Maybe they have

31

tried an adult class and found that it wasn't helpful. Maybe they don't have a clear enough goal of what they want to do with more education so nothing seems to meet their needs. For whatever of these reasons, some students say they don't find education relevant.

> "Tom says, 'I am scared to go to school and spend all that time and effort and then it will not mean anything. I do not need unpractical knowledge.' He concedes that education is good, but he doesn't have the luxury of obtaining knowledge for just the sake of learning. Tom would like to see his efforts translate into an ocupation that is in demand in today's job market. He would like to turn that into a genuine paycheck." (L., ABE/Independent Study)

Or perhaps some students think that they don't really need to go to school in order to work which is their first need.

> "Ngo comes from a traditional Oriental family where women don't need much education. She finisehd her basic education fifty years ago. Since moving to America with her family to escape the war, she hadn't attended school because she claims it's unnecessary. She's busy working at home. She has no difficulty communicating with neighbors who come from the same culture. She also believes it's a shame to return to school at her age to learn and compete against youths." (M., VESL/Office Skills)

> "Many people who come from other countries are selling drugs and getting money easy, so they are not intersted in improving their language to get ahead because they made good money with little effort." (B., Computer Literacy)

Some adults have an attitude about themselves and learning that may preclude going back to school. They feel they are too old to learn anyway and it will be of no use.

> "Most adults mistakenly assume that the benefits of education are limited to certain age groups, or ultimately to our life existence. ... We should remember that 'late is better than never.' In many ways, we can use our educational knowledge to improve our job, to write for newspapers, or write books, or teach, guide our children, grand-children, or to translate foreign books into our own language, or lecture to the public in order to expand our experience. . . I have started a new life as a refugee in the u.S.A. by learning English as a kindergarten pupil, by laboring as a docile guy, although I am now fifty-six years old! I am called 'Young Old Man'! " (D.H.T, Nursing Assistant/Accounting)

> "Adults think that to participate in education is something outdated for them. They say that education is something for young people and that they are disposed to being embarrassed in school. Besides, they think that being older than forty they wouldn't be able to express their ideas. They think that the young people would make fun of what they say. This is why many adults don't go to the trouble to go to school." (R. M., Beginning ESL)

> "We adults think that we've learned enough and it isn't necessary to continue learning. Also we think that there isn't any time to study because of the obligations that we have and we are satisfied with working. Some people think that they are already too old to go to school. Also they say that this opportunity to study would've been better when they were young." (T., Beginning ESL)

> "When being asked why not participate in education, most adults answer that they are too old to learn, and they may not have a good job after finishing a course anyway. 'You cannot teach an old dog new tricks' seems to be a good reason for them not to take classes." (N., VESL/Office Skills)

32

For many adults, it is a matter of feelings about themselves. They lack the confidence to feel they deserve an education and can achieve what they desire.

> "Because they get embarrassed in class and they need confidence in themselves to understand the teachers. They try to form sentences in English and they say them all backwards." (L., Beginning ESL)

> "M told me that she has no time to go to school. M told me that does not retain any knowledge. M told me that she does not have a good memory for details. She said it is very hard to learn a second language. . . . M believes that she will be wasting her time to learn English because she feels that she doesn not hve what it takes to learn. m told me that her husband will not let her study English or just to go to school and learn." (M., Orientation ESL)

> "My friend says that there are adults how never went to school as kids of if they went, they were not good students. They are scared of rejection. [They feel] insecure." (L., Beginning ESL)

> "I believe that some of the more important motives are lack of personal initiative, since the majority of adults have children and no time. Also, for lack of security to learn something new and better, and fear about what others will ay and how they will be treated." (L., Beginning ESL)

Another attitudinal reason given concerns motivation. It takes quite a bit of perseverance and motivation to decide to come to school and to stick with it. Many adults do not have this motivation.

> "The most acceptable explanation is the lack of self-motivation. If the person isn't interested in learning, he isn't going to do it. They don't consider going to school in their free time because they believe that it is better to spend that time in other activities which they consider more important." (I., Beginning ESL)

For second language individuals, learning English is so difficult that some students feel they cannot do it.

> "Another reason why people do not participate in educatio n is the language barrier. That's an obstruction for communication. Many uneducated or illiterate people feel ashamed at not being able to write or to read." (A., English)

Students also mentioned that they needed the support of their family and friends and sometimes they did not receive it.

> "The other reason is the environment around them such as friends and temptations. They have friends who have lack of education that persuade them to go out for fun instead of going to school." (S., Advanced Low ESL)

> "People are afraid that they would be looked down on or laughed at." (V., Accounting)

Finally, some students feel that they don't need English to do their daily chores so why bother?

> "Another reason is they don't use English, because many people in supermarkets, swapmets, etc. speak their languages. So they don't need to try and they get lazy." (B., Computer Literacy)

Institutional Barriers. Some adults find that the school environment is not welcoming or feel it is not convenient in terms of schedule. It is often said by adult educators in San

Diego that the students needs are met in as many ways as possible, but some adult students do not perceive this attention to their needs.

"A friend told me that he had bad feeling of school, he hated school system because nobody taught him what he wanted to know." (M., American Pronunciation)

Alex told me he cannot go to school. He said, 'Working is most important than school.' He tried to go to school two years ago but felt disappointed. His class was crowded, and the teacher did not ask him any questions or allow him to participate. He felt he was wasting his time. (R. G., English)

"Because sometimes I feel very tired and in the classroom I get sleepy and I don't get the lessons. Other times [I don't go] because the classmates only joke around and flirt with some lady that is in the class. They interrupt too much and don't let one concentrate. Therefore, one becomes discouraged and stops coming." (I., Beginning ESL)

Sometimes newly arrived immigrants or even adults who have been in the city a long time do not have sufficient information about the adult school offerings. Many do not realize that there is free education available to them at the San Diego Community College District.

"I think that many adults don't participate in education because of the lack of time and also for the lack of orientation. Many times they don't reliaze that being in another country with a different language [how] great a necessity it is to learn at least the basics so as not to depend all the time on their children." (Y. L., Beginning ESL)

Increasing Participation in Adult Literacy Education

In addition to finding out why adults in their community do not participate in adult literacy education, the adult student researchers were also asked to provide suggestions for recommendations about what might be done to get more adults to pursue education.

Table 3.2 summarizes recommendations made by the adult student researchers to increase the participation of their fellow community members in adult education. Interestingly, whereas the largest category of barriers to participation that the student researchers found were situational in nature, the largest category of recommendations to increase participation deals with dispositional factors and the second largest category is concerned with institutional factors.

Table 3.2. Types and numbers of citations of activities that adult student researchers offered to increase participation in adult literacy education.

Activity	Number
Situational	
Give money for transportation, books, etc.	07
Offer child care	07
Get businesses involved with education	04
	18
Dispositional	
Encourage support by families, peers	53
Testimonials by former students	06
	59
Institutional	
Make schools more suitable for adult needs	10
Have good teachers who care	07
Provide counseling and self-esteem classes	06
More recruitment, orientation; use media	04
	27

Voices From the Community -Part 2:
How to Increase the Participation of Adults in Adult Literacy Education

To recapture some of the contextual qualities of the research on recommendations to increase the participation of adults in adult literacy education, this section provides samples of the adult students' recommendations stated in their own voices and grouped roughly by the three categories of situational, dispositional and institutional barriers to education.

Situational Recommendations for Change. Adult student researchers stated that providing services such as help with transportation and child care would be key to adult participation.

> "My opinion is that if they had a home for teenage mothers and had babysitting in the home, it would be better for those mothesr with the additional help of a bus pass. This would help take a lot of stress off of the teenage mothers." (Q., GAIN/ABE)

> "My recommendations are that the GAIN program have more school locations to make it easier for parents, provide day care on the school campus, consider that students would enjoy coming to school if the cafeteria prices weren't so high, and of course, if the cafeteria had better food." (G., GAIN/ABE)

> "Also, many adults have children that keep them from enrolling in the schools. Consequently, child care is needed on the same campus, so they can attend classes close to their children. I think having programs like GAIN that pays for child care or schools with extended day care can also encourage people with children to go back to school. Perhaps a sliding scaled can be used for tuition in adult school." (A., English)

Other students mentioned that the business world should recognize the importance of further education and reward those adults who achieve it.

> "Other things that can encourage adults to take classes are incentive. For example, employers can encourage advancement of their employees by paying part of their educaion. Job advancement could be promised to the student." (A., English)

> "To encourage more adults to take classes I think that more schools should have daycare. Also, I think that it could be maybe a 'work-study'. Meaning that jobs should allow their employees to go to school, perhaps during working hours. So long as the class will help them to improve not only themselves but also their performance on the job." (T., ABE/Independent Study)

Dispositional Recommendations to Increase Participation. In general, the comments classified as dispositional by us tend to reflect the great need for encouragement, motivation and emotional support that marginalized adults need to make a decision to participate in adult literacy education. This was most clearly indicated by the fact that all of the adults said that the emotional and moral support provided by family and friends was a very important factor in encouraging adults to participate in education.

> "In order to motivate adults to come to school, everyone should help, the school, friends, and principally the family. Many times the family, especially the husband, does not agree. Many times the children think that adults are too old to go to school They think that shchool is only for teenagers. These are the reasons why adults are not motivated to go to school." (R. M., Beginning ESL)

Adults thought that students should also be assured that they are never to old to learn and that getting more education will be empowering.

> "I told Mrs. M that age is not a good excuse not to come to school or get an education. I told her that in my English class at Cesar Chavez Center that there are many older adults that are very happy studying and they learn and understand everything our teacher teaches. Sometimes the adults understand more than the younger adults. I told her that she should come to school and see for herself that the older adults learn just as much as younger adults. I told her that I am very proud of the older students that are in our class because they set an example for the younger adutls. I told her that when I get older I am going to continue to come to school." (M., Orientation ESL)

It was also suggested that it would be inspiring to have successful former students return to motivate present students.

> "Sending biographies to their homes (Latino adults who do not go to school) of adult Latin American people who has trimphed through the education. Also showing to them that the education to help to exalt our self-esteem, so they may feel encouraged to do something about it. . . That those who are already attending to school, could encourage their neighbors, relatives, and friends to do so" (A. R., Advanced Low ESL)

The need for adults to develop more positive attitudes toward education and the school system was noted by some adult researchers.

> "By the way, we need to change our attitude toward school system to be more appreciation in lifelong learning process. When people think that learning is important, they will come to school to study what they like to know. . . . If a person doesn't want to study anything at all, that is too bad because he would not even know what is missing in his life. We, human, are studious being." (M., American Pronunciation)

Institutional Recommendations to Increase Participation. Some students stated that school could be more suitable for adult needs.

> "One thing is the importance of having small classes. The students can participate, and the teachers can listen. In a crowded class, many studfents can be lost in the shuffle, forgetting the interest they had when they first came to class to find their future. . . . Motivation can be encouraged with new teaching techniques and materials. Using different ways in preparing the students will catch their attention. Then students will not abandone school." (R. G., English)

Many students stressed the importance of good teaching.

> "I feel having out-going instructors and aides who are willing to assist at all times on assignments is very important. It has been my experience and that of my friends that school needs to be a lot easier to enroll in, centrally located, and not have as many entrance requirements." (S., GAIN/ABE)

> "One of the biggest problems is the teacher who has favorites in a classroom. It is depressing to hear teachers brag about some students, spending more time with them. All students deserve the same attention." (R. G., English)

School orientation could be done better, some students mentioned. They had ideas for doing more effective outreach.

> "We can make them come to school by holding classes explaining how the classes are and how important it is to go to school. [We can reassure them] that they are not going to waste their time but on the contrary, they are going to have a better life." (T., Beginning ESL)

> "Also teaching their children in the schools to encourage the adults to come to school would help." (B., Computer Literacy)

> "Meeting at the elementary schools where the parents can attend and listen about all kinds of possibilities of getting better education fort the benefit of the whole family and the community." (A. R., Advanced Low ESL)

It was also mentioned by some students that there should be special assistance to help adults return to school. Some of this would be in the form of counseling services, classes

to help students with self-esteem, and community help for older adults.   Also mentioned were the use of incentives.

"The first thing that can be done to motivate adults is this: young people should give all the help necessary. [The young people] are already in classes but should respect their [older student's] opinions and try to help however they can instead of making fun or laughing. They should help them because what they do is make others feel bad by amking fun of their problems with learning how to pronounce words and how to write." (R. M., Beginning ESL)

"I think we need to encourage them offering child care for those who demonstrate interest. Also any kind of incentives like store certificates, money, etc. For their attendance and/or good grades regardless of the kind of class that they are taking." (M., ESL)

"A motivation would be when you finished the class, the school would offer a reward like a job or classes in job improvement skills." (L., Beginning ESL)

"People need incentives to do the things that one can manage psychologically, convincing them of the benefits that education brings, the satisfaction of understanding things in a better way, the pride of being able to help your children in their schoolwork and the ability to open a way to progress for themselves. Very important also is to have a teacher that is intersted in coordinating a plan of action so that the time [in class] is efficiently used and that the students really learn." (I., Beginning ESL)

Finally, the use of the media in presenting a positive picture of the rewards of adult education was suggested.

"Advertising, publicity. The more people know about a subject the easier it is to get them to do something about it. For example, if you tell everyone they can attend free classes, that might give them the push towards improving themselves by increasing their job skills, assisting in changing job fields, or learning a second language." (V., Accounting)

"Basic information about practical courses offered and the low cost of them needs to readch the peole that are discouraged from taking the initiative into making the contact themselves. Some ideas that come to my mind are: bold, simply stated advertisements in newspapers, mailings, and handouts at EDD and Social Services offices. Some other ways to inform the public are to include info brochures inDMV car registration notices and driver's license mailbacks. . . It seems to me that every opportunity is ther just for the asking. All that needs to be done to complete the picture is to let everybody know what is waiting for them." (L., ABE/Independent Study)

"I think the government needs to take care of the population doing flyers, ads, TV commericals, radio, etc. to motivate people to start to encourage them in education to achieve higher goals and improve their lives." (B., Computer Literacy)

"In my opinion, many adults don't participate in educaion because they don't think that education is a life time process. Many of us couldn't wait to finish high school, some dropped out from school. . . We can solve this problem by emphasizing the importance of education through medias. We should have some education programs on television. University on air might be a good idea as well, student can study at home by his own time with the TV program, books, and education center." (M., American Pronunciation)

37

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter we have considered two major questions regarding the participation of San Diego's adults in adult literacy education: why don't more participate and what might be done to encourage more adults to participate.

Why don't more adults participate in adult literacy education? In exploring this question, the CWELL ARC was interested in whether adult students, as indigenous members of the community, could perform the role of researcher. The results showed that they could, and their findings paralleled those of university-based researchers. This is a significant finding because it suggests a new, proactive role for adult students in institutional settings like the community college district in determining the educational needs of their community.

The reasons that adults gave for not attending were categorized into situational, dispositional and institutional reasons. Most of the reasons were *situational*, meaning that factors such as work schedules, lack of money, transportation problems, and child care were barriers to attending school that adults could not surmount.

Dispositional reasons were the second largest set of reasons for not participating in adult education. These reasons included the perception that higher skills were not needed to get by, there were negative feelings about school, some thought they were too old to learn, and some were simply not motivated to go back to school.

Finally, *institutional* reasons for not attending were the fewest in number, and centered around perceptions that the school offerings were not relevant to adults' lives, some were frustrated by the large classes, lack of texts and materials, and behaviors of other students in class, and others lacked knowledge about the availability of free education.

What might be done to get more adults to participate in adult literacy education? Once again adult students proved that they could assume the role of researcher to come-up with recommendations for ways to overcome people's barriers, real or imagined, to participation in adult literacy education.

When categorizing the adult students' recommendations, it turned that the biggest single recommendation was of a *dispositional* nature. It concerned the importance of family and peers offering strong encouragement and moral support for those who need or want to go to adult literacy education. This is important because it emphasizes the role of *social capital* in encouraging adults to participate in adult education (Sticht & McDonald, 1989). It suggests that churches, social clubs, businesses and individuals should receive guidance in how they can encourage and support the adults they are in contact with to participate in lifelong learning.

Of secondary importance were recommendations to improve aspects of the *institutional* setting, including smaller classes, more TV or other distance learning, better teachers, more counseling, and better orientation of community members about the availability of programs.

The set of recommendations that were mentioned least often, but are apparently very critical barriers to be overcome, if the data on why adults fail to participate are reliable, were the *situational* barriers: need for child care, transportation and so forth. Interestingly, the national longitudinal study of adult literacy education in the United States reported that programs that provided these types of support services tended to retain students longer (Young, et. al, 1995). This issue, retention, is the subject of Chapter 4.

38

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Chapter 4

Getting to Class and Completing
a Semester is Tough

> "Today is last day in a school, the frist time when I learn English at shool. I was feeling intrested with the way instructor teach me! I was feeling to improve English in the short time. The teacher helps the student to learn vocabulary very funy such as vocabulary game; to reading Daily new made students knowledge of culture in USA. I', really sorry! can't continue to study English your class, because I have to work the other job which start 7:15 until 3:30. If I have free time I'll come back to learn." S., Advanced ESL

Once adults overcome the many barriers that have prevented them from participating in adult education, and have actually enrolled in a course of study, the daily struggle to meet family and work demands often have a depressing effect on the actual amount of education they can participate in before they must meet other pressing needs.

In this chapter we focus on studies of the largest group of adults who enroll in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, those adults undertaking the study of English as a second or other language (ESL). We consider the problems that these adult students encounter in going to school in terms of three issues: persistence, attendance, and turbulence.

Persistence refers to how many students complete a course of study. *Attendance* is concerned with how often students attend classes, indirectly indexed here in terms of the numbers of instructional hours in a semester students complete. *Turbulence* refers to the numbers of adult students who are added to and dropped from a class during a semester.

Following our study of persistence, attendance, and turbulence, we provide some insights into the problems that adult students encounter in going to school, and some of the types of program factors that may encourage greater persistence and attendance among students.

Persistence

Persistence is examined in two different ways. First, we consider how many adults who start to attend classes in the typical 18 week semester of the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, actually stay enrolled for all 18 weeks and complete the semester.

Figure 4.1. Percentage of ESL students who started in week 1 who completed week 18.
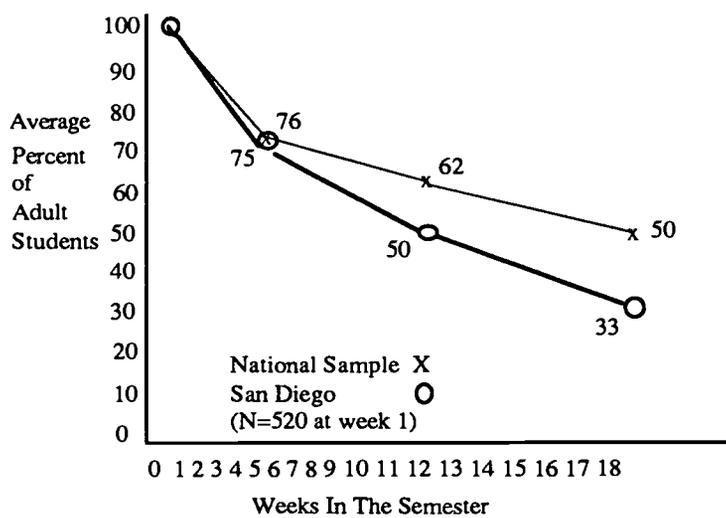
Figure 4.1 shows average persistence rates for adult ESL students in 12 classes, ranging from beginning to advanced ESL in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education for the fall 1995 and spring 1996 semesters.

Persistence data are also available for California's federally funded adult ESL education programs in 1995-96. The data show that after 80 to 100 hours of instruction, which would be between five to eight weeks in the San Diego system, 61 percent of ESL students were either in the same class or had transferred to another class (CASAS, 1996, p. xi).

The San Diego data for weeks 5-8 are in line with these state-wide data on persistence, though they do not include students transferred to another class.

Data are presented below to suggest that perhaps as many as 25 percent of the adult students who dropped out of the ESL classes in San Diego may have transferred to another class. If that is the case, then the eighteen week persistence rate in school, though not in a given class, might be as high as 57 percent.

> **Perhaps 25 percent of adults who dropped ESL classes in San Diego transferred to and completed another class. If so, the 18 week persistence rate in school might be as high as 57 percent.**

Also presented in Figure 4.1 are data for persistence in ESL programs from the national study of federally funded adult literacy education programs.

While the data from the San Diego sample are not necessarily representative of all ESL classes in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, they are consistent with the national data in showing that large percentages, perhaps over half, of adults who start classes do not persist through the end of the semester.

Progression to Higher Levels of Study. A second way to look at persistence is to consider how many ESL students enroll in beginning, middle and advanced courses of study. Here, interest is in determining whether the adults who start at the beginning levels of an educational sequence persist and progress through the sequence.

In April 1994, the CWELL Action Research Center published the results of an extensive study of instructional programs in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education (SDCCD/CE) (McDonald, et. al, 1994). Among other things, the report presented data on the numbers of adults in San Diego who enrolled in English as a second language (ESL) programs during July 1992 to June 1993.
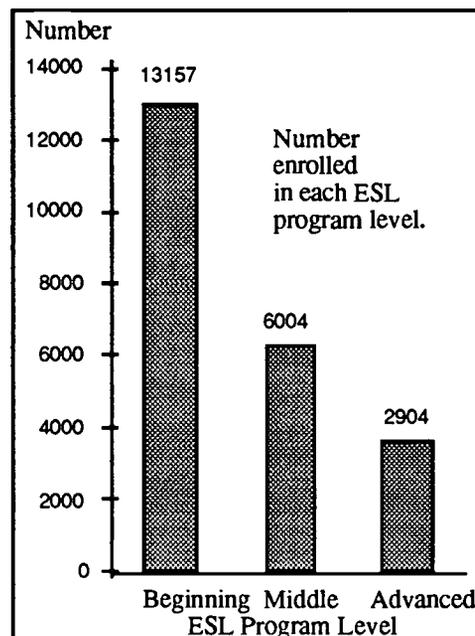
As Figure 4.2 shows, over 13,000 adults enrolled in Beginning ESL. But less than half that number enrolled in Intermediate ESL, and fewer than 3,000 enrolled in Advanced ESL. That is less than one fourth of the number of students who enrolled in Beginning ESL.

Figure 4.2. Numbers of adult English as a second language (ESL) students enrolled in three levels of ESL, fall 1995.

31

This raises the important question of where does everybody go? Why aren't the thousands who start out at the Beginning level of ESL continuing to enroll at the Intermediate and Advanced levels? While we do not know the answers to this question, it seems likely that the need to meet the demands of daily living encourage adults to leave school with the barest minimum of skills needed to get a job or negotiate the requirements for English that permit them to get by.

Attendance: Getting to Class Each Day Is Not Easy!

The studies of persistence rates for the 12 ESL classes reported above show the percentage of students who were enrolled during the semester after eighteen weeks. But many times those students who are enrolled do not actually attend class very much. These daily fluctuations in attendance affect the numbers of hours of instruction that students actually receive.

Because of the open entry/open exit policy in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, some students enter after the first week and many enter after the 6th, 10th, 12th and even 15th weeks. For four of the 12 classes studied earlier, data were obtained on the total numbers of hours of instruction that students attended from the day they enrolled in the class until the end of the semester. For example, a student who joined in the fifth week of the semester had 195 hours of ESL instruction available in the remainder of the semester. We then determined the percentage of hours out of the 195 possible hours of instruction the student actually completed. As indicated in Figure 4.3, some 50 percent of students attended 30 percent or fewer of the hours available in the semester after the date of their enrollment.

The data in Figure 4.3 are for all students who enrolled during the semester, including all adds and drops. If one looks only at the hours of instruction completed by those ESL students who persisted throughout the 18 week semester, they completed an average of around 70 percent (189) of the available hours of instruction. This indicates that those persons who stay with the class also attend the most often.

Figure 4.3. Hours of instruction completed by adult students in four ESL classes.

Figure Reads: 21 percent of adult ESL students completed 10 percent or fewer of the hours available to them after enrolling in the ESL class; 10 percent of students completed 11 to 20 percent of the hours available to them; 20 percent completed 21-30 percent of the hours, and about 6 percent completed 91 to 100 percent of the hours available to them after enrolling in the ESL class.
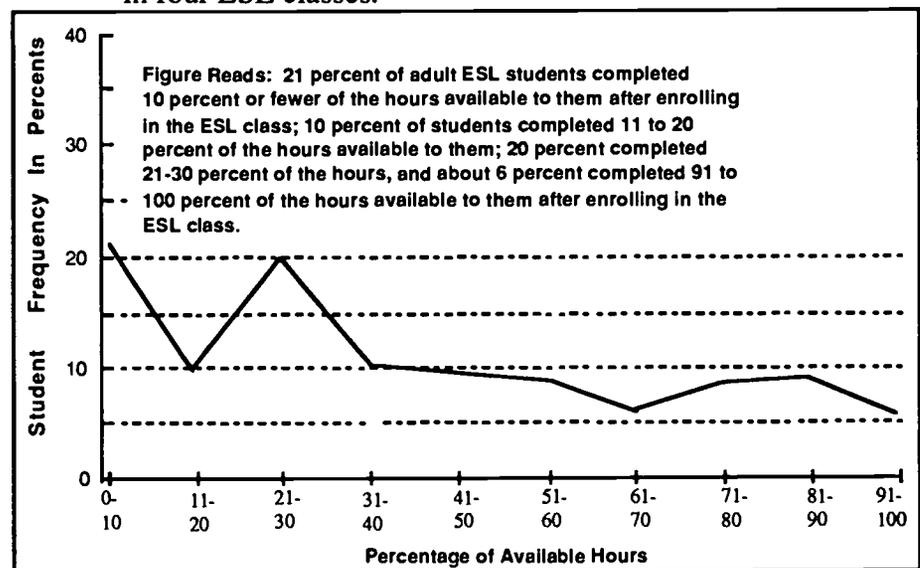
Voices From the Community-Part 3:
Journal Writings Reveal the Struggle to Go to School

In several ESL classes, the CWELL ARC engaged teachers as researchers in the process of studying journal writing as an instructional technique. During the course of these activities, some students in an advanced ESL class were asked to write what they liked most about

32

class that week. Here is a sample of writings by ESL students that reveal something of the difficulties they encounter in getting to school on a daily basis.

"What I like about the class this week well I mist all this week. because I had to do something but that was only one or two days and the other days becouse I felt lazy I didn't wanted to walk, I just wanted to stay home and one day becouse of tha rain. But now I relace that is not good to stay at home doing nothing because today I come here and I see the vocabulary but I don understend all of them so now I'm insicure to take the test and the dication so I don't think I'm going to fail the quiz I'm sure I'm goint to fail. but now I'll try to come her every day., I like the fridays becouse we do lots of thing that are good to improve our self, also I love to listen the songs and try to write the most I undertend that's my favorite thing so I promes I won't mist one friday even if I don't come in the whole week. I'll have to come in the whole week. I'll have to stop I sorry. Toll next time. C. E., Advanced ESL

"Eventhoug I have come only two days to the school this week. I could say that what I liked the most was that I saw my friend again. I have been with personal matters during a period of time. I was planning to come back to school again as soon as I could. It is nice to be hare again. It is good to see friend, teachers and students, that I han't seen for a while. I like school where I can find more friends with the same likes that I have." J., Advanced ESL

"I spend time that I study English at this free school. I used to go to ALI of SDSU, and I paid huge money to them, though. This school is as well as ALI, I think. I really agree with your way teaching English, especially I like what you explain hadline of newspaper at latest. I watch on TV sometime, but I can't get to the point on news. So it's very helpful for me to undrestand news. And also I had known new difficult words, since I have become coming here. But I'm aftaid, I can't come to shool for meanwhile. For my I-20 has already expired, I neet new I-20. I'm going to go the new language school at down town to get I-20. I would like to come back this class, after that. I intend to study for myself." H. S., Advanced ESL

Turbulent Lives May Lead to Turbulent Classrooms

Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines "turbulence" as "wild commotion." Personnel researchers have studied the effects of turbulence, or "wild commotion" on teams of personnel who work together to accomplish their training and job duties. In these studies, "turbulence" was measured in terms of the numbers of people who were added to and dropped from the team in a given period

The personnel researchers considered that for an instructional system to work, some degree of personnel stability is necessary. A team leader, like a teacher, needs sufficient time to learn the strengths and weaknesses of personnel, time to create a group identity and cohesion, and of course time to provide instruction. The researchers noted that constant turbulence, adding and dropping people from teams, takes a toll on the ability of the team leader to train and the team members to learn to proficiency standards (Bialek, 1977).

CWELL ARC Study of Turbulence in the ESL Classroom. During the January-June 1995 period researchers in the CWELL Action Research Center studied turbulence in the four ESL classrooms cited in Figure 4.3. The ESL programs ranged from low to advanced in English skill levels and were made-up of one Vocationally oriented (VESL) and three conventional (CESL) ESL classes. Weekly data were collected on how many adds and drops there were during each of the 19 weeks in the semester (though there are usually only 18 weeks in a semester, the spring 1995 semester started in the middle of a week and so an extra week was added).

43

The data show a lot of movement into and out of each of the four classes. As an example, in a large, advanced (level 6), conventional ESL class (CESL) there were 40 students enrolled in the first week. In the second week, six new students were added and one student was dropped. In week three, three students were dropped. In week four two students were added and one was dropped. In week five three students were added. In week six four new students were added and three were dropped.

Altogether, in weeks two through six of this advanced ESL class, fifteen students were added and eight were dropped. During weeks seven to twelve, seven students were added and nine were dropped. During weeks thirteen through nineteen, sixteen students were added and eighteen were dropped.

In this one class, then, during the semester 38 new students were added to the original week one total of 40, and 35 were dropped from the class. While the numbers were not the same, the outcome was essentially the same in the three other classes-- new students entered and had to catch up, and old students disappeared from sight without a trace. What is being observed here are the visible signs of turbulence in the classroom.

Data on the numbers of adds and drops in the four ESL classes during the semester were obtained to calculate turbulence rates. The total additions to and drops from the class during the semester were added together and divided by the week-one total enrollment. For the four classes combined, the total first week enrollment was 125.

Figure 4.4 shows turbulence rates for each of the four ESL classes. The figure shows that there was a rather large change in the student population throughout the semester. For example, the beginning level conventional ESL class, CESL 1-2, had an initial enrollment during the first week of the class of 28 students. Then, during the semester, 39 new students were added while 41 students were dropped. Thus, a total of 80 students was added and dropped. When 80 is divided by 28, the first week's enrollment, the result is 2.86; a turbulence rate of almost 300 percent.

Figure 4.4. Turbulence rates for four ESL classes.

CESL=conventional ESL class   VESL=vocational ESL class
Skills levels: 1-2 (low); 4 (intermediate), 6 (high)

Why do students drop out of ESL classes?

In order to find out more about why adults drop out of classes, CWELL staff made a phone call to students who did not attend classes for a week. They were asked their reasons for not attending. When they dropped the course, they were asked why they were not planning to come back. Out of the 280 students who dropped out, we were able to reach 94 students, just over a third of the drop outs, who gave their reasons for leaving the ESL instruction.

These reasons were categorized according to the scheme proposed by Cross (1981) in her studies of reasons of barriers to adult education. She identified three major categories of reasons: dispositional, situational and institutional. A *dispositional* reason is one that stems from the behavior, attitudes, and abilities of the student; a *situational* reason involves baby-sitting problems, changes in work schedules, moving, and so on. An *institutional* reason involved the instruction itself, or the policies and requirements of the school. Using this scheme, the reasons for dropping for the 94 students are given in Table 4.1.

According to this limited survey, the major reason that students dropped out was due to their job situations. They either got new jobs or had changes to work schedules.

Table 4.1. Reasons why adults drop out of ESL classes.

Reasons	Number	Percent
Dispositional		
•Personal	09	09.6
Situational		
•Moved	12	12.8
•Job	37	39.4
•Medical	08	08.5
Institutional		
•Transferred to another class	25	26.5
•Curriculum Related	03	03.2

The second major reason for leaving one class was to enroll in another. Though we do not know why students transferred from one class to another, conversations with teachers and students from time to time revealed that there are several types of activities that could lead to transfers among classes. Students sometimes move from one class to another because they have a friend or relative in another class, so they decide to go to class with their friend. Or they may change classes to better fit their work schedules or their children's school schedules, or because their teachers suggest that they should be in another class.

The Importance of "Focus" to Persistence in ESL

As we considered the reasons why adults frequently enroll in a course of study and then quickly drop out, we wondered whether or not this might have something to do with both an adult's interest in some specific goal and the institution's ability to focus courses on specific goals that an adult might have.

We developed this concept of "focus" by considering that both adults and institutions can sometimes have very global, generalized purposes for education. In this case, adults may wish to attend educational programs just to improve themselves or to further their general education. In response, institutions may develop general education programs that have no particular focus but aim to provide adults an opportunity to develop their cognitive skills and broaden their knowledge.

On the other hand, there are some adults who have very specific goals in mind, such as getting a job in the electronics field. In this case, their focus is on getting a particular kind of job. If the institution can then offer them education and/or job training that they see is directly related to their goal, it is possible that they may be more motivated to complete such a focused course than a course in "general development."

To explore this concept of "focus" on the part of adults and education programs, the CWELL ARC took a two-pronged approach. First, we looked at the reasons that adult students gave for why they were attending English as a second language education and the types of classes they were attending. We wanted to see, for instance, whether adults who were attending Vocational ESL courses, in which the focus of language instruction is upon the vocabulary and concepts of a given job field, are more likely to give job-related reasons for attending ESL instruction than are adults enrolled in other types of courses. This indicates the degree to which adults are focused on a particular goal.

In a second approach to trying to better understand the role of focus in persistence, we looked at the course completion rates of adult students in three vocationally oriented ESL programs that differed with regard to the specificity of the vocational training component of the ESL instruction. Here we were interested in whether the degree to which a vocationally-oriented ESL course focused on actual job training and job placement increased the likelihood that adults would complete the program.

Reasons for Attending English as a Second Language Courses. To gain some insight as to why adults taking ESL want to go to school, and to determine their degree of focus on a particular goal, interviews were held with adult students in three different types of ESL program: VESL = Vocational English as a Second Language, in which the teaching of English was accomplished using job-related terminology and tasks; CESL= Communicative English as a Second Language, in which general conversational and school-related English usage was emphasized, and FESL = Family English as a Second Language, in which the emphasis was upon how parents could help with their children's learning and schooling.

As a part of the interviews with adult students, they were asked to complete a survey that included the question, "Why are you taking this course? (circle one or more)." Then seven alternatives were presented: (1) to get a job, (2) to keep a job, (3) to get into vocational training, (4) to go to college, (5) for self-improvement, (6) to help my children, and (7) for citizenship.

In analyzing the responses, the seven alternatives were combined into four categories: Vocational Training/Job (items 1,2,3); College/Self-Improvement (items 4,5); To Help Children (item 6); and Citizenship (item 7). Altogether, data were obtained from three VESL (n=121), four CESL (n=146) and two FESL (n=37) programs with a combined total of 304 adult students who completed the surveys.

Figure 4.5 shows that in general, adults' stated reasons for wanting to attend ESL showed a degree of focus and paralleled the type of ESL program in which they were enrolled. Some 58 percent of those adults enrolled in the VESL programs indicated that they were taking the courses to get into job training or into a job. The figure shows that the 121 adults enrolled in VESL courses made 224 responses to the seven alternatives listed above. When 224 is divided by 121, the result is 1.85. This means that on the average, the adults in the VESL courses were quite focused. They marked fewer than two of the alternatives.

Figure 4.5. Percentage of adults in ESL classes indicating their reasons for taking ESL classes.

	Number Of		
	Adults	Responses	Rate
VESL	121	224	1.85
CESL	146	358	2.45
FESL	37	83	2.24
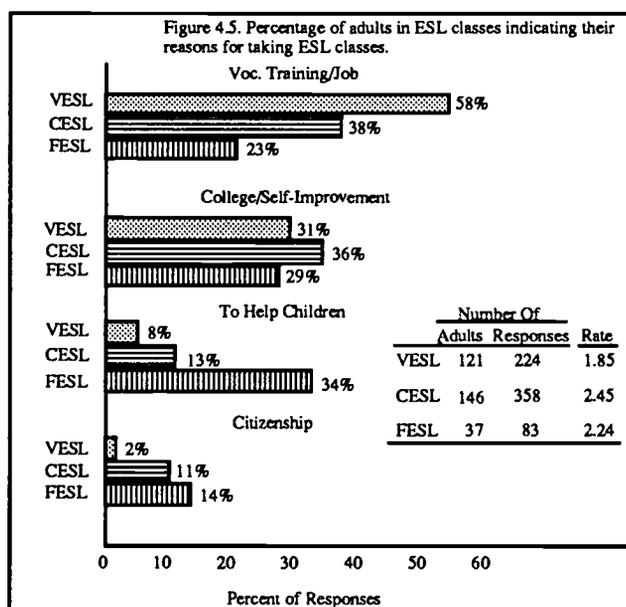
Those enrolled in VESL were primarily interested in taking ESL to help them get a job or a better job. They were less interested in ESL for college or self-improvement purposes, while these were very important reasons for the 146 adults taking the CESL classes, whose response rate was 2.45 choices marked out of seven. Interestingly, the CESL students were slightly more likely to say they were interested in ESL for job-related reasons than for broader, college education or self-improvement reasons.

The 37 adults enrolled in the two FESL classes were primarily interested in taking ESL to help their children. Their rate of marking was 2.24 choices out of the seven choices indicating that, like the CESL students, they were less focused than the VESL students.

Focus and Persistence. As mentioned above, to explore the concept of "focus" on the part of adults and education programs, we took a two-pronged approach. First, we looked at the reasons that adult students gave for why they were attending English as a second language education and the types of classes they were attending. We wanted to see, for instance, whether adults who were attending ESL courses having a particular focus, such as being vocationally-oriented, are more likely to give job-related reasons for attending ESL instruction than are adults enrolled in other types of courses. The data of Figure 3.5 indicate that this is indeed the case. The types of courses that adults were enrolled in reflected the types of reasons, or focus, that adults had for enrolling in ESL classes.

In a second approach to try to better understand the role of focus in persistence, we looked at the course completion rates of adult students in three vocationally oriented ESL programs that differed with regard to the specificity of the vocational training component of the ESL instruction. Here we were interested in whether the degree to which a vocationally-oriented ESL course focused on actual job training and job placement increased the likelihood that adults would complete the program.

To find out if the relationship between the focus for taking an ESL course and the closeness of fit of the course to this focus might have some affect on course completion, we looked at three different VESL classes in the Continuing Education Division of the San Diego Community College District. One VESL program was a 10 week, six hour a day program for Electronics Assembly that offered electronics-related English as a second language instruction for three hours in the morning and electronics assembly training for three hours in the afternoon. The program electronics instructor maintained close relationships to the electronics industry and was very strong in placing people in jobs at the end of the course. The other two VESL programs were full semester, 18 week programs, in which adults attended class for three hours a day. One of the VESL programs was solely focused on Office Technology. The other VESL program was a more general pre-vocational introduction to different job fields such as Office Technology, Automotive Trades, etc. It focused more on job readiness training, how to do a job interview and so forth. Neither of these semester long programs had close links to job placement.

Figure 4.6. Percentage of Adult Students in VESL Courses Who Completed the Course As A Function of the Extent to Which the Course Focused on Getting a Job
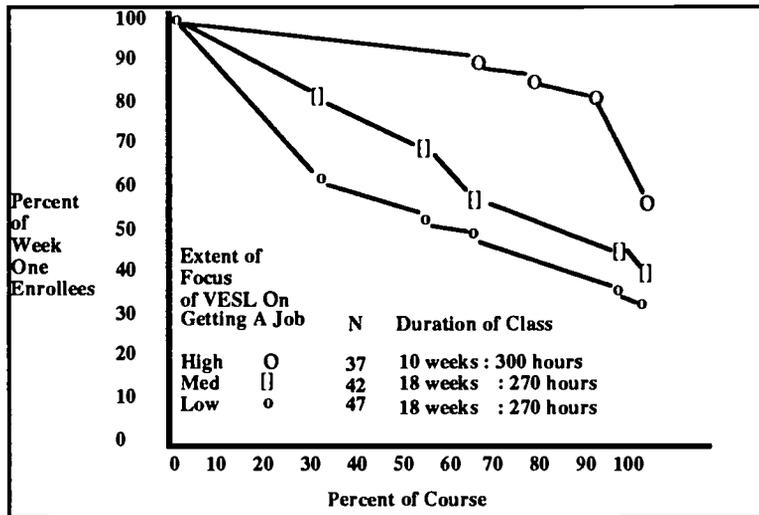
Figure 4.6 shows that , in general, the closer the fit between the focus of the adult students for taking the VESL course, in this case to get a job, and the focus of the program, in this case focusing directly on vocational training and finding jobs for students, the more likely the students

47

were to complete the course. This is clearest for the VESL program that was six hours a day but only 10 weeks in duration. Almost 60 percent of the students who enrolled in week one of the 10 week course completed all ten weeks, and over 80 percent completed nine weeks (90 percent of the course), by which time many of them already had a job in electronics assembly.

In contrast, for the other two courses, both of which were 18 weeks long, the course with the focus on a particular job field (Office Technology) had a rate of persistence of about 70 percent at the nine week point (50 percent of course) compared to over 80 percent retention in nine weeks for the high focus course, and fewer than 40 percent completed the full 18 week semester. The course with the least focus on specific jobs had a nine week retention rate of less than 60 percent and a course completion rate of just over 30 percent.

The foregoing data on the effects of the focus of interests of adults for taking an ESL course and the focus of interest of the course on persistence and completion rates are based on only a very small sample, and there is confounding of focus and the length of the course. But keeping these factors in mind, the data offer reason to suggest that persistence in the ESL classroom might be increased if there were a closer connection between the focus that adults bring to the classroom and the focus of the course.

Also, there is reason to suggest that courses that are brief as well as strongly focused might help increase completion rates. This is suggested by the fact that in all three courses completion rates were higher the fewer the number of weeks that the course went on. In the two 18 week, semester long courses, retention rates half way through the courses, at the end of nine weeks, were considerably higher than they were at the end of 18 weeks.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter we examined three major issues that relate to the participation of adults in English as a second language (ESL) classes in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education: persistence, attendance, and turbulence.

Persistence

How many adult students who start an ESL class actually persist and complete the course? In the sample of 12 classes studied by the CWELL ARC, 75 percent completed six weeks of study, 50 percent completed 12 weeks and 33 percent completed the full semester of 18 weeks. This contrasted with an 18 week persistence rate of 50 percent for adult ESL students in the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (Young, Fleischman, Fitzgerald, & Morgan, 1995).

In a recently completed study of student outcomes, the Division of Continuing Education indicated that, at the end of the Spring 1997 semester, out of 10,453 students who had been enrolled in ESL during the semester, 3,939 (37.6 percent) were attending at the end of the semester (Division of Continuing Education, 1997). This is similar to the 33 percent persistent rate found for the 12 ESL classrooms studied by the CWELL ARC researchers.

Progression to Higher Levels of ESL. Data for the fall 1995 showed that during the previous year, over 13,157 adults had enrolled in beginning levels of ESL, whereas only 6004 (45.6 percent) were enrolled in mid-level ESL and 2904 (22 percent) were enrolled in advanced level ESL. This suggests that there are dramatic drop-offs in persistence in ESL instruction after the beginning level.

48

Why Do Adult Students Drop Out of Class? A follow-up of 94 adult students who had left their ESL class revealed that the major reason (39.4 percent) adults gave for leaving were related to the demands of their jobs. But the second largest reason (26.5 percent) was that they transferred to another class. Thus persistence rates *in school* may be higher than persistence rates in a given class. Though it is highly unlikely, if all the 26.5 percent who transferred to another class completed the class, then semester completion rates might have been as high as 57 percent, more than 10 percent above the national rate of persistence (50 percent) for 18 weeks of instruction. But we lack data on these transfers so it is not possible to say what their actual persistence rates were.

Attendance

Using hours of instruction attended as an indicator of attendance, the data for four ESL classes indicated that 50 percent of ESL adult students attended fewer than one-third of the hours of instruction available to them after their enrollment in the ESL class. Seventy percent completed half or fewer of the available hours. Those students who persisted throughout the semester completed about 70 percent (189 out of 270) of the hours available to them.

The typical ESL adult student completed about a third, or 90 hours of instruction in the 18 week semester. This compares favorably to the ESL students studied in the to the average of 113 hours of instruction completed in the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (Young, Fleischman, Fitzgerald, & Morgan, 1995). In that study, adult ESL students enrolled for an average of 30 weeks of classes and completed a median of 113 hours of instruction. On a weekly basis, this indicates that, on average, the San Diego sample completed about 5 hours of instruction per week, or about a third more hours of instruction per week than the national sample which completed about 3.8 hours of instruction per week.

Turbulence

The concept of *turbulence* was introduced by the CWELL ARC to refer to the total number of adds to and drops from ESL classes divided by the number of adults enrolled during the first week. In three of the four classes studied, turbulence rates were over 200 percent, and in one turbulence reached a level of 286 percent of the first week's enrollment.

High levels of turbulence, which may result in classes that follow policies of "open entry/open exit" have been shown in personnel research to adversely affect training and learning in teams of personnel (Bialek, 1977). This is similar to the situation of students in classrooms that primarily utilize large group instruction, as is the case in the four ESL classes that the CWELL ARC observed.

Focus and Persistence

Realizing that adult students generally indicate more than one reason for wanting to attend classes, but may have a central or main reason, the concept of *focus* was introduced by the CWELL ARC to indicate the degree of correspondence between a student's focal or main reason for attending an ESL class and the extent to which a given ESL class focuses on the same main reason as the students have for being in the class.

Research on Vocational ESL (VESL), Communicational ESL (CESL) and Family ESL (FESL) classes revealed that adult students do tend to have more than one reason for attending classes, but they also have a main reason. VESL students are mainly interested in jobs, CESL in jobs or college/self-improvement, and FESL in helping their children.

A study of naturally occurring variations in the degree of focus among three VESL classes suggested that in classes where the focus of students and classrooms are more closely aligned, persistence rates may tend to increase.

The data on persistence rates for twelve classes and those for the three VESL classes concurred in showing that persistence rates tend to be higher for half a semester than for a full 18 week semester. This suggests that if ESL classes were "chunked" into smaller time periods students might be motivated to attend more often and complete the course in greater numbers.

What do these data on attendance and turbulence mean for how well students learn and transfer their learning outside the classroom? This question is examined next, in Chapter 5.

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Chapter 5

ESL Students May Learn
Some But Transfer Little

"One thing is the importance of having small classes. The students can participate, and the teachers can listen. In a crowded class, many studfents can be lost in the shuffle, forgetting the interest they had when they first came to class to find their future. . . . Motivation can be encouraged with new teaching techniques and materials. Using different ways in preparing the students will catch their attention. Then students will not abandone school." (R. G., adult student, ESL)

In Chapter 4 we saw how sporadic attendance and the constant adding and dropping of adult students in English as a second language (ESL) classes throughout the semester lead to considerable *turbulence* in the classrooms. In the classes studied, it was the norm for the number of students added to and dropped from classes during the semester to sum to more than twice the number of adult students who were enrolled in the first week of class, i.e., to produce turbulence rates of over 200 percent.

How do various instructional factors such as class size, erratic attendance, and turbulence due to the constant adding and dropping of students affect the outcomes of instruction? In the present chapter we focus on three major perceived outcomes of ESL instruction: (1) students' perceptions of instruction, (2) students' and teachers' perceptions of improvements in learning, and (3) students' perceptions of the extent to which they use or transfer what they learn in class to contexts beyond the classroom.

We refer to these outcomes as *perceived* outcomes because they are based on interviews or surveys with small samples of adult students and teachers who gave their opinions about instruction, learning and transfer of learning. These subjective opinions are not confirmed with extensive, formalized classroom observations or objective indicators of learning such as standardized tests (but see chapters 7 and 8 for data on learning indexed by standardized tests). So we refer to them as perceived outcomes rather than objective outcomes.

Adults Students' Perceptions of Instruction

To find out how factors such as class size, erratic attendance and turbulence may affect students' perceptions of the quality of the instruction they are exposed to, interviews were conducted by CWELL ARC staff with adult students. There were just a few of these students in the sample, so their views are not necessarily representative of the total population of adult students served by the Division of Continuing Education. For these reasons generalizations to the total student body cannot be made. But the findings are suggestive.

Three focus groups were conducted with students in two ESL 6 (advanced) classes and a Vocational ESL 6 class at the Mid City Continuing Education Center. The focus groups were small - approximately 5 or 6 students in each group. In each group there were students from China, Mexico, Somalia, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Philippines. It was explained that the CWELL ARC was interested in their beliefs about ESL classes. They were told that they were being asked to participate because their English was good and understandable and that they might be asked to interview beginning level students who spoke the same native language as they did. They appeared interested and willing to

51

participate. A portion of one focus group relevant to the question of how adult students perceive classroom instruction is reproduced below in the student's own voices.

Interviewer: One thing we would like to know is how we can make the English program here better. What things would you like to see ? Are there things that the teachers do that you do not like? (Adult students from: S=Somalia; M=Mexico; V=Vietnam).

> S1 Make fewer students (smaller classes) so the teacher can answer questions. Also the students do not have books. The teachers teach grammar but they talk and talk but we can't follow.

> M2 Then you raise your hand to ask a question and they tell you to wait until they are finished and by the time they finished you already forgot.

> S1   With 40 students the teacher can't teach all of them and at home I don't practice (I don't have books at home and no money for them) there should be audio programs to help.

> V2 They have a learning lab next door.

> S1 You are correct but the lesson you studied *today* is not there.

> V2 If you want to listen to the teacher again buy a tape recorder it is only 30.00 dollars.

> S1 I am not working so I don't have the money.

> V2 Sometimes the students cannot understand the teacher and the "other" students cannot help because they hear differently and they don't sound the same.

> M2 In my morning class the people do not have good English to be in that class. (Poor placement.) They ask me what the teacher said. This is not my job. The teacher is helping them and not teaching the class. They need to explain over and over.

The data for the full duration of all the focus groups (including the brief segment given above) revealed several broad themes related to students' perceptions of instruction:

(1). Despite some specific complaints, overall the students were very happy with the services provided to them by the Community College's Division of Continuing Education.

(2).The students felt it was difficult to learn ESL in a large group setting. They felt there were too many students in the classes.

(3). Several students mentioned that they wanted to study what they had learned after class but they could not take the books home. They would be interested in having tape recordings of the classes in the learning laboratory but all that the learning laboratory had were recordings unrelated to what they had learned.

Additionally, it was found that the more advanced students did not necessarily know the more beginning students, thereby dispelling a myth that all Chinese, Mexican, Vietnamese, etc. students know each other. Nonetheless, many of the students expressed an interest in interviewing other students who spoke their native language about their perceptions of learning and transfer of English skills outside the classroom. Some of the interviews that the adult researchers completed are discussed later in this chapter. But first we turn to a survey of adult ESL students' perceptions of how much they learned in their ESL classes.

Adult Students' Perceptions of Learning

To gain an idea of whether or not students thought they were learning much English in their ESL classes, a survey was conducted that collected data on students' perceptions of their growth in reading, writing, speaking and listening (understanding English).

Data were collected for five ESL classes in the Spring Semester 1995. The classes included two advanced ESL classes, including one Vocational ESL (VESL 6), and one Communicational (conventional) ESL (CESL 6). An intermediate level ESL class (CESL 4/5) and two beginning level classes (CESL 2; CESL 1/2LL) were also surveyed.

In each class, at the beginning of the semester students were asked to do a pre-instruction rating of their skills in the four English language abilities. At the end of the semester, students were asked to provide a post-instruction rating of their language abilities. The difference between the ratings at the beginning and the end of the semester give an indication of students' perceived improvements in their skills, that is, the extent of learning that they perceived had taken place during the class.

At the end of the semester, teachers were also asked to rate their students on their abilities in reading, writing, speaking and listening (understanding English).

For both students and teachers, the survey asked respondents to rate their English language ability on a scale from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent). Figure 5.1 summarizes these data by class, students' pre/post-rating means and teachers' mean ratings.

Altogether, in 18 out of the 20 possible pre- and post-ratings, students perceived that they had achieved at least some learning in each of the four language skills.

In 14 out of 20 ratings, teachers rated students' end of course skills at a higher

Figure 5.1. Perceptions of language skills before (pre) and at the end (post) of their ESL class by adult students and teachers ratings of skill levels at the end of the class.

■ pre-ratings ☰ post-ratings ▦ teacher's ratings
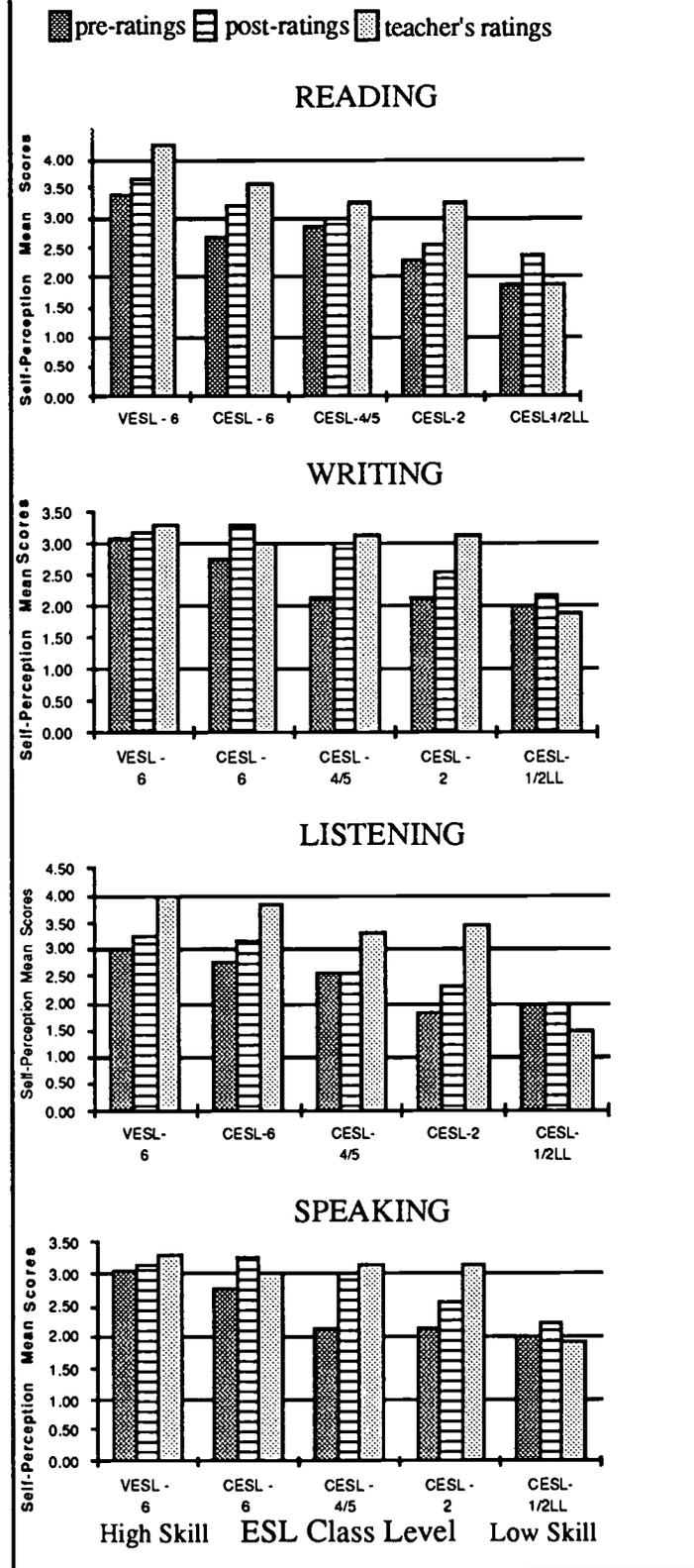
level than the students rated themselves. Only in the lowest level class, CESL 1/2LL did the teacher's end of course rating indicate that the teacher perceived students to be at about the same level that students perceived themselves to be when they started the course.

The surveys produced several interesting findings:

(1) The ESL students were able to read the surveys and use them to rate themselves and the teachers were able to use the survey to rate their students. This is important because it validates the use of paper-and-pencil survey techniques for efficiently gathering outcome data and other information from non-native English speakers.

(2) Generally, both the pre- and post-course ratings by students increased as the skill level of the ESL class increased. This suggests that the rating scale is sensitive to differences in language skill levels and validates the use of the scales to index growth in language skills.

(3) Despite the turbulence, all students surveyed felt their English language skills were better at the end of the semester than at the beginning. Note, of course, that these are students who actually persisted from the beginning to the end of the course. We do not know how those who completed the pre-course survey and then left before the end of the course felt about the way they were learning.

> **All students felt their English language skills had improved in their ESL classes.**

(4) Students rated themselves higher in reading skills at the end of their classes than in writing, listening or speaking. But they rated their greatest improvements to be in the expressive skills of writing and speaking.

(5) Teachers rated the students more favorably than the students rated themselves with the exception of the ESL level 1-2, low literacy class, whose teacher rated her students much lower than they rated themselves. With regard to this teacher, it should be mentioned that she had recently been moved from an advanced ESL class to this lower level class and that may have influenced her perception of her students.

With respect to finding that the teachers tended to give the adult students higher skill ratings at the end of the course than the students gave themselves, it could mean that teachers have an inflated view of their students learning which helps them justify their day-to-day work teaching English. It could also mean that students feel less confident of their ability than do the teachers who may see the bigger picture of English learning. Finally, due to the high turbulence rates, teachers may not really know their students' abilities well enough to be able to validly rate each individually on these four English language skills. The question of the validity of teachers' judgments of students' language skills bears further investigation because advancement in ESL classes is typically based on teachers' perceptions, not students' perceptions or objective test scores.

Adult Students' Perceptions of Their Transfer of Learning Outside the Classroom

The major, general purpose for attending English as a second language (ESL) classes is to be able to transfer what has been learned in class to contexts outside the classroom, such as the home or the workplace. For this reason, the CWELL ARC (Action Research Center) was interested in finding out not only how adults perceived themselves to be learning, but also how they perceived themselves to be using what they had learned outside the classroom.

Three different sources of information were obtained that bear on the issue of transfer. One involved the use of rating scales by ESL adult students in a Family ESL class, a second engaged advanced adult students as researchers to interview beginning level students about their use of English at home, and the third involved a teacher as researcher project that included a survey of the teacher's students about the extent of their use of English outside the classroom.

Adults' Perceptions of Changes in Parenting Activities in a Family ESL Program

Evidence regarding the transfer of new skills and confidence in speaking English from the classroom to the community was obtained from data for an experimental Family English-as-a-second language (FESL) class in the Continuing Education Division of the San Diego Community College District. In this FESL class, adult students were all non-native English speaking parents who were participating in the FESL class to improve their understanding of parenting in the United States, particularly parenting activities that might help them help their children do better in school. There parents, all women, came to class without their children so no direct instruction in parent-child interactions was provided.

At the beginning of the FESL class and again at the end, adult students completed surveys asking them to rate on a 5 or 6 point scale how frequently they carried out each of six parenting activities with their children or their children's teachers.

Figure 5.2 presents family literacy program outcomes for two projects. One, the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) programs, included a number of sites with mostly native English speaking parents and their children (National Center for Family Literacy, 1994). In the NCFL programs, parents and children worked together for a part of the class time to facilitate an increase in parenting activities that could lead to improvements in children's literacy and school behavior. The second program in Figure 5.2 was the experimental, Family English as a second language (FESL) program.

Figure 5.2. Changes in school-related parenting activities in two family literacy programs.

Importantly, from the point of view of identifying transfer from the classroom to the home or community, in both the NCFL and FESL programs the parents reported increases in parenting activities with their children and their children's teachers. Though the experimental FESL program was still under development and did not produce as many positive changes as the more extensive and expensive NCFL programs, the fact that the FESL adult students were all non-native speakers and that they did make three out of six important changes (helping with homework; reading with children; talking with teachers) suggests that the FESL students were successful in learning about these activities in the

45

classroom, while improving their English language skills, and that this learning and new confidence transferred outside the classroom to the home and the schools.

Studies of Transfer by Adult Student Researchers

In a second approach to better understanding the extent to which adult ESL students learn and transfer their learning to situations outside the classroom, the CWELL ARC engaged four advanced ESL students to serve as researchers. These student researchers conducted interviews with beginning level adult ESL students in their native languages. Interviews were conducted with eleven Chinese students and ten Somali students. The findings are summarized below.

Chinese Students at Mid City Center. Eleven students were interviewed by two advanced ESL students who had attended one of the earlier focus groups (see above). Of these 11 students, 8 were females and 3 were males. The ages ranged from 18 to 62, with one 18 year old, three between 20 and 30, two at 35, one at 40 and 50 respectively and two in their early 60's. They were fairly well educated in their native countries. Three students had 17 years of education in their own country, six had 12 or 13 years of prior education, and two had 8 years of education. They all had held successful jobs in China. Three were doctors of medicine, one of these was a medical school teacher, the others were a surgeon (a woman) and a radiologist. The other occupations were electronic assembler, teacher, farmer, and nurse. There were 8 married students and 3 single students.

There were five Chinese students interviewed who had children. The children were doing well in school, if they were in school; several children were pre-school age. The students had been in the United States from 6 months to 9 years. The native language was Chinese or Mandarin and five of the students said they spoke English, too. All students were taking English classes.

> **Beginning level ESL adult students from China or Somalia spoke little or no English at home.**

Regarding transfer of English from the classroom to their homes, *few of the Chinese students said they spoke much English at home. There was only one student who spoke English at home and three who said they occasionally spoke English.* The latter were taking other classes in addition to ESL, including classes in cosmetology, x-ray technician, word processing, typing, and computer programming.

Somalian Students at Mid City Center. An advanced ESL student from Somalia volunteered to interview ten Somalian students who were enrolled in beginning- to mid-level ESL classes. Of the ten students interviewed, six were female and four were male. Their ages ranged from 25 to 60, with three students from 25 to 30, two from 36 to 40, one was 50 and another was 60 years old. They did not come from a strong educational background in their own country. All were educated to about the 6th grade level, with one person educated to the 8th grade level. Their prior job experience in Somalia included two in business, one in the military, one was a driver, and one was a shepherd. They said they did not need to be trained for their jobs, except the military person who said he was trained by the military.

There were 8 Somalian students with children, and of these, three had preschoolers, two had school age children and three had children over 16 years old. The students with school-age children reported that their children were doing well in and out of school. They reported taking their children to the park to play as the major activity they did with their children. All of those interviewed spoke Somali and one student spoke English.

Regarding their transfer of language learning from the classroom to the home, *all students said they speak Somali at home and no one spoke English in the home.* They were all studying ESL but no other courses were reported.

In the two groups of ESL adult students interviewed by other ESL students above, there were reports of little use of English at home outside the ESL classroom. This may not be particularly surprising given that these were beginning level ESL adult students. But as Teacher Researcher Lovanne Malo suggests below, if teachers believe that it is the practice that ESL adult students engage in out of class that contributes most to their growth in English language skills, they may be mistaken.

A CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher Studies the Transfer Issue

Additional insights into the transfer of English use from classrooms to the home and community come from the work of Lovanne Malo, an ESL Teacher Researcher with the CWELL Action Research Center.

According to Malo, most teachers want to provide the most relevant instruction possible and expect that the students will go home and practice what they have learned in order to continue the process of learning. In fact, she says that in her experience it is common for teachers to believe that it is the practice outside of class that is the important variable in developing English speaking proficiency. To find out more about the extent of practice that ESL adult students engage in outside of class, Malo conducted a study of her students' uses of English outside of class.

Malo measured her students' use of English outside of class using the Self Assessment Chart (Bell, 1988). This instrument asks the respondents to indicate the frequency with which they use English in the following situations from 0, 25, 75 or 100 percent of the time:

- with friends at work
- with boss at work
- with neighbors
- at stores
- on busses
- at the bank
- at the doctor's office
- at child's school

Malo found that the majority of students marked 0 percent for all options except "with neighbors," "in stores," and "at the doctor's." In these categories they marked the 25 percent category most followed by the 50 percent option. Regarding the use of English at the child's school, there were not many parents in her class so there were few opportunities to talk to a teacher.

In further analyses, Malo rated her students according to three types. The first type was students who have opportunities to speak outside of class and who are able to speak comfortably. The second type was students who speak mostly in their native language outside of class and who have low English speaking proficiency. The third type was students who speak mostly in their native language outside of class and yet have high English speaking proficiency. She was most interested in the Type 3 students and interviewed two of them to find out more about why they can speak English so well, yet do not practice outside of class.

Malo found that for one student who was from Mexico and had a college degree from Mexico, English speakers appear to be uncomfortable speaking with her and often refer her to a Spanish speaking person when they hear her accent. She does not have much opportunity to speak to native speakers because she lives around Spanish speakers mostly and does not yet have a job. She speaks to the teachers before and after class to get some practice. Her high level of education gives her confidence that she can master new information so she persists.

The second person interviewed said she did not speak English outside of the classroom because all her friends and family were Spanish speaking and they did not want to speak English. However, previously she was a housekeeper for an American family and she spoke English with her employers. Also, she was not shy about speaking English so she took whatever opportunities came her way to practice.

Based on her research, Malo concluded that most of her adult students' opportunities to use English outside of class were superficial and they do not use English very often. She speculated that while many Spanish speaking individuals may have a goal of assimilation into mainstream American culture they find that achieving this goal may often be stymied by the cultural milieu in which they find themselves. It is a separate, largely Spanish-speaking sub-culture enclosed within the mainstream culture. That may be a contributing factor as to why English remains the language of the classroom but is only minimally used in the home and the street.

Summary and Discussion

In Chapter 4 we noted that ESL classrooms in studies by the CWELL Action Research Center have been characterized by sporadic attendance and considerable turbulence - i.e., numerous adds to and drops from class during the semester. In the present chapter we have tried to get some idea of how these types of factors have influenced adult students' perceptions of instruction, learning and transfer of learning from the classroom to non-classroom contexts.

Adult Students' Perceptions of Instruction

Interviews with small numbers of adult ESL students revealed that they were concerned about class size. The CWELL ARC staff observed that some ESL classes are regularly filled with 35, 40 and even as many as 60 students. Classes that are too large means that teachers can not give individual students sufficient attention. Also, students whose language skills were not good enough to be in a given class demanded too much time of the teachers and asked other students for help. But one of the students who was asked to help felt that was the teacher's job, not his. Students' needs for help are greater when they have been absent or when they are newly arrived in class.

Students also felt that it would be useful to have textbooks that they could take home. But conversations of CWELL ARC staff with teachers and administrators indicated that this is too costly for the Division of Continuing Education, and many students cannot afford to buy texts.

Further, the listening lab available for student use does not have the daily lessons that different teachers deliver, so without textbooks to take home or relevant learning materials in the learning lab students cannot repeat lessons over again for practice.

Adult Students' Perceptions of Learning

Using pre- and post-instruction rating scales it was found that most ESL students, from beginning to advanced classes, were, in fact, able to use rating scales as instruments for assessing their learning. There was a trend for pre-instruction ratings to increase from beginning to more advanced ESL classes, lending validity to the use of the rating scales for assessing learning gains.

In 90 percent of the ratings, students thought that their English language skills had improved, with the receptive skills of reading and listening improving the least and the expressive skills, writing and speaking, improving the most.

In all ESL classes except the very lowest level of skill, at the post-rating period, teachers tended to rate students' skills higher than the students did. In the lowest level class they rated students as less proficient than the students did. This raises important questions for further research about how to determine the validity of both students' and teachers' judgments of learning in ESL classes.

Adult Students' Perceptions of Transfer

In one approach to estimating the degree to which adults might transfer new learning to contexts outside the class, adults in a Family English as a second language (FESL) program rated themselves as having improved on only three out of six activities that could have showed transfer from the class to the home and school. But it should be noted that the FESL class was new, and there was at the time of the survey no complete curriculum aimed at improving each of the rated activities, so the potential for new learning and hence for transfer was actually limited (see the work by Teacher Researcher Judy Quinton, page 111, for additional evidence of transfer of parenting skills from an Adult Basic Education (ABE), welfare-to-work classroom).

In interviews by CWELL ARC Student Researchers from advanced ESL classes with adult students in lower level classes, using their native language, the students in the lower level classes reported that for the most part they did not use English at home. Similarly, CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher Lovanne Malo found that students that she worked with reported that for the most part they did not use English outside of class, except for a little use with neighbors, in stores and at the doctor's office.

According to Malo, herself an experienced ESL teacher, many teachers believe that it is the student's practice outside of the classroom that will bring about the most improvement in English language skills. But her research suggests that it may be necessary to come up with specific strategies and tactics to promote the use of English outside of class if students are to advance more rapidly in developing their English language skills. There is clearly the need for further research into both the beliefs of teachers about the importance of students' uses of English outside the class in developing language skills and the realities of students' use of English outside the classroom.

Taken together, the research studies summarized above lead us to suggest that, despite the turbulent nature of ESL classrooms, adult students who struggle and persist, and their teachers, perceive that they are learning new English language skills and there is some, though limited, transfer of new found skills and/or confidence to uses in speaking English outside the classroom. In *Part 2: The Struggle to Teach*, we look in greater detail at how the teachers who work in these turbulent classrooms perceive their work and how they must cope with the exigencies of their students' daily lives, and their own, to make even a small amount of learning and transfer happen.

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Chapter 6

Teachers and Students Share Thoughts on the Hardships of Teaching and Learning

> *Maria missed a full semester of school due to her trauma but came to see me this year. She was interested in coming back to school to continue learning English. She made full use of her journal and found it a blessing during her painful and solitary moments.-Marina Zamora Vera, CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher*

Most teachers would say, "Walk a mile in my shoes before you say anything about teaching in this system." Accepting the validity of these sentiments, the CWELL ARC staff moved directly to engage as researchers teachers who had worn out many pairs of shoes teaching adults. Additionally, CWELL ARC staff did some volunteer teaching, worked as classroom assistants for a day and prepared teaching materials and quizzes for teachers. These observations, coupled with the many opportunities for informal conversations in hallways and incidental observation of classrooms, revealed a talented, well-educated, dedicated group of teachers, mostly women in the ESL and ABE Departments, who strive against all odds to meet the educational needs of their adult students.

In the following pages, we present the results of two teacher research projects and a survey of teachers that reveal the depth of commitment of teachers to their students and the telling insights that teachers have about the educational system in which they work, generally part-time, day-in and day-out. First we present a research study by Rosa Teresa Limon, who at the time was teaching Orientation ESL at the Cesar Chavez Center, one of the four San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education sites that helped to make-up the CWELL Action Research Center community. Limon's report illustrates the importance of the local, community context for understanding the lives of adult students and why they may or may not attend adult education classes.

Next we turn to a research project by Marina Zamora Vera, ESL teacher at the Cesar Chavez Center, in which the difficult lives of five Latina women form the basis of conversations in small group meetings that helped both the teacher and the students better understand the hardships that accompany teaching and learning when life gets tough.

Finally, we turn our attention to the results of a survey of teachers for their views on teaching in the turbulent classrooms of the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education.

Case Study of Students' Reasons for Leaving ESL Classes
Rosa Teresa Limon, CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher

I have taught ESL for several years and have noticed the coming and going of my students in the open entry/open exit policy of continuing education. I have noticed that many students have dropped out, and they did not give this excellent ESL Program at Cesar Chavez Center an opportunity to empower them, not only to complete the ESL Program, but to continue to pursue higher education. My question was, why do students drop-out? I attempted to discover why they might leave the program or why they don't leave the ESL Program. Two student researchers participated by sharing their own educational and life experiences. The two students and I met to discuss and share ideas pertaining to a certain question or topic.

Methods Used to Work on the Project

Case Study: By a case study of two Hispanic students, my project examined the issue of retention in the Hispanic community (Logan Heights). I chose a student who was most likely to succeed in all his/her endeavors, and one who was a high risk student, and was most likely to drop-out of school. Throughout this documentation, I referred to the student that was mostly likely to succeed as student "A," and the student that was most likely to drop-out of school as student "B," for compliance with the federal Right and Privacy Act.

Discussion/Sharing Ideas: The two Student Researchers and I met bi-weekly for 20 minutes, and at other times for 30 minutes per meeting to discuss and share ideas pertaining to why students dropped-out of the educational system. We met after regular class session was over. We met at 12:00 noon or 12:30 p.m. When we had 30 minute discussions, we met once a week. Many orientation students started school with lots of enthusiasm and continued this behavior throughout the first and then throughout the second level. Once they reached the third level they seemed to begin to drop-out. I asked

Detailed Description of the Two Participating Students	
Student A	Student B
Male	Female
Young	Middle age
Between 18 yrs-23 yrs	Between 40 yrs-50 yrs
Most likely to succeed in all education	High risk student and likely to drop out of school
Had previous education	Never attended school
Finished high school	No education
Quiet	Timid-shy
High self-esteem	Low self-esteem
Single	Married
No children	Four grown children
Great health	Greathealth

many questions that lead me to the results of this research project.

Results of Project

Students sometimes drop-out of the educational system due to drug involvement. Some students start their education by attending class regularly. They soon find out that it is going to take years before they can speak English or maybe find a good paying job. Very shortly someone (drug dealer) introduces the student to a quick way to earn lots of money without knowing how to communicate in English. The student then decides to stop attending class. Our young population that attend our ESL classes soon drop-out. Through my research, I found out that we lose about 30 percent of our orientation students (this is my personal estimation). Consequently, because we lose 30 percent of our orientation students for the reason that they prefer to sell drugs to earn income without having the need to speak English is alarming to me. I will suggest to the counselor on duty to invite educated and well informed guest speakers to address many and different types of drug issues to educate the students about the risk and danger involved.

Students drop-out of the educational system because they do not feel part of the educational program. Once students have been placed in a program that is appropriate to their needs and learning styles, there is at least one other pre-instruction counseling function that the ESL Program at Cesar Chavez Center may provide. Because students have been out of school for a period of time (Student Researcher B), they may need to be reoriented to the kind of study skills that will enable them to get the most out of the classes, reading materials, writing materials, and individualized tutoring sessions.

However, the kinds of study skills that this ESL Program at Cesar Chavez Center communicates to adult students must take into account the fact that many students work and live in an environment that is not conducive to home study (Student Researchers A & B). The only study time the students may have is the time that they spend in the program's

classrooms, and even that time may not always find students well rested and free enough of other worries to give full concentration to instructional activities (Student Researcher B). Therefore, a counseling session that helps students with strategies to manage their study/learning time effectively may be important for adult "first chance" learners with family, job, and community responsibilities (Student Researcher B).

It is unwise to assume that progress will automatically follow once students have begun the instructional program. Many students may be unused to voicing their objections to people they perceive to be in positions of authority, and the students may *drop-out of the ESL program* rather than complain with the way it is taught (Student Researcher B).

If students are not aware that adjustments can be made in the pace or kind of instruction, they may assume that they must either accept what they are being given or leave the program. Students who are bored or uncomfortable may assume that is the way it is supposed to be; they will believe that something is wrong with them, not that something may be wrong with the material or the instructional methodology.

Recommendations. I recommend to have counselors, teachers, or others initiate informal as well as formal counseling opportunities in which the learners' views on the program and their progress in it are openly solicited. Until the learners are comfortable with program staff and the program requirements, counselors may need to be more than simply available to students; they may need to be "pro-active" and reach out to them.

I recommend for it to be made mandatory for all ESL students (preferably the Orientation level) to visit the counselor to stress the importance of education and, if possible, to write an educational plan. This educational plan should be similar to the one college students follow to insure they reach their educational goals. This approach can be adopted by Cesar Chavez Center to be used to document an eight-week instructional cycle with three scheduled counseling interviews. These three interviews with the counselor will create a commitment between the student and the educational program. Possibly the student will feel he/she is important and will make a greater effort to stay in school.

Editor's Comment. Rosa Teresa Limon's in-depth case studies show how the circumstances of the local community at a particular time, in this case the prevalence of drug-related activities, can affect the personal perspectives of two students and their teacher about why adults do and do not enroll in and continue to participate in adult literacy education, including English as a second language (ESL) instruction. To date, her recommendations for eight-week instructional cycles and three scheduled counseling interviews have gone unrealized.

Life History of ESL Students: Group Study
Marina Zamora Vera, CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher

ESL students come from different walks of life. Many of our students at Cesar Chavez Center come from low socioeconomic levels with very little or no educational background. These limitations seem to have limited their social and family relations. It was not a lack of personal motivation to learn ESL. During my teaching experience, I observed that adult ESL students were rich and talented in other areas of their personality. When given the opportunity to voice these talents and concerns, they became interested in learning and class attendance increased. Responding to the positive change, I personally became more involved with their day to day problems.

In essence, I found my participation as a sounding board to their many faceted and colorful lifestyles. I learned that these were more than just students. They were survivors and had learned to web education into their life. School was a reward. It was essential to note that for these students attending school and learning English was a fulfillment of a dream. Their personal background reflected that many were involved in abusive relationships. The five women in this study felt isolated in this culture and lived without extended family support. All had very little knowledge regarding community services for them and their families. I asked myself a variety of questions: How do these women do it? What motivates them to come and stay in school? How can the school system be more effectively responsive to their needs? How can I learn from them?

Methodology

Ten students originally voiced their interest in the program but for various reasons only five remained and finished the program. We met once or twice a week in groups of twos and sometimes threes depending on their attendance during that week. All the group participants had children and could not stay after class. We decided to meet during the break for about 20 minutes. The short time was frustrating for me. I did not consider 20 minutes enough time. Nevertheless, for the participants, our sessions became very special. The personal contact helped them deal with their current issues.

Though it was planned that all would keep journals, two out of the five students could not and were not able to use journals. One of the main reasons was that they could not relate their feelings and thoughts in writing. The other reason was that they lacked privacy at home. The other three participants made full use of their journal writing and felt a sense of intimacy and empowerment. The students considered journal writing as an extension of their class discussions. These were never the focus.

Nevertheless, for one member, the journal became a refuge during a stormy period in her relationship. During the program, other students requested to participate since the word got around that we were meeting. However, due to time constraints and lack of room to meet I could not take on new members. I, however, made my own time to meet with them and to help them with their concerns.

Narrative Report on the Student Program Participation

[Editor's Note: Each of the synopses given below of the discussions with the five students first gives a fictitious name for the student, the particular problems that were discussed, the student's program participation and the student's status at the end of the project].

Rosa . Rosa was 36 years old. She was married with two elementary school children. She never attended school in Mexico. Her memories of her childhood were very sad. She only recalled being put down by her mother and other relatives. She had low self-esteem about her capacity to learn anything but loved coming to school because this was something she was doing for herself.

The pressing problem was that she and her family lived with two other families in a two bedroom apartment. She and her family slept in the living room. Consequently they had no privacy of any kind. The children fought among themselves, and the parents were always mad at each other. During our group support sessions, the other participants and I encouraged her to find another place for her family. She was very fearful at first but after a month, she found a house and moved in with her family.

Her second problem was that her husband drank and spent all the money. Again the group encouraged her to learn how to manage the family income and to provide support for her husband. With the help of a friend, she came through and was able to stabilize her limited income. It soon became evident to Rosa that she could take control of her life. This gave her the ability to express more positive feelings about herself and

her family. I continued to see Rosa whenever she came to school. I have an open door policy and she was always welcome. She worked part-time cleaning houses and was unable to attend school on a regular basis.

Agustina. Agustina was 46 years and married with four children. She had female twins, aged 23, and two adolescent boys. She was happily married and loved coming to school. She was bright and had a very positive outlook on life. She was a seamstress but made school her priority. She was very helpful in the classroom and was a peer tutor. She had a tremendous impact on the other participants for her courage and her high self-esteem. She really did not have a pressing problem but just enjoyed sharing her life and those of her children. She graduated from elementary school in Mexico and had plans to one day get her high school diploma here.

Agustina looked for me whenever she needed to share something eventful or just to get clarification on some concerns. I continued to enjoy my meetings with her.

Natalia. Natalia was 38 years old, divorced with four children, and currently receiving federal aid. She was a dedicated mother but had low self-esteem regarding her parenting skills and her capacity to learn English. Moreover, she felt guilty and ashamed for not working on her own and depending on welfare. Her children, who were all adolescents, did not like being on welfare and directed their anger toward her. She was an excellent cook, loved music and dance and was very lively to be around.

She had two major pressing problems. The first was whether she should go back to work to please her children or to continue receiving help and take advantage of her time to learn more English. As a result of our group discussions, Natalia decided to remain in school and wait until all of her children were out of high school to try to go back to work.

Her second problem was her shaky relationship with her lover. She did not want to commit to anyone. She involved herself with a relationship that did not adequately satisfy her needs. Consequently this depressed her a lot and she stopped coming to school. In our last session, she had decided to leave the relationship and appeared motivated to do so. I had not seen her in school or talked with her about her status. I felt she knew I was available for her whenever she was ready to share.

Maria . Maria was 35 years old, married and had one nine year old daughter. She was currently responsible for raising three other children: two nephews aged 12 and 15 and a 20 year old niece. These children had been with her since their mother died a few years ago. This responsibility had been one of her major problems in her life. Maria also suffered from epilepsy. She was in good health except after her epileptic attacks. It took her a while to recuperate and to get a clear sense of things. She was concerned because although she remembered everything in her primary language, she forgot the new information in English.

Out of the five participants, Maria was the one with the most problems. Although she appeared to be the strongest in the group, she was the least able to help herself since she knew she had to depend on her husband to provide her with the income for her medication. Her abusive situation worsened and she sought help in a women's shelter. After a few months and a broken leg, as a result of an epileptic attack in the center, her husband took her back home. They continued to receive family counseling and they went back together again. This time her husband fully supported her as the lady of the house. She also managed all of their income and was trying to be the best mother she could be to her nephews.

Maria missed a full semester of school due to her trauma but came to see me this year. She was interested in coming back to school to continue learning English. She made full use of her journal and found it a blessing during her painful and solitary moments.

Alicia . Alicia was 42 years old. She was married with two daughters: 9 and 10 years old. Alicia was the only professional in the group. She had two licenses: she was a medical doctor and a dentist. She was a gifted student and was always willing to help others.

Her major problem was feeling isolated in a new culture without any family support. Due to their limited income and her not being able to practice her profession, she started to experience depression and low self-esteem. She felt ugly, fat and unattractive to her mate.

Alicia had decided to move back to Mexico. She found American culture cold and not filling her needs. Although her husband had a good job, they could barely make ends meet. This frustrated her and made her feel impotent to bettering their situation. After she was transferred to the next ESL level, she soon stopped attending school. During the following semester, Alicia confided in her teacher that it was pressure from her husband that discouraged her from attending classes. Nevertheless, she was working on asserting her right to come back to school. She felt that education was the only way for her to be successful.

Program Outcome

I personally learned through this experience that the students were not necessarily looking for someone or something to solve their problems. They recognized that life and school with its many complexities was to be lived and not necessarily to be solved. However, in order for this to take place, they needed ongoing guidance, support and understanding from their teachers and other professionals serving their community. They requested to have counselors set up family and individual counseling sessions in the center. They would also like to see support groups for other problems affecting the Latino family, like alcoholism, drugs, family violence, and health issues. One of the factors that had increased absences had been the problem with child care due to the year-round elementary school schedule.

In conclusion, I felt that there were intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influenced the retention of ESL students at the adult level. Nevertheless, some of the women had been able to overcome insurmountable barriers by asserting themselves. The problem was not in the individual but in the individual's lack of knowledge of systems literacy. As soon as the women understood how the system worked, they were able, without confrontation or destruction of their marriages, to work out solutions. I suggest that the district set as its priority to not only teach ESL, but also to include systems and cultural literacy within the course curriculum.

Editor's Comment. Marina Zamora Vera's conversations with five adult Latina students capture the dynamics of the lives of women who are first of all human beings struggling to cope with the wishes, wants and needs of daily living, and secondarily adult ESL students. The teacher's job is often complicated by the personal lives of students who face abuse at home, identity problems in meeting the cultural expectations of good looks, happy relationships, the demands of parenting, and the need to make a living. Student's personal problems often become problems for teachers, too, and this can pose an extra burden on their already heavy load in teaching a turbulent class where 80, 100, 200 or more students may pass through in a semester.

Other Voices From the Classroom

To capture the opinions of a larger number of teachers regarding their teaching in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, the CWELL ARC staff analyzed the responses to a survey completed by 17 English as a second language (ESL) and 5 adult basic education (ABE) teachers. This is a very limited number of teachers and so we cannot claim that the findings are representative of the entire teaching staff. Still, they add another tile to the mosaic of understanding of adult literacy education in the Division of Continuing Education formed by all the various bits and pieces of information assembled in this report from students, teachers and CWELL ARC researchers.

The responses of ESL and ABE teachers to the different questions in the survey are summarized below.

1. Number of years teaching, degrees/training for teaching, and amount of orientation given to the District and teaching in the field.

ESL Teachers. The ESL teachers responding varied between one and 20 years of teaching experience, mostly within the District. There were seven teachers with ten or less years of teaching and ten teachers with eleven to twenty years of experience. They had impressive training. All of them had a B.A. in some field and seven had masters degrees, as well. Ten of them had been trained through the California state-funded ESL Institute and one had been part of a mentoring program. When asked how much orientation they had to teaching in the district, some of them said "none." But since most of the teachers had been in the District for many years, practices may have changed. Those who had been hired in the last five to ten years remarked that the Resource Teacher and Department Heads had been very helpful. Five of them read the Faculty Handbook, five received in-service training, four mentioned the help given by more experienced teachers, and three began their teaching by being an assistant in the classroom.

ABE teachers. Two ABE teachers had taught for twelve years in the District, one for seventeen years and two for twenty years. They had impressive credentials with four of them possessing a masters degree, two of them going through the California state-funded ABE Institute and one mentioning the usefulness of conferences in obtaining further training. They reported little orientation to the job, although one had received in-service training and one mentioned colleagues sharing. Again, they were hired a long time ago but even now new teachers in the field of ABE are not given much orientation.

Comment. Although teachers complain bitterly about having no contracts, the teachers responding to the survey were those who had been with the District for up to twenty years. They were well educated and had additional training through professional institutes. The situation that exists in the District is similar throughout the country. Adult education is a marginalized program providing only $1700 per full time equivalent (FTE) student, and the teachers in Adult Education are primarily part-time, without benefits and have no job security.

2. Amount of District control over curriculum materials versus the amount of materials that teachers themselves create.

ESL teachers. Eight teachers said that textbooks and/or workbooks were recommended by the District and used. But as one teacher wrote, "no single text covers all needs; all teachers need to create supplemental papers and hands-on materials." In fact, twelve teachers said they made-up their own instructional materials and handouts. A few teachers used information from newspapers, short stories and interviews to provide cultural information, one teacher who is an artist creates her own visuals to accompany lessons, one teacher has developed computer programs to use in a computer ESL class. Only one teacher used no self-developed materials.

ABE teachers. For ABE, there are more usable educational materials and all five teachers used some textbooks published by Steck-Vaughn, Contemporary, Oxford, etc. This may be because the approach to teaching low-level adult readers to read is similar to that for younger people and the textbooks are available. For programs such as GAIN, California's welfare-to-work program, teachers are allowed to order materials that other teachers would not have the budget to do. In addition, they have computers and can order computer software and use a wide variety of reading and mathematics software. For GED, the high school materials are mandated. Nevertheless, all teachers created their own worksheets, handouts and study guides. One teacher provides students with a cassette tape and accompanying written material which orients all new students to her class and tells them

about the program and how long it will take and what students can expect to learn. All of this material was created by her in her spare time.

Comment. In ESL, the teachers create more materials than in ABE and these findings have been corroborated by CWELL ARC staff in numerous classroom observations and informal discussions with teachers. The fact that teachers have to make-up handouts and other materials is not surprising. However, they are only paid for classroom time, so the amount of energy that goes into the creation of curriculum materials is unpaid and varies from teacher-to-teacher and from day-to-day for any given teacher. Some teachers in interviews have said that each teacher is essentially on his/her own and is rarely checked upon or supervised. Other interviews with administrators suggest that teachers are observed more than they realize and the administrators know who are the best teachers.

3. The third category of question on the survey concerns the time allocation to various activities within the classroom on a day-to-day basis. Teachers were asked to estimate how much of their time was spent on (a) lecture, (b) computers, (c) textbooks, (d) writing/reading exercises, (e) individualized learning plans, (f) small group activities, (g) projects, (h) discussion, and (i) non-academic time. For each of the three areas, the answers were different.

ESL teachers. First of all, the category of "other" was included in the survey and most of the teachers used the category as "listening/speaking" and the time estimated ranged from 25 percent to 75 percent in one teachers case. Lecture was estimated by almost all teachers to be from 10-25 percent of the lesson plan. Very few ESL teachers have computers, so that was not an option for most of them. For those with computers, they were used from 30-50 percent of the lesson. Reading and writing exercises were used on average from 10-25 percent, with one teacher saying it took up 50 percent of the time. Individualized learning was not used much although one teacher used it for 75 percent of the class time. Small group activities were used by all of the teachers and this was estimated from 15-25 percent of the lesson and discussion was the other category that was used again from 10-25 percent of the lesson. Projects were not mentioned at all. As for non-academic time, it was given a small percentage, 5 percent was a typical answer. Most ESL teachers do their administrative tasks outside of class.

ABE teachers. ABE teachers estimated only 30 percent of time for lecture for two teachers. This is likely because most ABE classes in the District are run through a learning laboratory. All teachers used small group activities, one teacher said use of textbooks constituted 50 percent of the time, and for two other teachers individualized learning plans were used for 50 percent of the lesson. Reading and writing was only mentioned by one teacher and this was for 10 percent and only two teachers had computers which were used from 5-25 percent of the time. Discussion was used by one teacher for 25 percent of the time. Another teacher used one-to-one tutoring for students at least half of each day's class.

Comment. Clearly, the teachers in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education utilize a potpourri of methods, materials, contents and processes. All of which means that adult ESL or ABE students are likely to be involved in different learning methods and materials in ESL classes of the same levels and across different levels.

4. Where do students go after training?

ESL teachers. ESL teachers had different answers to this question depending on which level they taught. But ten teachers said that their students got jobs upon leaving ESL

instruction. For many students, learning English is done in order to get a job and once they can speak enough English to get a job, they drop out. Six teachers said their students went on to vocational training, five said to the next level of ESL instruction (especially at the low levels), four mentioned other educational goals such as GED or computer training, and four mentioned college. Another category mentioned by four ESL teachers was that students go on to ABE. Many immigrants to the United States are not literate in their own language and have to start at the very low reading levels handled in ABE classes.

ABE teachers. ABE students went on to GED, GAIN or Job Search if they were in the GAIN/ABE class. Otherwise they moved on to Regional Occupational Program (ROP) classes offered through City Schools, computer classes offered through Continuing Education, Vocational training or a job.

Comment. It was reassuring to see that the instructors who answered the questionnaire did offer information about where many of their students went next. Many students are very devoted to their teacher and try to keep in touch for at least a little while. This provides the District a good way of trying to more systematically move students along pathways into more vocational training, or GED completion, or the next level of instruction and keep students in the system. However, from the survey, it is not certain just how accurate the teachers' information is, and it would be useful to provide a more systematic method for compiling such data.

5. How long do students stay in class (in months, weeks, etc.) and what percentage go on to the next level?

ESL teachers. For three ESL teachers, this type of attendance and progression information was not available. They kept no statistics and had no way of knowing. This has been mentioned in many interviews with teachers. Among the remaining teachers, there was a wide variety of responses; some teachers gave their answers in hours, others in months, and some in weeks. For the purposes of this report, the teachers' estimates will be converted to hours. Two teachers estimated that their students spent 50 hours in class and that 80 percent of them went on the the next level. Three estimated 100 hours from which 50-60 percent go on to the next level. Two said students stayed in their class 150 hours and 50-75 percent go on to the next level. Then there were teachers who estimated more than this. Four said students stayed approximately 240 hours and 70-80 percent went on to the next level and three said it was 320 hours (more hours than in a given semester!) and 40-60 percent went to the next level.

ABE teachers. The ABE teachers experience was no different. The estimated length of time that students stay enrolled varied considerably from teacher to teacher and program to program. In the GAIN/ABE class, students stay seven months. They are mandated to stay in classes five hours a day so this translates into 700 hours. Another teacher estimated two weeks to one year. This would translate into 35 to 750 hours of instruction. One teacher mentioned that students stayed one year (750 hours) and 75 percent go to the next level. Finally, a teacher said that students stayed 3-5 years in a class and only 1 percent went on to the next level. As one of the ABE teachers put it on the survey (and many others put it during interviews), ABE students fail to realize how hard learning is and how long it will take them to change their ability levels.

Comment. Because of the open entry/open exit policy, students come and go and teachers have no systematic way of knowing where they have gone, or why they have not returned to class. They do not keep the attendance roll, or pre-post test data on students. Roll information is kept by an administrative staff person who keeps it for all classes.

The wide variety of subjective perceptions of attendance and progression found with the ESL and ABE teachers raises questions about just how reliable and valid teacher's judgments about students, their skills, and their learning really are. Given the open entry/open exit policy, it is not always possible for teachers to know who will be in their class from day-to-day. So they will not always have sound information to inform their judgments of student's skills.

One ESL teacher responded with an attached sheet about the situation. According to this teacher, two of the biggest problems in adult education are the open entry/open exit policy and the non-fee classes. "Students do not always take the classes seriously without a vested financial interest. They perceive the classes as easy come, easy go and they can go as they please with no consequences nor accountability. This makes it difficult to build on lessons." The solution to the problem according to this teacher? "Charge a minimum of $10-25 per student (possibly refundable with completion of the course). Allow entry only every three or four weeks."

7. What methods are used to assess progress in the classes offered in ESL, ABE, and Vocational?

ESL teachers. Teacher observation is the most often used assessment method of the ESL teachers who answered the survey - nine teachers gave this answer. Eight teachers said their assessment method was listening to the students, which probably means the same. This has been the impression gained by CWELL ARC staff through classroom observations and interviews. Teachers of ESL are presumed to have an understanding of how well each student is learning just by listening and if any of the students have made sufficient progress they move them on to the next level. They are rarely wrong in their judgment, according to all CWELL ARC interviews conducted. Three teachers said they used checklists, one teacher said an introductory and exit assessment was used, one teacher mentioned the use of worksheets and two said that they gave weekly quizzes. Six teachers said that they used the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) tests, which are mandated by the state so all teachers are supposed to give it, but apparently many do not consider it a method used to assess progress.

ABE teachers. Checklists were mentioned by two teachers, and homework assignments were mentioned by three. Another teacher uses the CASAS, vocabulary tests, dictation, and teacher judgment to assess progress. Finally, one teacher said that educational contracts were used.

Comment. There were no uniform, agreed-upon methods for assessing progress reported by ESL or ABE teachers in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education. The most common form of assessment was teacher judgment, and as noted earlier, there are wide variations among teachers and their judgments of such things as attendance, progression and learning, and it is not clear just how reliable or valid teacher's judgments are.

8. What is needed to make teachers better?

ESL teachers. Five teachers said they needed instructional aides, seven teachers wanted more training, five teachers said level-appropriate materials, five said mentoring by more experienced teachers and one said knowing the goals of the students so lessons could be targeted would be useful.

ABE teachers. The ABE teachers wanted more sharing with colleagues. One ABE teacher said that a computer for every student as opposed to one computer per five students as is

currently the case would improve teaching. Another teacher said computers that work would be an improvement, where currently all of the computers are very old and several of them do not work. One teacher paid for an aide out of her own pocket and found this improved her teaching considerably! Finally, one teacher mentioned the need for more in-service training.

Comment. The teacher's ideas about what they could use to do their jobs better include what are generally quite modest requests for more training in their field of teaching, some help in the classroom, more appropriate and better materials for teaching. Providing such aid, material, training, and information are reported to be goals of the ESL Department, which is encouraging.

The ABE teachers wanted more sharing among colleagues. This has been a recurring comment among ABE teachers, and they are achieving it by having more meetings of just ABE teachers instead of the larger group of ESL/ABE teachers. The Division of Continuing Education has also instituted a non-paid department head position for ABE at each Division of Continuing Education site. This may serve as a means to more strongly advocate for the computers, training and aides that ABE teachers felt would improve their ability to teach.

9. The last question concerned the strengths and weaknesses of the students attending their classes.

ESL teachers. The ESL teachers unanimously agreed that the desire to learn was a strong point of their students. One teacher also mentioned their multilingual and multicultural offerings to the United States. However, their weaknesses were many. For example, some students are not literate in their own language so learning a new language is even more difficult. Several teachers mentioned the fact that students are exhausted from a heavy workload and can barely stay awake in classes or often miss classes because of this. Four teachers mentioned low self esteem on the part of students, one teacher said the lack of child care was a problem and one teacher mentioned poor health.

ABE teachers. The ABE teachers also said that motivation to learn was an important strength of the students. Two teachers said another strength was the desire to be a good role model for children. Another teacher said that students want to improve their lives and this makes them motivated. Finally another teacher said "They are survivors, but they are also immature and irresponsible." Other weaknesses mentioned were that they have very low expectations for success because they have such a long history of school failure. One teacher said they have learning disabilities. Another teacher mentioned that they are distracted by family concerns and that they cannot seem to organize their lives in order to achieve their goals.

Comment. Uniformly, the teachers in the survey thought that the greatest strength of their adult students is their motivation to learn, including the desire to improve themselves and to serve as role models for their children. But this motivation to learn is beleaguered with a litany of weaknesses or problems, ranging from low levels of literacy in their native language for ESL students, heavy workloads, child care problems, low self esteem, family concerns, immaturity, and learning disabilities.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter we presented the results of two teacher research projects and a survey of teachers that reveal the depth of commitment of teachers to their students and the telling insights that teachers have about the educational system in which they work, generally part-time, day-in and day-out.

At the outset it should be noted that without exception, the teachers whose voices are heard in this chapter thought that the greatest strength of their adult students is their motivation to learn, yet teachers face the daunting task of helping their adult students overcome many personal as well as instructional difficulties during their sojourn in the Division of Continuing Education.

Teachers as Researchers

Rosa Teresa Limon. Limon's report illustrates the importance of the local, community context for understanding the lives of adult students and why they may or may not attend adult education classes. She found that students sometimes drop-out of the educational system due to drug involvement or because they do not feel part of the educational program. She suggested the use of guest speakers to address many and different types of drug issues to educate the students about the risk and danger involved. She also recommended a counseling session that helps students with strategies to manage their study/learning time effectively may be important for adult "first chance" learners with family, job, and community responsibilities.

Marina Zamora Vera. Zamora Vera's research focused on how the difficult lives of five Latina women affected their abilities to participate in and benefit from ESL instruction. She found that these women suffered from many hardships, including extreme poverty, crowded living conditions, abusive spouses, and other negative factors. Nonetheless, they were striving to not only survive their hectic and often painful personal lives, but also to improve themselves through education. Zamora Vera thought that many ESL adult students need ongoing guidance, support and understanding from their teachers and other professionals serving their community. They need family and individual counseling sessions in the center, and they need to learn about the various support agencies our cultural system makes available.

A Survey of Seventeen Teachers

The results of a survey of seventeen teachers indicated that because of the open entry/open exit policy it is not always possible for teachers to know who will be in their class from day-to-day. Therefore they may lack information to inform their judgments of student's skills for teaching or for deciding when to advance a student to the next level of ESL instruction. This raises questions about just how reliable and valid teacher's judgments about students, their skills, and their learning really are.

The teachers utilized a potpourri of methods, materials, contents and processes,which means that adult ESL or ABE students are likely to be involved in different learning methods and materials in ESL classes of the same levels and across different levels. This raises the question of how instruction should be designed to cope with the turbulence of the open entry/open exit classroom. There were no uniform, agreed-upon methods for assessing progress reported by teachers. The most common form of assessment was teacher judgment and as noted it is not clear just how reliable or valid these judgments are.

In their constant search for materials and teaching methods to help their students learn more useful and relevant information, teachers often engage in innovative curriculum development projects, only to find that they cannot implement their new curriculum materials due to the turbulence of both their students' lives and the open entry/open exit classroom. One teacher's struggle to innovate is the subject of Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

One Teacher's Experience in the Open Entry/Open Exit Classroom

> *Attendance was very irregular. Only 3 students attended the entire 11 days of the curriculum. On the 10th day, a Friday, only 10 students attended. Also, during the entire semester I had 82 students pass through my class, a 'normal' rate of attrition. Three other classes in this study had 86, 92, and 95 students during the semester.-Lynn Francis Bundy, CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher*

This chapter presents a case study of one teacher's experiences as a CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher in trying to change instruction in an ESL class and how the dynamics of students' lives and turbulence affected her work. The Teacher Researcher, Lynn Francis Bundy, was an instructor in Advanced ESL at the Mid-City Continuing Education Center during the time of the project. Following is her account of her experiences.

Empowerment Skills for ESL Students
Lynn Francis Bundy

The United States has long witnessed a burgeoning growth of immigrants and refugees. Many of them are political and/or economic refugees leaving a harsh existence in their countries, hoping for a brighter future. To aid these people in their transition, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes have emerged in increasing numbers.

The San Diego Community College District is one of the institutions that has established ESL classes in many adult education centers in the city. One of these sites, Mid-City Adult Center, serves students who reflect a myriad of ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds. Naturally they bring with them their own diverse attitudes and concepts about themselves and the world, derived from their own unique cultural and social conditioning.

It has been suggested in the literature (Sticht & McDonald, 1989) that it is amidst this social and cultural setting that intellectual potential is determined. In other words, cognitive development is a direct result of the social and cultural group in which a person is born or raised. The caretakers in each culture, consciously and subconsciously, provide the input through which children learn to understand the piece of the world to which they have been exposed.

All students, then, are an amalgamation of emotional, physical, mental and psychological factors which affect their ability to learn. Research in recent years has been increasingly interested in looking at the learner to investigate the processes involved in learning, and what prevents learning from taking place.

In *Educational Leadership*, a publication of the Journal of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, a study was reported on what the most important influences were on child learners (Wang, et al., 1993/1994). Twenty-eight categories were examined to compare their relative influence on learning. The top two categories were classroom management (which included group alerting, learner accountability, smooth transitions and teacher "with-it-ness") and metacognitive processes (a student's capacity to plan, monitor, and, if necessary, re-plan learning strategies). They also cited the importance of motivation

73

and perseverance. Support for the importance of metacognitive strategies was found in another study (Philips, 1991) looking at university-level Asian ESL students.

In line with the importance of learner accountability, Sticht, et. al. (1992) reported on the Empowerment Philosophy in a report to The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. After conferring with educators, government policy makers and workplace employees, and examining the research on cognitive science, they concluded that empowering people to take responsibility for their own work is of the utmost importance. Sticht & McDonald (1989) also report:

> In addition to messages about the value of learning, people also receive messages that help them determine whether or not they are capable of learning. They learn well, or not, depending on their view of their own ability to learn. An example of this motivational condition is the way the culture responds to failure and errors. There are culturally transmitted attitudes about the probability of learning successfully after one has initially failed to learn. These attitudes can greatly affect future learning (p. 30).

The many facets of the learner have always been emphasized in the teaching of ESL, from lowering the affective filter - helping students feel 'comfortable' in the class (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), to providing physical activities to promote learning according to the method of Total Physical Response - TPR (Asher, 1969). It has been shown that when students physically perform an activity, retention of the language is greater. Theories of language learning have evolved from grammar-translation in which language was thought to only be the sum of its rules regardless of content, to theories such as that of Community Language Learning. In this theory, counseling is applied to learning and the 'whole person' is taken into account (Richards & Rodgers, 1992).

As well as the research that shows how learners learn, there is evidence to show what stops learners from learning. A study cited by Thomas Sticht in a recent national satellite teleconference at San Diego State University stated that 45 percent of women in the Even Start program were clinically depressed. One wonders how much learning can take place in this state of mind.

Schweers (1993) in *Tesol Matters* talks about learner resistance. He cites a study by Bassano that states:

As Bassano (1986) argues, any of the behaviors typical of resistance--aggression, apathy, complaints, condescension, confusion, discord, ego-centrism, evasion, or withdrawal--can be enough to interfere seriously with learners receiving full language-learning benefits from classroom activities.

Another factor is the skills that are necessary. According to the U.S. Department of Labor report released in June, 1992, by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), three foundation skills are necessary for success in tomorrow's workplace.

1. Basic Skills - Reading, writing ...speaking and listening.
2. Thinking skills - Thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye, knowing how to learn, and reasoning.
3. Personal Qualities - Individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity.

Skills 2 and 3 address the metacognitive domains mentioned above which are being addressed in ESL research and teacher training. Students bring with them to the classroom

all of who they are - physical, emotional, psychological and mental factors, all of which have an impact on learning. If the students can access all of these in the learning process, if they can feel encouraged and supported to do their best, and if the students can feel empowered taking greater responsibility for their own learning, perhaps English can be learned and acquired more rapidly and efficiently. This research project set out to investigate these areas.

The hypothesis for this study was that ESL students learning the English language in a context and teaching framework of self-empowerment, goal setting and self-awareness will increase their English language skills and self-confidence. The following research is a pilot study and a start in this direction.

Participants

The ESL class used in this study could be classified as a low advanced/high intermediate level according to the Model Standards of the California State Department of Education. It was formerly labeled a Level 7 (of 8 levels) based on criteria created by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) and the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) program. The students were originally placed in these levels according to their abilities as determined by the school's assessment center and/or teacher assessment and recommendation.

Due to a plethora of classes at Mid-City, the class was held off-site with the other advanced levels at Wesley Church. The class met 15 hours a week, from 8:30-11:30 each day, though not all students attended regularly. They came from different countries of origin and ethnic backgrounds.

Challenges to Data Collection

Doing research in an adult education class had aspects that were challenging, including the myriad of variables within one class:

Age - The students' ages vary from 18 - 72 years old.

Education and Jobs - There were students with 5 years of grade school ranging to those with advanced degrees in medicine and engineering. Some of their occupations were: surgeon, cardiologist, bus boy, assembler, judge, psychology student, housewife.

Length of time in the U.S. - The students had been in the U.S. anywhere from 14 years to 2-3 weeks upon entering my class. Their outlooks on American cultures and values were different as well as their own cultural and social framework.

Attendance - Though the class met for 15 hours a week, students did not always attend regularly. Some students arrived late due to family commitments (dropping children at school) or they worked late shifts at their jobs making it difficult to arrive on time. Some came only before break.

Open entry/open exit - The district has a policy of allowing students to enter classes, which are free, at any time during the semester. They also exit freely upon entry into the work force or various other changes in their life.

Hourly teachers - Hourly teachers (who make up 97% of the district) have no job security. This affects the method and content of instruction when jobs are at risk of closure.

Procedure

The goals of this project were three-fold. One was to create a framework (methodology) in which to conduct the class; secondly, to provide relevant class content; and thirdly, to incorporate language skills into the above.

To meet the first goal, a framework to present the curriculum was implemented.

- Playing music in the background before starting class and during group work and journal writing.
- Using an inspirational quote to start off the discussion every morning.
- Using affirmations to focus the students into leaving their problems and worries outside and concentrating to their best ability on learning English.
- Writing for 15 minutes everyday before the end of class time.
- Continually encouraging and focusing the students to do the best that they can.
- Reinforcing the importance of self-responsibility in the learning process.

New students were given a Contract of Intent (to study English, try to be on time, etc.) and class rules designed by the students.

The class content consisted of an 11-day curriculum developed on the subject of Goals. Though the curriculum was planned for 10 days (two weeks), due to low attendance on the 10th day, an 11th day was added.

The curriculum consisted of materials and activities designed to help the students set short-term (daily) and long-term goals for themselves and to help empower them to feel that they could really achieve these goals. Also, fears that would stop them from getting what they wanted were addressed.

The basic skills were integrated into the lessons. Listening skills were facilitated through music, dictations, and group and pair work. Speaking was practiced in paired activities, group work and open discussions. Reading consisted of relevant articles on goals. Pronunciation was integrated in context. Writing was addressed in the journals everyday. The rationale for using journals was to allow the students to write about whatever they wanted in order to provide them with another means of self-expression, self-reflection and practice in writing in English on an ongoing basis. The entries were not corrected but comments were frequently made to form a dialogue with the student. It has been the experience of many an ESL teacher that constant practice in any one area of language (speaking, listening, etc.) automatically, over time, improves that area.

After the 11 days, the framework and the journal writing continued throughout the semester in conjunction with other experimental units such as one on self-esteem as well as a more traditional curriculum.

As a teacher, I found my role to be one of facilitator and coach to help and encourage the students to be the learners. The role of the teacher was changing from knower and doer of all to participant in the classroom experience being re-created by both teacher and student alike.

Measures

The findings were to be examined both quantitatively and qualitatively. The CASAS Reading test, Level C which is always administered in California State-funded ESL programs was used to compare pre-test scores at the beginning of the semester with post-

test scores after approximately 111 hours of instruction in the low advanced/high intermediate levels.

A questionnaire was given at the beginning of the unit to try to determine how the students felt about setting goals and whether this was an important or non-existent part of their lives. It was also administered at the end of the unit. Results of the questionnaire are not reported here, due to difficulties in data analysis and time pressures.

Journal entries were analyzed for content and anecdotal information. I also kept a journal for self-reflection on the process of research and personal/professional growth.

Results

Attendance. Only 3 students attended the entire 11 days and 6 new students arrived on the last day of the curriculum (attending only 1 day). The daily attendance figures show that 37 students were enrolled in this period, so it is clear that the same students did not come everyday.

Reading Improvement. One of the criteria used to assess results included administering the CASAS Reading test, a mandated exam in ESL classes used statewide. In my class the test was administered immediately preceding the beginning of the implementation of the project. Though the unit on Goals was only 11 days, the framework of the class (described in Procedures) remained through the semester regardless of the curriculum. Only those students who took both the Level C pre-test and post-test were included in the analyses.

Table 7.1 shows the pre- and post-test scores for seven different ESL classes. The asterisks in the last column, labeled Significance (Sig.), indicate classes that had statistically significant differences between the pre- and the post-tests. In my class, #3, the students did

Table 7.1. Mean pre-and post-test scores on the CASAS Reading test for seven ESL classes.

Class ID #	Class Level	Mean Pre-Test Score	Mean Post-Test Score	# of Students Tested	Gain or Loss	Sig.
1	Adv. Low	220.3	223.6	10	+3.3	
2	Adv. Low	224.6	229.4	7	+4.8	*
3	Int. Hi./ Adv. Low	219.0	223.4	16	+4.4	*
4	VESL Office Skills Adv.	224.6	230.1	8	+5.5	*
5	Int. Hi./ Low Adv.	218.3	222.2	19	+3.9	*
6	Int. Hi./ Adv. Low	225.9	220.9	9	-5.0	
7	Adv. Low	218.0	224.4	21	+6.4	*

statistically significantly better on the post-test (M = 223.4) than they did on the pre-test (M = 219). In Class #6, students did more poorly on the post-test than on the pre-test, though the difference was not statistically significant. The greatest gain was made in Class # 7.

Journal Writing. Another means of examining the effects of the empowerment curriculum was to investigate the content of the journals of the six students who attended the most number of days during the 11-day unit on Goals.

Several themes were found to be re-occurring in the journals. The themes were identified and selected by use of certain words or phrases. The topic with the most number of entries was 'Goals and Aspirations.' Students wrote about what they hoped to achieve, what they wanted for the future, and what they would try to do. The next highest categories were 'Friends/family/classmates,' 'English Class neutral' and 'Positive Feelings.' The following are some examples of the themes found in students' journals.

Positive feelings - 'good mood', 'happy', 'proud'.
Negative feelings - 'feel bad', 'confused', 'apathetic', 'depressed'.
Goals and Aspirations - use of the word 'goal' in the sentence; use of 'hope', 'try', 'wish'.
Like or agree with English class - 'class was interesting', 'I like my class'.
Suggest ways to improve English class - 'But I think that teacher can for me to hear easy song'. 'However think that teacher should teach to me better grammar'.
Neutral topics on English class - 'Two yers I learn English.'
Language skills - related to listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, idioms. 'In this class today we learn about conversation and idioms.'
Jobs - subject of. 'I feel down applecation for temperery imploei.'
Friends/Family/Classmates - mention of. '...and practice together with my classmates.' '...I go to meet my closed friend to play the chess.'
Like music - 'I was enjoying a lot the song.'
Dislike music - 'The sound of music or some noisy bodther me and make me lesse atentive.
Neutral statements about music - 'But today I hear a song...'
Fear - 'I discovered that I have a lot of fears.'
Aspirations - use of 'hope', 'try', 'wish'.
Past life in country - 'I came from Ukraina and there...'
News/Current Events - 'President Yeltsin claims to lead Russia.'

The journals revealed much about what was going on inside the individual. One student, Lo, a psychology student from Mexico, was an example of being self-reflective on many different levels. Her journal entries always expressed what she was thinking and feeling, as well as her fears. A couple of times she stayed after class to talk. Before returning to Mexico she wrote a paper at home expressing her feelings and thought patterns. The interesting part in her journals and letter was that there was no mention of English or the language skills whatsoever. She had experienced something valuable in the class, all in English, something that perhaps is not measurable but is nonetheless very real. She enlarged her social and cultural domain and stepped outside of her own comfort zone.

Another student, Qu, a young man from Viet Nam only attended class for 10 days, and only 3 were during the Goals curriculum. He was the kind of student who, though very intelligent, seemed to pay little attention and appeared to be bored. During a discussion in class, he expressed to the students that he felt that he had no control over his life. That was why his journal entries were so surprising - that he had taken the topic about goals to heart more than I had anticipated. At home he had also written a letter to the class which another student delivered stating that he had found work and could not continue with the class but that he was reflecting seriously on his goals. The lessons here for me were that first of all, from his classroom behavior, I did not perceive much going on with him, but through the journal entries and the fact that he took time to write this letter to the class it became apparent to me that a lot was happening in him.

78

journal entries and the fact that he took time to write this letter to the class it became apparent to me that a lot was happening in him.

Another student, Wa, an Olympic trainee from Brazil, turned out to be a poet. He wrote from the heart. (This was indiscernible from regular class activities). We used one of his poems in class as a dictation and discussion exercise.

Leo, a student from Mexico, brought up the fact that he had lost his job and was looking for another one. The students helped him brainstorm goals to set to help him find another one and within a week he reported that he had succeeded in doing so.

The journals truly provided a means for self-expression, self-examination and practice in writing.

Discussion

The three areas that will be discussed are the results of the CASAS test, the challenges to teaching ESL in adult education, especially with regard to attendance, and the contents and processes of journal writing.

The CASAS test showed that, irrespective of the class content, several classes exhibited a statistically significant improvement from pre-test to post-test. Some of these classes were taught at night and some during the day. One of the classes was a non-traditional Office Skills class for advanced ESL students. The curriculum was completely different from the others and the students worked on computers a substantial amount of time. The students in all of these classes were obviously learning something. Also, one class showed no change and one class went down. Further study is needed to determine what the variables are that influence the instruction of each class.

Another area of interest that emerged from this study was the true realization of the challenges of teaching ESL in adult education, especially with regard to attendance and accountability. In most other teaching situations there is a degree of homogeneity based on several criteria. In elementary/secondary schools, children are grouped by age and sometimes by ability. They are required by law to attend and assessment and accountability are inherent. Colleges and universities usually require certain prerequisites such as a high school diploma. They require tuition and a high level of accountability. Other kinds of schools - language schools, trade schools, etc., also cost money and require prerequisites. ESL classes at many institutions divide classes into language skills such as conversation or writing. Attendance and accountability are common threads weaving through these programs.

ESL adult education classes are open to anyone at any time, and courses include all of the language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) grammar, pronunciation, culture orientation, critical thinking skills, etc. Attendance is one area that needs to be addressed when searching for realistic methods of assessing the real outcomes and effectiveness of these programs.

Attendance was very irregular. Only 3 students attended the entire 11 days of the curriculum. On the 10th day, a Friday, only 10 students attended. Also, during the entire semester I had 82 students pass through my class, a 'normal' rate of attrition. Three other classes in this study had 86, 92, and 95 students during the semester. Approximately 40 active students are needed to ensure an attendance of 20-25 students a day. Accountability and assessment need to be examined in new and creative ways (i.e. portfolios) in light of the attendance situation.

The journal writing proved to be the key to really seeing what was going on with many students - more than can be discerned during the regular class time. Some of the students would take the liberty of expressing deep feelings while others would write more practically and tangibly. What was important was the choice of the student to be as self-reflective as s/he chose to be. The journals also served as a way for me to create rapport with the students and see other aspects of them that were not obvious in the class. It also helped me assess their needs better and to adjust the class accordingly.

Keeping a teacher journal also revealed a lot to me about myself. One of my biggest lessons was trying to let go of outcome. My expectations of wanting everyone to come to class everyday, and wanting them all to be on time, especially for the 11 days, was unrealistic and only caused frustration. What became important was to do the best job that I was able each day with the students who were there.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter we have listened to the voice of an imaginative, committed ESL instructor in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education as she described an attempt she made to introduce an innovative curriculum into her ESL class. Working on ideas gleaned from a wide-ranging reading about adult literacy education, ESL instruction, and contemporary needs for communication, social and personal management skills, Lynn Francis Bundy grappled with serious social and psychological problems that accompany many adult ESL students when they set-out to learn English as a second or other language. In the course of her work she came up full-square against problems resulting from turbulence in the open entry/open exit classroom and problems in assessing learning.

Effects of Turbulence

Turbulence results from the constant churning of students in ESL classrooms due to sporadic attendance, attrition, and the need to keep adding students to maintain the class. These factors take a toll on the ability of teachers to teach and students to learn.

Attendance. Bundy found that in just one 11 day period, when she was introducing her innovative empowerment curriculum, erratic attendance reduced any given student's chances for learning much from the curriculum. In fact, though daily enrollment figures showed that 37 adult students were enrolled during the 11 day period, only 3 students attended the entire 11 days.

Turbulence. Adds and drops throughout the semester resulted in a "flow" of some 82 students through Bundy's class. Approximately 40 actively enrolled students were required to produce the average daily attendance of 20-25 students needed to keep the class open. On the last day of her new curriculum, six new students arrived in her class.

Measuring Learning

An important finding from Bundy's work was the fact that the same CASAS test was used in seven different classes even though the content being taught, in terms of concepts and ideas, differed from class to class. This is important because the CASAS tests are supposed to be measuring specific competencies, such as completing an application for a job, and not generic, content-free "skills." The interesting thing is that, apparently regardless of what was taught, from Vocational ESL (class #4 in Table 6.1) to "empowerment" in Bundy's class, some gains were noted on the CASAS tests. This underscores the need for better

understanding the relationship between what is taught in classes and what is measured on assessment tests.

Another important finding from Bundy's research was that the use of journals actually provided more insights into students' learning and areas of interest than the CASAS tests. Yet the function of the latter is to identify the important competencies that students need to develop so that instruction can be targeted on improving those competencies. But Bundy discovered that more often than not she was surprised at the themes that emerged in students' writings. The themes were not the types of "competencies" identified by the CASAS test as the things that students need to know and be able to do.

Perhaps the most important outcomes of Bundy's research were the sense of wonderment at the complexity of the processes of teaching and learning, and the realization of the difficulty of conducting inquiry that leads to sound understandings of these complex human activities. These important outcomes were expressed by Bundy as follows:

> *This study seemed to raise more questions than it can answer. How can we address the factors of attendance and accountability? Are we interested in both the process of learning, the whole person, as well as the product/performance? How do we really measure metacognitive factors and effects of classroom management skills? Is cause and effect that discernible?*

Another fact of life in adult literacy classrooms that clouds the vision of cause and effect is the awesome range of diversity among the adults who clamor for classes in their struggle to find paradise. In Chapter 8 we take a look at how teachers and administrators grapple with these factors of diversity which compound the complexities of teaching in the turbulent classroom.

81

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82

Chapter 8

Grappling With Diversity Amidst Turbulence

We don't want overloaded classrooms. We need a teacher's aide in our classrooms so we can get the proper help we need because we have been out of school for a period of time. We need the teacher's aide five days a week to help the students. Everyone's not on the same level and the teacher has to teach different lessons to different groups of students all in the same day. (J., Adult Student, ABE)

As we have seen in earlier chapters, teaching in the turbulent classroom is a constant struggle to keep track of who has quit coming, and must be dropped, and to cope with the learning needs of new students who may enter anytime, including the last week of class in the semester.

But turbulence is just one of the many factors that make the teacher's job a constant struggle. Turbulence leads to a never ending diversity of adults who enter the classroom over the semester with a wide background of education and a correspondingly wide range of language, literacy and mathematics skills that reflect these educational differences. Adults ranging in age from 18 to over 65 show up for adult basic education and to obtain the high school credentials that they missed out on once before. There is also diversity in the focus of their reasons for wanting instruction.

Coming from the largely multicultural section of San Diego, which is a sort of "Ellis Island of the West," where new immigrants and refugees land and start their lives in the U. S., there is also a constant coming and going of adults with a large diversity of native languages, prior education and a range of skill in the English language from total illiterate, non-English speakers to those on the edge of being prepared to pursue college level studies.

In this chapter we first look briefly at the challenges to teaching posed by diversity due to cultural factors and different levels of language and literacy skills. Next a project by CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher Wes Popham is summarized to show how teachers can develop instruction to cope with turbulence and diversity, and meet one of the focal goals that adults frequently have for enrolling in adult literacy education - getting a job.

The Challenge of Cultural Diversity

Data for fall of 1995 show that in that year in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, there were over 52,000 enrollments in non-credit courses. This included adults in vocational, adult basic education, high school equivalency or completion, and English as a second language (ESL) courses. While a little over half of the students were native to the United States, some 47% came from as many as 146 other countries. Over 16,000 (30%) of these students reported that English was not their primary language.

Not all the cultural and language diversity in the District is equally distributed throughout the six Continuing Education Centers in the District. For instance, in the Mid City Continuing Education Center where the CWELL Action Research Center office is located there were adults from 28 different countries speaking some 20 different languages in the

school year from September 1995 through August 1996. This diversity reflects the largely multicultural community of the mid-city area of San Diego.

During this same period, however, over 95% of the enrollments at the Cesar Chavez Center were from Latin American nations and spoke Spanish as their native language. In addition, the majority shared many cultural features, such as the Catholic religion, music, food and so forth. This reflects the fact that the Cesar Chavez Center is located in a largely Hispanic community in San Diego.

These types of differences in the cultural and language backgrounds of adult students influence the ways teachers work with the students. At Cesar Chavez, for instance, where teachers are mostly bilingual Spanish/English speakers, one is much more likely to hear bilingual education taking place. Teachers frequently use Spanish to explain instructional tasks and various concepts in "mainstream" United States culture that may be unknown to their students. They can converse with students in the students' native language to find out about their educational backgrounds and to estimate their English skills.

At the Mid City Center, however, it is a different story. While many teachers are bilingual Spanish/English speakers, and even bilingual in a few other languages, the cultural and linguistic diversity is so great that there is very little bilingual education. Further, using one group of students' native language might be perceived as a slight by other students, and teachers are sensitive to these multicultural, social dynamics. The result, however, is a different approach to teaching at Mid City than that at Cesar Chavez.

At Mid City teachers and students must cope with trying to speak English together, there is little by way of bilingual education. Students can sometimes ask other students who share their native language for explanations and other sorts of help. But as adult students have noted, this strategy is not always effective or appreciated. In the words of two adult students:

> "Sometimes the students cannot understand the teacher and the "other" students cannot help because they hear differently and they don't sound the same." (V2)

> "In my morning class the people do not have good English to be in that class. They ask me what the teacher said. This is not my job. The teacher is helping them and not teaching the class. They need to explain over and over." (M2)

The Challenge of Diverse Skill Levels

Adults not only arrive at the Division of Continuing Education with a wide range of cultural and language backgrounds, they also arrive with differing amounts of prior education and developed skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as the English language. In an attempt to limit the amount of diversity in skills that a given teacher will have to cope with in a given class, the California State Department of Education, Adult Education division, stated in its State Plan for 1982 that adult education institutions receiving state funds should provide "counseling and guidance services to ensure that all students are properly placed in the appropriate competency level..." (West, 1995, p.49).

To meet this requirement, the Division of Continuing Education provides testing and counseling services where students' skills are assessed using standardized tests and information from interviews. Counselors are available to direct adults to classes in ABE or ESL that are at different levels of skill development. For instance, ABE has three levels, A for the least skilled, B for those with a middle range of skills, and C for those just under

84

the level of skill needed for working on the high school diploma or the General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalency certificate.

Similarly, the ESL program is divided into six levels of skill in English from beginning to advanced. During the placement counseling, adults are advised as to which classes their skills seem to suit them for. They are then free to follow this advice or ignore it. Many of them do ignore it because they may have a friend or relative who is taking a class and so they go to that class, too, regardless of the fit between their English skills and the skill level of the class.

Difficulty With the Placement Strategy for Coping With the Diversity of Skills. Table 8.1 shows how problems may develop with the placement strategy for coping with diversity in skills. The table presents standardized test score data for two different tests, the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) reading test and the Adult Basic Learning Exam (ABLE) paragraph reading test. The data are for students who attended an advanced (levels 6/7) ESL class.

As Table 8.1 shows, despite the fact that the advanced ESL class is supposed to require students to possess skills closer to those needed to study for a high school diploma (CASAS scores near or above the 225 level), over half the students were reading below the 7th grade level on the ABLE, and more than one in six were reading below the 4th grade level.

Table 8.1. Diversity of reading skill levels in an Advanced (Levels 6/7) English as a Second Language (ESL) course as measured by two tests.

CASAS* Functioning Level	CASAS Scale Scores	Percent of Students	ABLE* Reading Grade Levels	Percent of Students
Functioning at or above high school entry level in reading and math.	225+	37.6	9-12+	32.3
Functioning above a basic literacy level. Able to handle most survival needs and social skills.	215-224	34.3	7-8.9	11.7
Possessing low literacy skills. Difficulty pursuing employment outside entry-level.	200-214	28.1	4-6.9	38.2
Difficulty with basic literacy and computation skills. Difficulty providing basic personal identification. Unable to follow simple basic written directions.	199 & below	0	1-3.9	17.6
		N=32		N=34

*CASAS=Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System; ABLE=Adult Basic Learning Exam (Paragraph Reading)

Additional data for six different classes are given in Table 8.2. In that table, one vocational education (VocEd) electronics class that was supposed to have students with reading skills above the 7th grade level actually had students reading as low as the 2nd grade level. An ESL class at the highest level, 6/7, had students reading as low as the 3rd grade level. At the other end of the skill distribution, a class at the beginning levels (1/2) of skills had students reading from the 2nd to the 5th grade levels. One class, officially designated as a multi-level classroom (1-7-W), was a vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) course in electronics and enrolled students ranging from the 2nd to the 10th grade level in reading skills.

Table 8.2. Diversity of reading skill levels in one vocational education (VocEd-electronics) class, and four English as a Second Language (ESL) classes ranging from the highest level (6/7) to the lowest (1/2). Cells with asterisks shows placement ranges appropriate to the given class.

ESL Level	Reading Grade Levels on Adult Basic Learning Exam (ABLE)								
	≤ 2	3-3.9	4-4.9	5-5.9	6-6.9	7-7.9	8-8.9	9-9.9	≥ 10
VocEd ≥ 7.0	2	5	5	3	0	4*	1*	0*	3*
6/7-C	0	5	7	8	3	2*	3*	1*	0*
1-7-W	6*	5*	6*	4*	0*	0*	1*	0*	1*
4/5-D	0	1	0*	4*	3*	2*	0	0	0
1-3-RE	1*	9*	8*	10*	3	1	0	0	0
1/2-RO	2*	5*	4	3	0	0	0	0	0
CASAS	≤190	195	200	206	212	217	222	228	≥233
ESL Levels	1-2	3	4	4	5	5/6	6	6	6/7

The teacher's task is to keep track of the skills of the students during the semester and to try to estimate who is making what kind of progress, and what kinds of materials and new activities each adult should be pursuing. This includes accommodating new students on almost a daily basis whose skill levels may not be immediately known to the teacher.

Diversity in Learning Outcomes: Reading. The six courses discussed in Table 8.2 not only teach different content (electronics; life skills English), they also teach in different community and cultural contexts. How do these factors affect learning outcomes?

Figure 8.1 shows gains in reading as measured by the Adult Basic Learning Exam (ABLE), a standardized test of reading in English. As indicated, the VocEd course in electronics, which did no systematic teaching of English or reading, nonetheless made 1.6 months of improvement on the ABLE test. In this case, electronics students moved from a pre-test score of 6.07 to a post-test score of 6.23, for a gain of 1.6 months. The course with the most gain, the Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) multilevel course went from a pre-test score of 4.16 to a post-test score of 5.12 for a gain of some 9.8 months, almost a complete school year of 10 months. Interestingly, this VESL multi-level ESL course was only 10 weeks long , but students went to the ESL class in the morning and then to electronics vocational training in the afternoons.
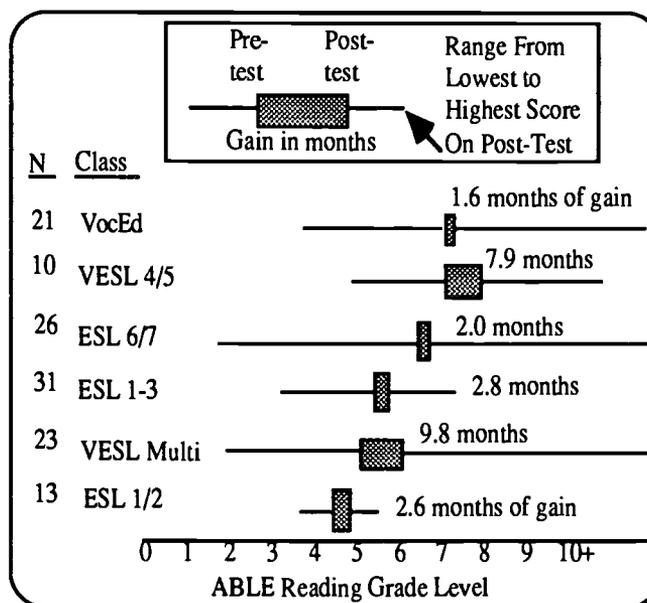

Figure 8.1. Average pre-test, post-test, and gain scores on the Adult Basic Learning Exam (ABLE) in reading grade levels for five ESL classes and one vocational education class in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, Spring Semester, 1997.

The VESL 4/5, ESL 1-3, and ESL 1/2 classes were all held in the Cesar Chavez center where the student body and surrounding community is largely Hispanic. The ESL 6/7 and VESL Multilevel were both offered at the Mid City center, where the student population and surrounding community is very multicultural and multilingual.

With the exception of the VESL Multilevel class, the others were 18 weeks in duration (one full semester). The VocEd course was offered at Centre City and was 18 weeks in duration.

The relatively small numbers of students tested in each class reflects the difficulty of obtaining pre- and post-test scores in the turbulent classroom. For instance, though the ESL 6/7 class enrolled some 100 students throughout the semester, only 26 adults were there long enough to provide both pre- and post-tests.

Because of differences in turbulence rates, contents, and the fact that some of the pre-test scores for some of the students whose data are given in Figure 8.1 were obtained a month after the start of the semester, meaning that not all students had the same amount of instruction between pre- and post-tests, it is not meaningful to compare across the classes to see which one made the most gain for purposes of evaluation of classes and outcomes. Rather, the data should be regarded as indicative of the levels of reading skills that adults may enter and depart with in continuing education classes.

To help in understanding the gains in ESL reading scores of Figure 8.1, it should be noted that in the national evaluation of federally funded adult education programs for English as a second language, adult students enrolled for 14 weeks of classes, with around 120 hours of instruction between pre- and post-tests, averaged a five point gain on the CASAS reading test (Young, Fleischman, Fitzgerald & Morgan, 1995). This translates into about eight months gain on the ABLE reading test (Sticht, 1997, p. 26).

To provide a California frame of reference for interpreting the gain scores in Figure 8.1, Figure 8.2 presents average pre- and post-test scores for all levels of ESL in California for the years 1990-91 (CASAS, 1994, p.37) through 1995-96 (CASAS, 1996, p. 42). The ABLE reading grade levels are estimates from the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) scale scores with 80-120 hours of instruction between pre-and post-tests (Sticht, 1997, p. 26).

On average, California's adult ESL students made about nine months gain in ABLE reading grade levels in each year. This compares favorably to the national data of eight months and the gain of about 5 months obtained by averaging the gains for the five VESL and ESL classes in Figure 8.1. Given the measurement error in these standardized tests these numbers are remarkably close. If the data for California also apply to San Diego, then we can surmise that gains in San Diego ESL classes have been fairly stable for about the last decade, too.

Figure 8.2. ESL Pre- Post-test scores on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System converted to ABLE reading grade levels in California's ESL for classes 1990-95.

Data for California indicate that hours of instruction may make some, but not a lot of difference in the amount of gain made in reading by ESL students. For instance, averaged across all ESL levels, ESL adult students who were post-tested on the CASAS Reading test after 40-79 hours gained 5.3 scale points, those tested after 80-120 hours of instruction gained 5.8 points and those tested after 121-300 hours of instruction gained 6.0 points (CASAS, 1996, p. 85)

Though the gains by ESL students in San Diego, California, and the nation are positive, some of the gain may be due to practice in test-taking in programs and recall of prior knowledge of English, not to new growth in reading English. Also, on average in these different contexts, at the post-tests, the adult ESL students were reading near or below the seventh grade level, a level typically considered as "functionally illiterate" for adults.

However, it doesn't follow that just because a student scores at a low level on a general reading test like the CASAS or ABLE tests, that he or she is unable to read and function in some important but more specialized area of interest such as job-related reading. This is illustrated in the following research by Wes Popham, a CWELL Teacher Researcher who has for years coped with diversity due to turbulence and the full range of English language skills in the open entry/open exit, multilevel, vocational ESL (VESL) course for electronics that he developed.

Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL)
for Electronics Assembly: An Employment Focused Approach
R. Wesley Popham, CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher

The Electronic Assembly Training class (EA) is run by the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education's Mid-City Center in conjunction with the International Mutual Assistance Association (IMAA) of San Diego. This particular class has been in existence continuously for 12 years as an off-site, community-based facility providing job training for Electronic Assemblers.

> Motivation is not just to learn English, but to get a job, change jobs, have some money, support their family, make a better life, get off welfare.

Although there are several other Electronic Assembly Training classes throughout the San Diego Community College District, this class is unique in that it has a Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) component attached to it that is specifically focused on Electronic Assembly in the workplace. The primary goal of both classes is to provide particular skills to enable students to become employed upon completion of training. The VESL component of this training is the topic of this discussion.

Both the VESL (Vocational English for Electronic Assembly Terminology) and the EA (Electronic Assembly hands-on training) are designed to be interdependent. In order to complete training and receive a certificate in Electronic Assembly Training, students are required to attend both EA and VESL classes. This holds for native English as well as non-native English speaking students. Students attend training from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm, with a 30 minute lunch, five days per week for 10 weeks (previously 8 weeks). The VESL component is from 8:30 to 11:30 am and the EA component is from 12:00 to 3:00 pm. Training is open-entry/open-exit which means that students begin and complete training at various times throughout the 10-week cycle.

Classes are both multicultural and multilevel. Because the facility is located within a predominantly Asian community, the majority of students tend to be of Vietnamese, Laotian, Chinese, Cambodian and Hmong descent. The next largest population tends to be people of African descent, Spanish descent, then other (e.g. European). Although a small percentage, a number of U.S.-born, English speaking students have successfully completed training along with multicultural students.

There is generally a vast span of English proficiency levels of students in the Electronics VESL course. Students need only to demonstrate a basic understanding and verbal proficiency in English for admission to training. Frequently we have found that immigrants

and refugees enter the country at this level of English proficiency or shortly attain it within a couple of months of ESL language training.

On the other end of the spectrum are students who enter training at high levels of English proficiency. These are a combination of people who have been in the U.S for five to fifteen or twenty years, many who are citizens, people who have had extensive English training in their countries, people who attended the U.S. school system from early ages, second-generation (citizen) children of immigrant and refugee families, and others.

High motivation seems to be a consistent factor for students attending training. Motivation is not so much to learn English, but to get a job, change jobs, have some money, support their family, make a better life, get off welfare, etc. In essence, students are not attending class to learn traditional English, but to get the necessary skills to obtain an electronic assembly or related job. Learning hands-on skills (EA), electronic terminology and English things to get and keep a job is what students are seeking. Such motivation is an asset for class retention, learning both assembly skills and the English the student perceives as important to apply these skills to obtain and retain a job.

The Electronics VESL Classroom. The classroom is located within the community from which most students come. The physical training area-classroom is set up with work stations and equipment similar to an actual electronic assembly work environment. All equipment and supplies are accessible to both EA and VESL instructors. Actual assembly equipment and materials are used by the VESL instructor for demonstration of procedures and as props for learning and discussion.

Close proximity of the VESL and Electronics Assembly instructors allows for daily communication, coordination and review between instructors. VESL materials are synchronized to procedures and materials being covered in EA. Both VESL and EA class sessions are tailored to individual abilities and areas of need as determined by instructors. Examples of this might be the EA instructor identifying a student, or students, having difficulty verbally relating procedures learned or the VESL instructor identifying a student, or students, expressing confusion over EA procedures.

Interfacing with companies for potential job placements is done approximately weekly by the EA instructor who passes information such as changing industry trends and requests on to the VESL instructor to be incorporated into both training components. Examples of this might be a company saying it would like more emphasis on surface-mount technology or preparation for employees to accept supervision from female supervisors (which may not be of similar ethnic backgrounds).

> The open entry/open exit VESL class uses sequenced modules of instruction to let students enter anytime and know where they are and what to do to complete the training process.

Scripted, Modular Sequence of Instruction . Because training is open entry/open exit, students begin and complete training at various times throughout the ten weeks. Use of scripted, sequenced, modules of instruction allows students to arrive before or during a module that will be repeated for them at the end of approximately eight weeks. Students know where they are at any given time during the training process. The final stage of each module is a written test , called a quiz to keep test anxiety low. The quiz is a culmination of individual quizzes given for each section of the module. It is usually posted, without answers, two to three days ahead of time. The goal is not for a quantitative measure of what has been retained, but rather as a vehicle to get students to study on their own to learn the answers and successfully complete it. Taking a quiz that anybody can pass encourages review of the material while students' high success rate reinforces the

individual student's sense of accomplishment. All quizzes are corrected at the student's workstation immediately upon completion. The first one to two students who complete their own quizzes with all correct are often asked to assist the instructor in moving around the class correcting other students' papers.

Successful completion of modules based on quizzes allows students to develop a progressive sense of accomplishment toward the end goal of completing the final module and graduating with a certificate in Electronic Assembly.

Comment. Wes Popham's VESL class provides one example of how teachers and the adult literacy education delivery system cope with turbulence due to the open entry/open exit policy for enrollment and the diversity due to many cultures, various levels of English language skills, and different focal reasons for taking ESL classes.

Turbulence in Popham's class is dealt with by having a pre-determined, modularized, written-out (scripted), series of instructional modules that everyone must complete. If new students enter in week three, they will enter a module that the class is working on and they will know that that module will be repeated in a few weeks if they have trouble with it.

Because the instruction is very stable, changing only when the instructor determines that something needs changing to update the content to new industry standards or to present the information more effectively, students can see what they have to learn and when they will have to learn it. Also, they can take materials home for study. These conditions, and several of the specific teaching techniques that Popham uses that are not summarized here, make it possible for students less skilled in English to make progress along with those having greater skills.

The Convergence of Focus. A key factor in Popham's VESL class is that it has a strong focus on the same thing that the students are focused on - getting a job in the electronics industry. As we saw in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.6, p. 37), one CWELL ARC study indicated that the closer the fit between the focus of the students' interests in ESL and the focus of the course, the more likely the students were to complete the course. In that study, the course with the highest retention rate was Popham's class.

In another study, the CWELL ARC researchers investigated learning gains in Popham's ten week Electronics Assembly VESL class, a Vocational class in Electronics Assembly (no ESL instruction) and a conventional ESL class. As Figure 8.3 indicates, Popham's ten week instructional program, which offered electronics oriented ESL in the morning and vocational training in electronics in the afternoon (VOCED+VESL), produced more gain in Vocational Vocabulary and General Reading (as measured by the Adult Basic Learning Exam-ABLE) than did a General ESL program or an electronics vocational program with no ESL (VOCED).

In this study, students in Popham's 6 hour a day, 10 week program that integrated VOCED and VESL completed more hours of instruction between pre- and post-tests than did the 3 hour a day, 18 week general ESL program or the 3 hour a day, 18 week electronics VOCED program. In order to standardize the number of hours between the three classes and make comparisons between two different tests, the programs were compared in terms of rate of gain per 100 hours of instruction. The Vocational Vocabulary gain of 9.4 by the general ESL program was divided by the mean number of instructional hours which was 87 (9.4/87=.10804) and then multiplied by 100 to get the rate of gain per 100 hours of instruction (10.8). Following the same procedure for the VOCED and VOCED+VESL programs gives 10.22 and 13.45, respectively.

This indicates that the rate of improvement in Vocational Vocabulary in the integrated VOCED+VESL program was approximately 25-30 percent greater than that in either of the other two programs.

Following similar procedures for the General Reading gains gives a rate of gain of 3.21 months per 100 hours of instruction for the General ESL program, 1.24 months for the Electronics VOCED program, and 5.32 months per 100 hours of instruction for the integrated Electronics VOCED+Electronics VESL program. Thus Popham's ten week, integrated VOCED+VESL program had a gain rate per 100 hours of instruction some 65 percent higher for general reading than the general ESL program, and over 300 percent greater than the VOCED program.

Figure 8.3. Gain in electronics vocational terminology and general reading in a General ESL, a Vocational (VOCED), and an integrated Vocational and VESL (VOCED+VESL) program.
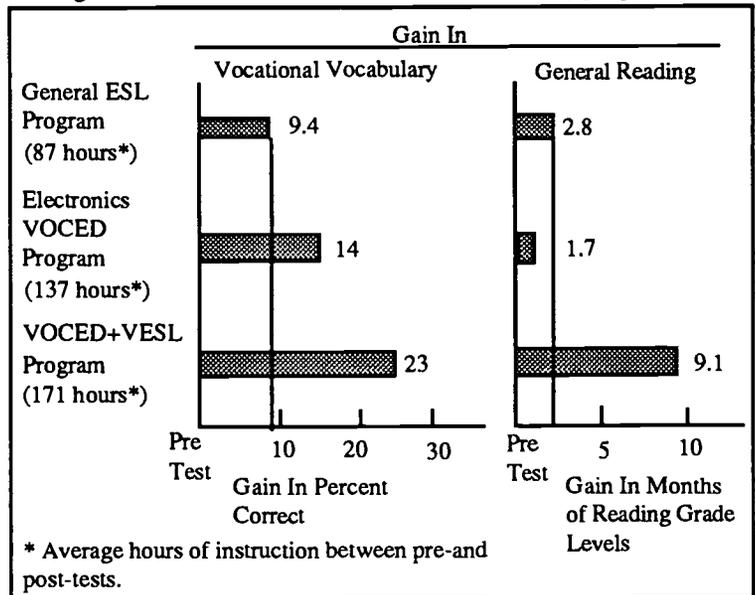
Taken together, the data from Figures 4.6 (Chapter 4, p. 37) and 8.3 on Popham's ten week VESL+ VOCED program suggest that it tends to produce greater retention, course completion, and higher gains in learning than do the comparison courses of general ESL or a conventional electronics vocational education course. Popham also indicates that placements of his students into electronics jobs is high, almost 100 percent, and many are placed by the ninth week of the course.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter we have looked at some of the ways teachers cope with the diversity of cultures, languages, literacy skill levels and focal goals of adult ESL students in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education.

Diversity of Cultures and Languages

We found that Continuing Education Centers may differ greatly with respect to the diversity of cultures and languages of students and that can affect how teachers teach and students learn. At the Cesar Chavez Center, for instance, most teachers were bilingual Spanish speakers and they often used bilingual education with their mostly Spanish speaking ESL adult students. At the Mid City Center, on the other hand, where there was a large diversity of languages, teachers had to rely mostly on English for instruction, and sometimes engaged students in helping other students with the same native languages. This was not considered effective nor appreciated by some adult students.

Diversity of Literacy Skill Levels

A major strategy for coping with the wide range of English language and literacy skill levels among adults was the *placement strategy*. This strategy relies on the use of standardized tests to assess students' skill levels and to then group them into classes for low, medium and higher skilled students. But this strategy did not produce the homogeneity of skills anticipated. In some classes for advanced students, for instance,

there were students with reading skills below the fourth grade level. Some classes, called multilevel classes, enrolled students across the full spectrum of skill levels. Perhaps not surprisingly, with such diverse skill levels among students upon their entry into the classes, there was considerable diversity of outcomes, with most students having post-test scores well below a functional literacy level of the ninth grade.

Diversity of Focal Reasons For Attending School.

In Chapter 4 we found that adult students may have more than one reason for wanting to attend adult classes, but they may also have a major or focal reason for wanting to attend classes. In the present chapter, we found that Wes Popham, a CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher developed a ten week, multicultural, multilevel Vocational ESL program that focused on getting a job in electronics and enrolled students who were also focused on getting a job in electronics.

With this congruence of focus, and the use of teaching techniques that included a morning class with a stable, modularized, sequenced VESL curriculum, coupled with an afternoon class of actual Electronics Assembly vocational training, and high job placement rates, Popham was able to cope well with turbulence due to the open entry/open exit enrollment policy and to the various sources of diversity discussed above. CWELL ARC studies indicated that Popham's VESL course had a higher retention rate and greater learning gains than comparison ESL and vocational education classes.

In the present and earlier chapters we have seen how the turbulence in adult students' lives has been accommodated by the adult education delivery system through the open entry/open exit enrollment policy. In turn, then, this has transferred the turbulence of students' lives to turbulence in the classroom.

We have also seen how the diversity in adult students' lives and goals for learning have been accommodated by the adult education delivery system in a series of actions that include bilingual education in English and the native language where feasible, the placement strategy to try to reduce diversity of skill levels, and the specialization of classes such as vocational ESL (VESL) or citizenship to accommodate the diversity of adults' focal reasons for attending classes.

In Chapter 9 we examine activities that the federal government has engaged in over the last 30 years to improve the functioning of the adult education delivery system as it has attempted to accommodate to the adults it strives to serve, while also preserving itself as an educational institution.

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93

Chapter 9

Striving at the National Level to Make the Adult Literacy Education System Better

> *ESL adult educators have always epitomized eclectic teaching. We use a variety of teaching methodologies and techniques and we gather resources from various books, workshops and other teachers, as well as create a myriad of materials of our own. Combine this with other factors in adult education such as open entry/open exit, and the objectives and outcomes of student learning become difficult to assess. Do we or can we adequately assess what the students are learning in adult education?-Lynn Francis Bundy, CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher*

In this chapter, we review some of the activities that federal policy makers and researchers have undertaken over the years to try to improve the adult literacy education system nationally, including California. In reviewing these activities, we look first at a series of three studies done over the last 30 years by the federal government to evaluate adult literacy education systems that incorporate the use of federal funds. These studies reveal the saliency of the open entry/open exit policy across time and programs, and some of the difficulties in teaching and learning perceived by teachers and students in the national studies and their similarity to the perceptions of the San Diego teachers and students discussed in the present report.

Following the review of the series of three evaluation studies, we discuss next a series of three research, development and dissemination efforts by federal and state governments that continue to introduce the policies and practices that are called CBAE (competency-based adult education) into the adult literacy education system.

Finally, the Summary and Discussion section discusses six major issues identified by the review of evaluation studies and competency-based adult education projects. These issues need to be addressed if current activities to reform adult literacy education across the nation are to be successful

Three Evaluation Studies From the Early 1970s to 1995

In 1969 a consortium of researchers spearheaded by adult educators from Columbia University conducted the first national evaluation of federally-funded adult literacy education programs since the creation of the federal adult education program in the War on Poverty of the mid-1960s. Twenty years later, in 1990, the U. S. Department of Education conducted a second, more comprehensive evaluation of adult literacy education programs. Five years later, the U. S. General Accounting Office conducted the most recent evaluation of the federally -funded adult literacy education system. These three evaluation studies are briefly summarized below.

Last Gamble on Education: A Federally-Funded Evaluation Study in the Late 1960s. In 1975, a book entitled *Last Gamble on Education* (Mezirow, Darkenwald, & Knox, 1975) reported the results of a two-year survey of federally-funded adult basic education programs in urban contexts. The study included adult basic education aimed at getting adult students to 8th grade levels of basic education, and English as a second language that aimed to improve the English language skills of non-English speakers. High school or GED programs were not included.

The study found that urban ABE students tended to be poor, employed in low skilled jobs, and some two-thirds were women. Fifteen to 25 percent were on welfare. Though they read below the 8th grade level, most had nine or more years of education. Those in English as a second language (ESL) classes were predominantly from Spanish-speaking backgrounds. Major reasons for attending ABE or ESL included obtaining a job or a better job, getting a high school GED certificate, learning English or helping their children with schoolwork.

Sixty percent of teachers were women and 80 percent were part-timers. Teachers in ESL thought their students were highly motivated and were not of low intellectual ability. Teachers of adult basic education (ABE) also thought their students were highly motivated but three-fifths of the teachers thought that at least a quarter of their students were of low intellectual ability.

In summing up problems in learning and teaching perceived by both students and teachers, the researchers identified problems of turbulence and diversity in the late 1960s and early 1970s similar to those identified a quarter century later in this report.

> The universal practice of permitting whomever shows up to enroll at any time can result in continuing setbacks to classroom learning. The heavy dropout rate in conjunction with pressure to keep enrollment figures high, and a sincere desire to serve those who are ready to be served, lie at the root of the problem. Unfortunately those who enter in the middle of a term require a great deal of the teacher's time. Late enrollees are seldom carefully screened and may be placed in an inappropriate class, further compounding the problem. The enormous variation in achievement and ability levels in ABE classes is also viewed as a major problem by both teachers and students (Mezirow, Darkenwald, & Knox, 1975, pp. 53-54).

National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs-1990-94. From 1990 to 1994 the U. S. Department of Education conducted a national evaluation of federally-funded adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English as a second language (ESL) programs (Young, Fleischman, Fitzgerald & Morgan, 1995). Data were obtained from over 2600 programs that served between 2.6 to 3.2 million adult literacy students during 1992.

In general, adult literacy students tended to be young (66 percent under age 31), without a high school diploma or its equivalent, and lived in an urban setting. The typical student was foreign born, female, spoke a language other than English, and was not employed or not in the labor force (58 percent). Most students enrolled in ESL courses (46 percent), 24 percent were in ABE and 30 percent in ASE courses.

Some three-quarters of teachers were part-time, 82 percent were not specifically certified in teaching adult education and most taught in more than one instructional area.

Programs tended to emphasize an "open entry/open exit" instructional design (p. 11). Over half (57 percent) the programs said they offered more highly individualized programs in contrast to fixed curriculum designs, while about 16 percent said they offered a prestructured/fixed program design. About a quarter (26 percent) were in the middle between offering a highly individualized program versus a prestructured/fixed program .

The national survey found that adult literacy education programs had a high turbulence rate, ranging from 180 percent in smaller programs to some 270 percent in larger programs. Overall, half the ESL students in nationally funded programs attended fewer than 114

hours of instruction, half the ABE students fewer than 36 hours of instruction, and half of the ASE students received fewer than 29 hours of instruction.

Most ABE and ASE programs reported using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) for assessing the learning of new clients. On average, ABE students went from a reading grade level score of 6.1 (end of the 1st month of the 6th grade) to 7.4, a gain of 13 months on the TABE after a mean of 84 hours of instruction. The ASE students went from a reading grade level of 8.5 to 9.3 for a gain of 8 months on the TABE. The ESL programs were assessed using the CASAS and on the average students went from a score of 207 to 212, a gain of 5 points on the CASAS tests (roughly one grade level) with an average of 120 hours of instruction between pre- and post-tests. If valid, these gains are impressive given the very limited hours of instruction received. However both the ESL and ABE students had post-test scores that were below the ninth grade level and would be considered as "functionally illiterate" by some contemporary analysts (Murnane & Levy, 1996).

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) Study of Adult Education-1995. The third in the series of evaluation studies being considered was concluded in September of 1995 when the General Accounting Office released a report entitled *Adult Education: Measuring Program Results Has Been Challenging.* The GAO study concluded that progress toward the achievement of National Education Goal 6 is difficult to assess because "...program objectives have not been clearly defined and questions exist about the validity and appropriateness of student assessments and the usefulness of nationally reported data on results (p.23)."

The GAO noted that the open entry/open exit feature of many programs adds to the difficulty of tracking adult students (p. 27). Students generally do not stay in programs long and those who do stay may attend so sporadically that it is frequently not possible to collect complete sets of pre- and post-course data on students. Obtaining accurate data is also difficult because of the limited capacity and expertise of local staff in understanding the utility of collecting data such as standardized test scores (General Accounting Office, 1995, p. 27).

Accountability has been hampered by limitations in the assessment instruments used to measure student outcomes. Research literature and testing experts were cited as raising questions about the validity of standardized tests used to measure adult literacy. One researcher was cited as having observed that functional literacy or competency-based tests, such as the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), disseminated through the U. S. National Diffusion Network, may lack validity because they are not derived from theoretical models of ability but from everyday literacy tasks. Given the complex nature of such tasks, it is not clear what instructional implications should be drawn from the test performance (p. 24).

The GAO report stated that, "Several experts and program officials told us that the State Grant Program lacks a coherent vision of the skills and knowledge adults need to be considered literate. Similarly, some state officials said that they would like the federal government to further specify the types of results expected from state adult education programs (p. 23)."

The latter request is somewhat odd because, as the following discussion shows, the federal government has engaged for some thirty years in trying to specify the types of results that should be obtained from state adult education programs. But as the more recent evaluation studies reviewed above indicate, the federal efforts have apparently not been entirely successful.

*Competency-Based Adult Education (CBAE): Three Projects to Reform
the Contents and Practices of the Adult Literacy Education System*

Briefly stated, competency-based, adult education (CBAE) means that adults progress in an instructional program by showing that they have actually mastered knowledge and skills at one area of the curriculum before moving on to the next. This is in contrast to a time-based program in which people progress having completed a fixed period of time (e.g., a semester) while achieving differing levels of knowledge and skill (such as grading "on the curve" with A's, B's, C's, etc., in a high school or college course).

For CBAE to work, programs must identify and assess what adult students should or want to know (content knowledge) and be able to do (skills). The latter information is needed to be able to place students into a curriculum at an appropriate level or content knowledge and skill area, and to then determine when they have mastered the knowledge and skills of a particular part of the curriculum before they move on to some other part.

The U. S. Department of Education has been engaged since the early 1970s in activities aimed at developing, disseminating, implementing and assessing instruction using one or another form of CBAE. In this section we discuss three of these activities, the U. S. Department of Education-funded Adult Performance Level (APL) project that started in the early 1970s, the CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) project that started in 1980 and the EFF (Equipped For the Future) project of the National Institute for Literacy that started in 1993.

APL-The Adult Performance Level Study. In the early 1970's, the U. S. Office of Education (USOE) sponsored the Adult Performance Level (APL) study to determine the knowledge and skills that adults need to meet the basic requirements of adult living (U. S. Department of Education, 1980). The basic requirements of adult living were identified by reviewing behavioral and social science research, surveying state and federal agencies and foundations, conducting a series of regional conferences on adult needs and interviewing undereducated and under employed adults.

The project staff arrived at the five knowledge and four basic skills areas identified in Figure 9.1. The range of knowledge and skills included ultimately led the researchers to drop the term "functional literacy" in favor of the broader term "functional competency".

Figure 9.1. The Adult Performance Level (APL) Functional Competence Matrix.

		Knowledge Areas				
Skills	Consumer Economics	Community Resources	Government and Law	Health	Occupational Knowledge	Transportation
Reading		Specific competencies were identified for each of the cells in the matrix.				
Writing		These competencies became the basis for the development of				
Speaking		the APL test of functional competency and later the development				
Listening		of curricula for competency-based adult education (CBAE) programs.				
Computation						
Problem Solving						
Interpersonal Relations						

The APL project went on to identify 274 specific tasks summed over the six knowledge areas that adults should be able to perform. Tests were developed using items based on

97

samples of the 274 tasks and were given to a nationally representative sample of adults. Based on this research, the APL project reported that about 20 percent (over 20 million) of adults were in the lowest level of competence. These were adults whose poor competency was associated with (1) inadequate income - poverty level or less, (2) inadequate education - eight years of school or less, and (3) low job status - unemployed or unskilled occupation. (U. S. Office of Education, 1975, p. 41).

Criticism of the Adult Performance Level Study. In September of 1980, the National Institute of Education published a report critical of the APL project and the measurement instruments it produced (U.S. Department of Education, 1980). Regarding the scientific basis of the APL study it was concluded that, "As a scientific inquiry, the APL study was very weak. Even if we put aside doubts about the existence of a general construct of "adult competence," the much publicized finding that 20 percent of American adults are "functionally incompetent" on the basis of the design, conduct and reporting of the APL study is altogether untenable" (p. 69).

The procedures for establishing the scores below which adults were considered "functionally incompetent" were essentially arbitrary and were never explained to the satisfaction of psychometricians by the APL researchers (p.63). There were criticisms of many of the specific test items for their vagueness and inappropriateness for many adults, and the results of a factor analysis identified only three basic dimensions, which were interpreted as the traditional three R's, not the seven skills or six knowledge areas given in the matrix of Figure 9.1 (pp. 64-65).

Additionally, the APL and other approaches to "life-skills" curricula were criticized for "The endless proliferation of goals and objectives to which this approach leads" (p. 62), such as the 274 specific competencies the APL project identified for the six knowledge and seven skill domains. Also of concern in such approaches to curriculum development was, "The requirement that the curriculum designer decide in advance which types of people are "good citizens, good parents or true believers." (p.62)

Nevertheless, the APL project was extended to curriculum development and widely disseminated by the U. S. Department of Education, and federal funding was used to encourage adoption of the APL competency-based approach in adult literacy education .

CASAS- The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System . As a major part of its competency-based adult education initiative, the California Department of Education, Adult Education Unit initiated in 1980 the California Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) (Alamprese, et al., 1987). Today, CASAS has participants in 49 states, and the name has been changed to the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). Like the Adult Performance Level (APL) project, CASAS was designed to enable adult educators to develop and implement a life skills, competency-based curriculum linking instruction and assessment.

Table 9.1 lists the eight major headings of the life skills competencies that CASAS had identified as of 1994, along with samples of the sub-competencies for each major area. When all competencies, sub-competencies, and sub-sub-competencies are included the 1994 list of competencies that CASAS had developed as of 1994 included 317, including ten for developmentally delayed persons. This is a 15 percent increase over the original 274 competencies identified by the APL study in 1973.The CASAS test item bank includes more than 5,000 items for assessing the 317 competencies (CASAS, 1995).

98

Table 9.1. A Small Sample of the CASAS Major Competencies List

1. Basic Communication
    Communicate in interpersonal interactions
    Communicate regarding personal
    information
2. Consumer Economics
    Use weights, measures, measurement scales,
    and money
    Apply principles of comparison shopping in
    the selection of goods and services
3. Community Resources
    Use the telephone and telephone book
    Understand how to locate and use different
    types of transportation and interpret related
    travel information
4. Health
    Understand how to access and utilize the
    health care system
    Understand medical and dental forms and
    related information
5. Employment
    Understand basic principles of getting a job
    Communicate effectively in the workplace
	6. Government and Law
	    Understand voting and the political
	    process
	    Understand an individual's legal rights
	    and responsibilities and procedures for
	    obtaining legal advice
	7. Computation
	    Compute using whole numbers
	    Demonstrate measurement skills
	    Use estimation and mental arithmetic
	8. Learning to Learn
	    Identify or practice effective
	    organizational and time management
	    skills in accomplishing goals
	    Demonstrate ability to use thinking
	    skills
	    Demonstrate ability to use problem
	    solving skills
	9. Domestic Skills (primarily for
	    developmentally disadvantaged)
	    Perform self-care skills
	    Perform home-care skills

Criticism of the CASAS Project. Like the APL project, the CASAS project has come in for its share of criticism. In the GAO report discussed above one researcher was cited as having observed that functional literacy tests may lack validity because they are not derived from theoretical models of ability but from everyday literacy tasks. Given the complex nature of such tasks, it is not clear what instructional implications can be drawn from the test performance.

The CASAS manual for item writing makes similar points and notes that the use of complex, functional tasks as items "...*generally tests the use of two or more skills.* Therefore, this context is not appropriate in itself for diagnosing weaknesses in specific skills since it is difficult to determine which skill was performed incorrectly" (CASAS, 1983, p.1 italics added). Without knowing what specific knowledge or skills might be causing students' problems, teachers may not know exactly what to teach once a person's profile of weak or missing "competencies" is known.

EFF-Equipped For the Future-1993-Present. Taking cognizance of the need for sound information about the knowledge and skills that adults need to be considered literate, as called for in Education Goal 6 and noted by the General Accounting Office study discussed above, the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) initiated the Equipped For the Future (EFF) program of activities (Stein, 1995). As a part of these activities, the NIFL sent out 6000 copies of an open letter to adult literacy programs across the United States that asked adult students to express their thoughts about National Education Goal 6.

Some 1500 narrative replies were received from adult students in 149 adult programs in 34 states. Based on their analysis of the letters, the NIFL researchers induced *four major purposes* served by literacy as adults behave in *three main life roles*: parent/family member, citizen, and worker. Figure 9.2 summarizes these categories.

99

Figure 9.2. NIFL Framework of Four Purposes for Literacy In Three Life Roles.

Three Adult Life Roles		
Parent/Family Member	Citizen	Worker

Four Purposes Served By Literacy

Literacy for Access and Orientation

Literacy As Voice

Literacy for Independent Action

Literacy as A Bridge to the Future

CONTENT STANDARDS

"...indicate knowledge and skills-the ways of thinking, working, communicating, reasoning and investigating, and the most enduring ideas, concepts, issues, dilemmas and knowledge essential to the discipline-that should be taught and learned in school. They help develop the work and learning habits essential to success in the world outside school: the ability to study well, think logically, draw inferences, support assertions with evidence, and apply what is known to a new situation. " (Shirley Malcolm (1993, November) *Promises to Keep.* Report to the National Education Goals Panel. (Foundation For Lifelong Learning)

In 1995, the EFF program contracted with several groups to further identify from adult students and other stakeholders what adults should know and be able to do to accomplish the four purposes across the three life roles of parent/family member, citizen and worker. Following work by these groups, the EFF program established a national advisory panel and let contracts for a broad consensus gathering activity that would further refine what adults should know and be able to do to fulfill the three life roles.

In 1997, a report was published by the NIFL listing what were called "role maps" for each of the three life roles (Stein, 1997). The "role maps" are lists "... of Broad Areas of Responsibility (BARS) and Key Activities- that represented the consensus at that time on what it means to "compete in a global economy," "exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship," and "maintain a strong and healthy family."

Altogether, for the Life Role of Parent, the Role Map includes three BARS (e.g., Manage a Family), and 14 Key Activities. Across all three life roles, there are 11 BARS and 51 subordinate Key Activities. These lists provided the starting place for an on-going consensus-building, validation and standards development activity still underway. The broad goals are to identify goals, promote change, assure quality and produce a more accountable adult literacy education system. More specific goals are to develop content standards and performance indicators that are specific enough to be useful to teachers without dictating curriculum, materials, or methods, yet are focused enough to be useful to suppliers like text book publishers, software developers, and assessment and testing specialists.

Criticisms of the EFF Program. Like the APL and CASAS projects, the EFF program is the latest of the three key federal government activities reviewed here striving to provide content standards for the adult literacy education system by identifying what adults should know and be able to do, to provide instructional guidance to teachers and materials providers, and provide assessment methods for accountability that can lead to higher

quality of the adult literacy education system. And like these other projects, the EFF program has encountered scientific, methodological and conceptual problems.

Regarding the scientific base of the original EFF research, though some 6,000 letters were mailed out to adult literacy programs responses were obtained from only 149 programs, a less than 3 percent response rate. The NIFL researchers stated that "We made no effort to control the number of responses from any one program. Some sent two or three. Some, sent dozens of responses." All this means that some few programs may have heavily biased the data base and limited the generalizability of the results.

A second major methodological problem encountered by the NIFL researchers concerns the *reliability* and *validity* of the four purposes for literacy that were identified in the research. While extensive, subjective coding of qualitative responses was performed, data were not available on the reliability of the coding scheme. No inter-rater reliability's were obtained and no cross-validation, using independent, separate coding teams was conducted to determine how replicable the research findings were. This means that in the EFF study, it is not clear to what extent the four purposes accurately and reliably captured the statements by the "customers" or "clients," or instead expressed the beliefs and attitudes of the researchers.

Third, like the APL, CASAS and other standards-setting or competency-based approaches to adult education, the EFF program faces the problem of the proliferation of lists of competencies or "key activities" and later sub-key activities as specific knowledge and skills are listed. It also faces the problems of developing valid assessment methods that have a sound conceptual and theoretical understanding of the development of ability or competence, as researchers cited by the GAO called for in commenting on the questionable validity and utility of functional, "real life" performance tasks.

Summary and Discussion

The review of federal evaluation studies and initiatives to reform the adult literacy education system over the last 30 years has revealed six major issues that have yet to be resolved and which hinder the achievement of reform.

(1) *The "proliferation" issue.* There is a tendency for these projects to develop very long lists of "competencies" or "key activities." In the three projects briefly reviewed the number of adult knowledge and skill areas, sub-areas, and sub-sub areas of content ranged from 51 Key Activities for the EFF project to 317 Major Competencies for the CASAS. Generally, in such "outcome-based" methodologies for specifying what people should know and be able to do, there is no rationale given for how many sub-areas should be identified, and this can get very specific, as in the 5,000 test items the CASAS has for assessing the 317 "competencies." In this case, each item can be seen as a specific "competency."

(2) *The "overlap" issue.* The "overlap" issue deals with the question of the interactions and similarities among the many "competencies" or "key activities" identified in the various projects. Factor analysis revealed only three factors in the APL study, not 270 competencies. These findings raise the important question as to just what the competence is that actually underlies the many complex tasks that adults can be identified as being able to do.

(3) *The "levels" or "standards" issue.* Across all three projects reviewed above there is a concept of "levels" or "standards" that suggests that people can be assessed to discover their "level" on some competency or attribute. For instance, the APL study found 20

percent of adults in the lowest "level" of functional competence. The CASAS has measurement tests that both assign a person to a general level of competence and also identifies performance on separate competencies that people may need to work on. The EFF project talks about "benchmarks," "standards," and "performance indicators." All these projects raise the question of just what it means to say that people have reached "benchmarks," "levels," or "standards" of knowledge, skills, competence, or literacy.

(4) *The "developmental" issue.* While all of the projects reviewed discuss knowledge and skill outcomes, such as "competencies," "benchmarks," "standards,""performance indicators, " or "levels" none of them present information on how it is that adults come to possess these outcomes. How do they get developed? Have adults who possess them at "high levels" at the age of 18 or 19 at the end of secondary school developed them in the same way as do adults who choose to develop them in adult literacy programs? What must one do to help adults move from scoring at the 200 level of a CASAS reading test to a 236 level (a growth of about three standard deviations)? How long will it take? Is there generalizability such that those at a CASAS 236 level also perform above the national standards of literacy set by the National Education Goals panel?

(5). *The "who decides what the content standards shall be" issue.* All of the projects have derived competencies ("key activities") based on the statements of adult students, business leaders, teachers, adult education program administrators, workers and various other stakeholders. But critics of the APL project questioned programs in which the curriculum designer decides in advance what people should know and be able to do to fulfill their roles as parents, citizens or workers. Others argue for "learner-centered, participatory education" in which adults identify what they want to learn and the teacher helps the adults find resources both within themselves and from outside sources to pursue their learning objectives. How can these differing points of view be reconciled?

(6). *The turbulence and diversity issues.* Each of the three evaluation studies identified problems due to turbulence caused by erratic attendance and large numbers of adds and drops (turnover rates). To some extent, the large turnover rates reflect the turbulent lives of many adult students and the attempt to accommodate the lives of adults through the use of an open entry/open exit policy. In turn, the latter exacerbates a second problem that has been identified as the diversity of cultural, language and literacy skill levels in classes. With students coming and going, and without the use of suitable counseling and placement tools, such as adequate assessment tests or interviews, adults show-up in classes and teachers have no idea of their skill levels, or what they know or can do so that the teacher can build on the student's entering competence.

What kinds of improvements in the adult literacy education system are we likely to see from ongoing efforts to implement one or another form of CBAE? To get a feel for the answer to this critical question, in Chapter 10 we take a closer look at California's attempts to implement CBAE over the last two decades.

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Chapter 10

The Struggle to Improve Adult Literacy Education in California

"Question: Dr. Pulliam, I would also like to ask you, do you feel that attendance of persons who enroll in a class and attend - perhaps it is a class which runs 13 weeks - and they attend for two weeks and then drop out, and then someone else comes along and they enroll for a couple of weeks and they drop out and you get down to the end of the course and you have someone enroll and they are in for a couple of weeks, do you feel that attendance such as that is a proper charge against the ADA apportionment - do you think that attendance should be counted? Senator Harold T. Johnson, Chair, California Senate Interim Committee on Adult Education, 1951.

At a 1997 annual meeting of adult educators, a high-ranking official of the California Department of Education gave a keynote address. In his speech the official, who had policy responsibility for adult education in California, emphasized the importance of two policies that have guided California's adult literacy education programs for decades. One of these is the policy referred to by Senator Johnson, above, almost half a century ago, the policy of allowing adults to enroll in programs at any time (open entry) and to drop out at any time (open exit).

The second policy that the official from the California Department of Education lauded was the competency-based, adult education (CBAE) approach to instruction. Interestingly, to a large extent, the introduction of CBAE into adult literacy education was and still is being done to overcome teaching and learning problems resulting from the classroom turbulence that appears to result, at least in part, from operating under the policy of open entry/open exit.

In this chapter we first consider the open entry/open exit policy and why it is considered so important for adult literacy education in the state. After that, we review the competency-based adult education policy that has guided the state's instructional philosophy for the last decade and a half.

The Open Entry/Open Exit Policy In Adult Literacy Education in California

There are two major reasons generally given when the reasons for following an open entry/open exit (oe/oe) policy of enrollment in adult education are discussed. On the one hand, the policy is meant to provide a convenience to adults so that they can participate in adult education when their often hectic lives permit. On the other hand, the policy allows the adult education program to maintain a high level of average daily attendance and that translates into the full time equivalents that provide the funds for the adult education schools. Each of these two reasons for the oe/oe policy is discussed below.

The OE/OE Policy for "Convenience Schools". The oe/oe policy is often justified as a way to provide a convenience for undereducated adults, many of whom, as we have seen earlier, live turbulent lives. Their schedules do not always fit the regimen of typical high schools or community colleges with their fixed schedules of classes and semesters. Like the fast food, convenience stores in the neighborhood, that are open 24 hours a day for ready access by harried adults, the oe/oe policy is widely regarded as a noble effort to

104

create "convenience schools" for undereducated adults whose lives are fitful and marred by the demands of surviving daily life on the margins of society.

But however noble the policy, it has long been the subject of debate about the quality of education to which it may lead. For instance, as the citation at the opening of this chapter indicates, almost a half century ago, in 1951, the California State Senate produced a report entitled "Partial Report of the Senate Interim Committee on Adult Education, Senate Resolution 185." The report presented the testimony of adult educators before the Senate Interim Committee, which was chaired by the Honorable Harold T. Johnson.

The hearings focused on issues regarding the funding of adult education, including concern about the offering of certain "frill" courses, such as square dancing, pottery, and so forth. In addition, issues arose about the educational value of the open entry/open exit attendance policy that governed adult courses, as illustrated by the following exchange between the Senate committee and Dr. Nolan Pulliam, Superintendent of the Stockton Unified School District:

> "Question: Dr. Pulliam, I would also like to ask you, do you feel that attendance of persons who enroll in a class and attend - perhaps it is a class which runs 13 weeks - and they attend for two weeks and then drop out, and then someone else comes along and they enroll for a couple of weeks and they drop out and you get down to the end of the course and you have someone enroll and they are in for a couple of weeks, do you feel that attendance such as that is a proper charge against the ADA apportionment - do you think that attendance should be counted?

> Dr. Pulliam: I wouldn't wish without detailed study of that problem to give an opinion which might be recorded and have some effect in determining judgments. I would be willing to make the generalization that in any case where people are enrolled for improving their educational attainments that there should be proper recognition given to the extent of their attendance, that is a factor which we always recognize as having some importance, we do that in our day schools and I think that it is appropriate to do that in connection with the adult classes.

> Question: Isn't there a difference in the day school - you have a compulsory program so that if you have a youngster who enrolls with you for two weeks you know that he is going somewhere else when he drops out - you know that he is going to continue somewhere else - but with the adult who enrolls for a few weeks and who drops out, you have no assurance there that the person is going to conclude that course of study, and I was wondering from the standpoint of benefit to the individual or benefit to anyone whether a person could enroll for two weeks and get any benefit out of a 13-week course?

> Dr. Pulliam: It seems to me in setting up the plan it might be well to establish some balance between the benefits for which the individual pays, perhaps through his fees, and those in which the State shares, depending upon the long range benefits which he may be assumed to have received." (p. 211)

Open Entry/Open Exit: Adult Education as a Source of Funds. Traditionally, in California at least, adult literacy education has been looked at favorably by some adult school administrators as a source of funds because it generates more income than it costs to deliver the instruction. Therefore administrators can use the excess money to pay for other programs or activities that do not pay for themselves. In the 1970s this was called "income averaging", in which the growth of low-cost programs was used to offset expenses for high-cost programs (West, 1995, p. 31).

105

One of the great benefits of the oe/oe policy is that it allows schools to enroll new students daily and therefore they are able to make-up losses due to drop outs. For instance, if the district needs an average daily attendance of 23 students to keep a class going, it can enroll additional students daily to make-up for any losses. If 25 students drop out of several classes on a given day, then 25 new students can be enrolled to keep the average daily attendance figures constant. As CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher Lynn Francis Bundy noted in Chapter 7, about 40 actively enrolled students were required to produce the average daily attendance of 20-25 students needed to keep her class open.

> **Open entry-open exit policy allows the adult literacy education system to enroll new students daily so they can make-up for dropouts.**

If one classroom uses computers and cannot enroll more than 20 students, because there are no more computers, then another class may have a daily attendance of around 26, with the three extra students being used to adjust the lower enrollment class to an average of 23.

Generally, in the San Diego Community College District, Division of Continuing Education, the District is reimbursed for services on the basis of about $1700 for one full-time equivalent (FTE) student. One FTE is defined as 525 hours of student contact. This can be made-up of five students, each receiving 105 hours of instruction, or two students each receiving 270 hours of instruction, or so forth.

The average daily attendance is used to calculate the number of FTE a program should be paid for serving. Obviously, the higher the number of average daily attendance, the greater the number of FTE the program can claim funds for educating. To keep a teacher's class open requires that each class maintain an average daily attendance of some 23 students. If daily attendance falls below that level, and there is no basis for averaging the teacher's classroom attendance with students in other classrooms, then the teacher's class can be closed and the teacher may be out of a job for that semester.

The use of a teacher's daily attendance records to obtain funds creates tension because it places teachers in a position in which it is to their economic advantage to record a sufficient daily attendance to keep their class open, while also serving as a steward for the proper use of the public's moneys for adult education. A striking example of how such an arrangement can lead to mistrust between teachers and administrators was illustrated in the 1951 hearings referred to above. In those hearings, Robert C. Dent, a Member of the Board of Trustees of the San Diego City Schools addressed issues about the reporting of attendance in adult education:

> "I talked to one superintendent of our schools, who happened to be a close friend of mine, after one of our meetings and I told him I was concerned over our adult program, and he said, "you're concerned about it - I've been concerned about it for years. I hated to do it" he said, "but I placed my custodians as stool pigeons in the classes to determine what the attendance was." He says, "the attendance turned in by the teachers was considerably different from those turned in by the custodians." (p. 432)

Recently, the tension between the use of the oe/oe policy to better meet the needs of students and its use to keep programs afloat was illustrated at the CWELL ARC office. A teacher stopped by to say how proud she was that one of her students had gotten a job and he had written a note to her saying that he could not attend school any more. She said, "I wish more of my students could do that---but not too many, because then I wouldn't have a job!"

Competency-Based Adult Education (CBAE) In California

Open entry/open exit policy is supposed to make it possible to better serve the learning needs of adults. Because everyone enters educational programs with differing backgrounds, the open entry/open exit policy is usually coupled with the call for individualized, self-paced, competency-based education.

Individualized instruction is supposed to accommodate to the entering knowledge and skill levels of adults and their "learning styles," however defined. Self-paced instruction is supposed to accommodate to the fact that people learn at different rates, and hence adults should have access to instruction that permits them to learn at their own pace.

Competency-based adult education (CBAE) emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a general strategy for meeting the needs of adults who learn at different rates and in different ways. In California, several demonstration projects in the 1970s set the stage for the later full-scale commitment to CBAE in adult education (West, 1995, p. 40).

In October of 1983 the California State Department of Education, Adult Education Unit, sponsored the publication of a *Handbook for CBAE Staff Development (Tibbetts & Westby-Gibson, 1983).* The Handbook explained the rationale for why the California State Department of Education had mandated CBAE in its adult literacy education system. The 1982 California State Plan [for education] stated that:

"The evaluation of the 1979/80 - 1981/82 State Plan identified several deficiencies in the quality standards and program content being delivered by the LEA's [local education agencies]. These deficiencies can be attributed in part to the extensive growth pressure on the program, coupled with the decline in real dollars to meet the need. The deficiencies identified by the evaluation are:

-Excessive class size ratios most frequently noted in English as a Second Language Programs

-Curriculum procedures and content that have not kept pace with contemporary trends and technology

-Student assessment systems that do not match curricular offerings and also have not kept pace with contemporary trends and technology

-Little or no provision for staff development

-Little or no provision for comprehensive program evaluation

-little or no provision for counseling and guidance services."

The Handbook went on to explain that under the State mandate for CBAE:

"1. Funds will be distributed only to those agencies which can assure quality programming for the target population identified in this Plan. All agencies receiving federal funds must make provision for:

A. Class sizes that do not exceed a certificated employee to student ratio of 30-1 on the average.

B. Curriculum design and content that is based upon the philosophy, process and procedures of competency-based learning.

C. A student assessment system which is competency-based.

D. A program of ongoing staff development for all certificated staff involved with the federal program.

E. Counseling and guidance services to assure that all students are properly placed in the appropriate competency level, and that their progress is monitored with appropriate assessment instruments.

F. Evaluation that will determine the levels of achievement pertaining to the goals and objectives of the total program."

According to the Handbook,

"The most significant and common elements in most definitions of CBAE include the following:

-The measure of success is demonstrated <u>learning</u> rather than putting in <u>time</u>. Students progress through instructional sequences at their own rate and not by fixed or predetermined seat-time schedules.

-The specified competency is carefully identified, verified, and made known in advance to all those concerned: the community, the staff, and most importantly, the student.

-The standards for successful performance are clearly stated and openly shared with all parties so they will know what degree or level of learning must be demonstrated for success (or competency).

-Prior learning or achievement is determined and accounted for in developing each student's educational program.

-Learning centers around life roles enabling transfer and actual application of learning to be demonstrated."

Given the foregoing elements of CBAE, the Handbook went on to present several program characteristics that become evident:

"-The agency's philosophy statement reflects a competency-based instructional approach as well as goal specifications agreed upon by representatives of the community, the agency staff, and the students concerned.

-The process for placing, monitoring, and certifying student competence is congruent with the program's philosophy and goals.

-Individualization of instruction is based on relevant assessment such as pre/post testing of

competency attainment and not on what others in a group are achieving.

-Instruction is frequently developed in modules and sometimes packaged in development sequences.

-Instructional strategies teach basic skills through application of those skills to real-life situations.

-Program participation is on an open entry/open exit basis."

Because of concerns about what would happen to average daily attendance figures if students were allowed to progress at their own pace, the Handbook assured that,

> Another easily dispelled criticism [of CBAE] is that once students are allowed to move at their own pace, there will not be a sufficient number of students to generate the necessary average daily attendance (ADA) to maintain the program. Programs of CBAE have been in effect in California long enough now to have produced ample evidence that just the opposite occurs. The reasons why are not clear. But program managers believe that ADA is maintained as a result of student satisfaction with encompassable goals and the accompanying improvement of instruction. The resultant word-of-mouth advertising seems to increase student enrollment. Open entry also enhances attendance records."

To implement CBAE throughout California's adult literacy education programs funded in part by federal moneys, a number of activities were conducted (West, 1995). One was the formation of the CBAE Staff Development project that produced the Handbook and conducted workshops on CBAE. The project also produced an instrument for self-evaluation by an institution to yield a profile of CBAE implementation.

A second, and the most enduring project, was the California Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) which later changed the word "California" to "Comprehensive" as a part of the nationalization and internationalization of the CASAS assessment system (see Chapter 9 for a discussion of CASAS).

Evaluating the Implementation of CBAE

The implementation of CBAE in California was given a three-year phase-in period. Then in 1984-85 a study was undertaken to find out how the CBAE mandate was affecting the federally-funded adult literacy education system.

In March of 1987 the California State Department of Education, Adult Education issued a report of progress in implementing CBAE in California. The report, entitled *Investing In Change,* noted that while some implementation of aspects of CBAE were well under way in some programs, about one-half of the state's federally funded agencies had gone through the process of identifying competencies, there was much more to be done to bring about a high implementation of CBAE in all programs throughout the state (Alamprese, 1987).

The implementation study of CBAE in California found that "...the majority of instructors commented in interviews that keeping records of individual student competency attainment -- particularly in ESL classes -- was 'not helpful,' "not attainable,' or 'not feasible." (p. 22) Adult Basic Education instructors "...frequently expressed the concern that a competency-based life skills approach, at least as defined by existing competency lists, was not appropriate for their students." (p. 40) However all ABE students interviewed reported that at least some of the "life skills" education was useful. (p. 40)

Retention data, defined as retained for 100 hours of instruction, for the state was about 50 percent, the same in 1984-85 as it was in 1982-83, the first year of the implementation of CBAE. But in programs designated as "high implementing" of CBAE, the 1984-85 retention rate was 66.5 percent.

Using the California Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) tests, the report indicated that, if programs implemented more of the CBAE features, they would show higher gain scores between pre- and post-tests on the CASAS. Statewide results for all programs and levels in 1983-84 and 1984-85 revealed mean achievement gains of 4.2 CASAS scale score points in 1983-84 and 4.3 in 1984-85.

Analyses of CASAS gain data for samples of 3 "high CBAE implementing" and 3 "low CBAE implementing" programs indicated that the "high implementing" programs did slightly better on average (4.9 gain) than "low implementing" (3.5 gain) programs, but no statistical tests were performed to determine the reliability of the difference.

Additional analyses of CASAS data were conducted based on samples of students in "high" and "low" implementing programs in ESL and ABE programs. Of six comparisons of "high" and "low" implementing student CASAS gains, one had no data for the "low" group, so no comparison was possible, one (advanced ESL) showed a marginally, statistically reliable (p<.10) difference in gain scores favoring the "high" implementers, and 4 showed no statistically reliable differences between "high" and "low" implementers, though gains favored the students from "high" implementing programs. But the various numbers for "high" and "low" implementing students never exceeded 200, and for 5 of the 6 comparisons, the numbers of students did not exceed the range of 13-90.

Interestingly, the "high" implementing advanced ESL program, which had the only marginally statistically significant increase in gain scores over the "low" implementers, had no statistically significant increase in retention of students over the "low" implementers.

*Determining if CBAE Has Increased in California Using Gains In Learning.*Using the California Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) tests, the *Investing In Change* report indicated that programs that implemented more of the CBAE features would show

higher gain scores between pre- and post-tests on the CASAS. This suggests that if more and more programs have become "high implementers" of CBAE over the years there should be a gradual growth in average gain scores in ESL and ABE programs

Fortunately data on gain scores are available because each year California has to send to Washington DC pre- and post-test data for English as a second language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs that are federally funded. The data are representative of all of California's federally funded programs.

Hypothetically if over the last dozen years more and more programs have implemented CBAE, the gain between the pre- and post-tests should grow on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) reading tests. Further, the gain should be due to the growth in post-test scores not to a drop in pre-test scores. Conversely, if growth in gain scores are observed between pre-and post- tests, this may provide indirect evidence that more and more programs are becoming "high implementers" of CBAE.

Figure 10.1. Pre- and Post test CASAS scores for ESL and ABE programs in California.
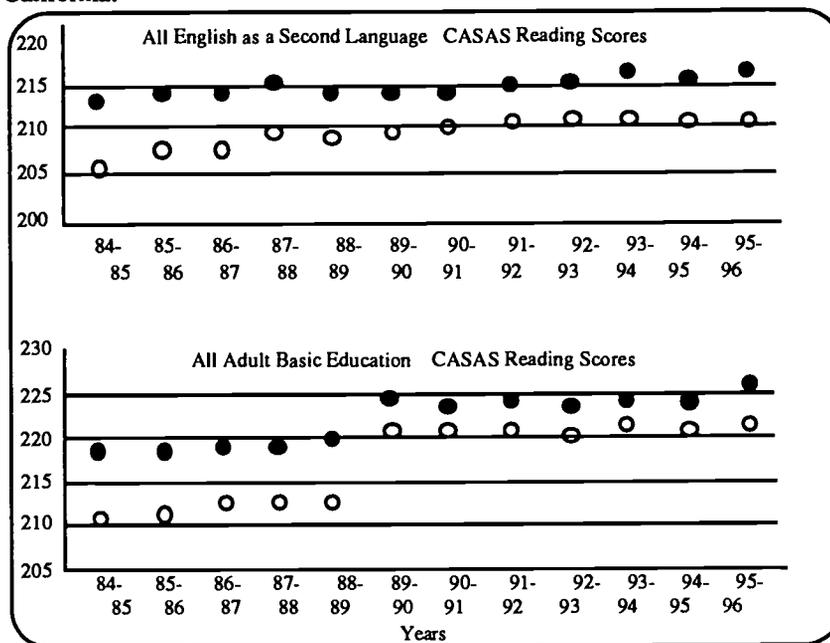
Sources: Data are from annual reports by CASAS to the California State Department of Education. Data for 1992-93 through 1995-96 are from the 1995-96 annual report, pp. 42-43; data for 1990-91 though 1991-92 are from the 1993-1994 annual report, pp. 37-38; data for 1989-90 are from the annual report for that year, p. 37; and data for the 1984-85 through 1988-89 period are from a summary chart in the CASAS summer institute for June 1989.

Data on CASAS reading tests for 1984-85 through 1995-96 are given in Figure 10.1. Averaged over all levels of ESL and ABE, pre-test and post-test scores for both ESL and ABE appear to have increased a little over the five years from 1984 to 1988. The gain stayed approximately constant at about 4-5+ CASAS scale score points for ESL.

The ABE data for 1984-85 through 1988-89 are markedly different from those of 1989-90 through 1995-96. We do not know why pre-test scores jumped from around 213 to over 220 between 1988-89 and 1989-90. But from 1989-90, gain scores for all levels of ABE combined has stayed fairly constant at around 3-4 scale score points. That's about where things were in 1984 for low implementers of CBAE. These data do not support an inference that improvements in learning in ESL/ABE as measured by the CASAS tests have been achieved on average due to implementing CBAE in California.

We do not know why the pre-test scores for ESL appear to have slowly risen over time. It indicates, however, that the applicants for these programs in the 1990s had higher language and literacy skills than their predecessors of the 1980s. Whether this means that the least skilled have stopped applying for services, or the skills of the pool of undereducated adults or new immigrants have increased is not determinable from these data.

The discontinuity of ABE scores from the 1980s to the 1990s was accompanied by a considerable drop in gain scores, though both pre- and post-test scores rose in the 1990s. The abruptness of the change suggests a change in the testing procedures, and indeed the annual report for 1989-90 indicated that new forms of the reading tests were introduced for both ESL and ABE classes. We did not find a direct reference to the abrupt change in ABE pre-and post-test scores in the CASAS annual reports for 1989-90 and beyond.

Other Indicators of Program Improvement

In her history of adult education in California West (1995) lists several other projects by the State Adult Education Unit to improve the adult literacy education system over the last decade or so. Multi-year projects started in the mid-1980s included the GED Teacher Academy, the ESL Teacher Institute, and the Leadership Institute for ESL and ABE resource persons and administrators.

Toward the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s other initiatives to improve the adult literacy education system included the Adult Education Institute for Research and Planning to implement a new strategic plan for adult education in the 1990s, the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN) which provides a computer-based electronic network with e-mail and other electronic information exchange and databases, and several other initiatives aimed at improving the adult literacy education system through staff development.

How well all these various initiatives have worked to improve the system is not altogether clear. The pre- and post-test gain data for learning as assessed by the CASAS annual surveys and presented in Figure 10.1 do not indicate improvements in learning outcomes over the years of these various initiatives and institutes.

But learning test score data are not the only indicators that can be used to index improvements in the adult literacy education system. The annual reports by CASAS also provide data on two other important indicators of program success, the percentage of adult students retained for 80 to 120 hours of instruction so that they can be pre-and post-tested and the percentage of adult students in ABE and ESL classes who leave during the program because they have met their personal goals.

Figure 10.2 summarizes data on retention and goal attainment for the ten years from 1986-87 through 1995-96. These data are for ABE and ESL combined because the CASAS reports up to 1991-92 presented only combined data. From 1992-93 only separate data were presented. We have used weighted averages of the ABE and

Figure 10.2. Percentage of adult students retained for 80 to 120 hours of instruction (top graph) and the percentage of adult students who leave during the program because they have met their personal goals (bottom). Data are for ABE and ESL classes combined.
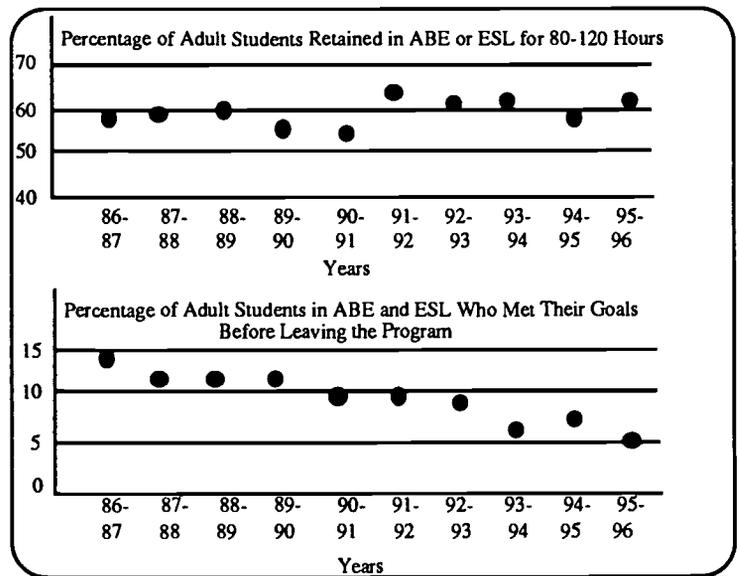
Sources: Data are from annual reports by CASAS to the California State Department of Education. Data for 1992-93 through 1995-96 are from the 1995-96 annual report, p. 92; data for 1991-92 annual report, p. 12; data for 1990-91 annual report, p. 26 ; data for 1989-90 annual report, p. 35; data for 1988-89 are from the CASAS summer institute notebook for June 1989; and data for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are from a paper by Patricia Rickard for the National Adult Literacy Symposium in the CASAS summer institute notebook for June 1989.

101

ESL data to construct Figure 10.2 data for 1992-93 through 1995-96 to make it possible to follow trends for a decade. Generally, however, trends for both ABE and ESL separately are similar to the combined data.

The retention data show fluctuations around the 60 percent figure for the decade. For the first five years, four out of five data points are below 60, while for the last five years four out of five are above 60 percent. But there is no indication of a systematic improvement in retention over the decade that would justify an inference that CBAE and all the other efforts to improve the adult literacy education system actually brought about higher retention rates.

Regarding goal attainment, the data shown are summed over goals such as "getting a job," "entering job training," "enter college," "improve communication skills," "become a citizen," "get a GED or high school diploma," or "personal" goals such as getting a driver's license, reading to children and so forth.

Clearly, goal attainment has never been high, with fewer than one in six attaining their goals in 1986-87. Over the decade, goal attainment shows a fairly steady decline of about two-thirds, from 15 to 5 percent of students reaching one or another of their goals. Of course, we have to recall that these data are for adult students who left the program before taking the CASAS post-tests. The 60 percent still there for the post-test make-up those who are classified as retained and they have yet to reach their goals.

Summary and Discussion

For at least a half a century, California's adult literacy education system has operated under the open entry/open exit policy in which students can enroll at any time in a course and then drop out at any time. In the 1950's California State Senator Johnson challenged the idea that students could be learning much by dropping in and out for two or three weeks. In earlier chapters of the present report we have heard in their own voices, how adult students and their teachers alike comment on the disruptive nature of the turbulence resulting from adding and dropping students at any time.

Managed Enrollment. Today some states are changing from the open entry/open exit policy to a policy that restricts when adult students can enroll in courses. In Oregon, a policy called Managed Enrollment (ME) is being implemented (Walker, 1997, personal communication), and the idea has been picked-up by adult educators in Kansas, too.

According to Oregon adult educators, "Managed enrollment is a process which limits when learners can enter a program. It is the opposite of open entry-open exit programming." In Kansas, the ME policy restricts when adult students can enroll to certain times, such as every four to eight weeks. In Oregon ME aims to reduce high turbulence rates by providing greater attention to adult students through case management and the teaching of skills in meaningful contexts, among other things. Whether or not ME accomplishes the types of outcomes that are being hoped for, and only time and the appropriate data will tell, it does indicate that there are options to the open entry/open exit policy to be explored.

Competency-Based Adult Education (CBAE). Despite almost two decades of formulating and implementing the CBAE approach to adult literacy education, the data reviewed in this chapter on retention, learning gains, and attainment of goals do not support the inference that the many hours of work by dedicated staff and teachers, millions of dollars, test and staff development activities invested in this strategy have lead to making the adult literacy education system better.

While our own work has focused on a microcosm of the state of California, in that microcosm we have not found evidence that would suggest that CBAE is being accomplished in a comprehensive and systematic manner. The CBAE approach aimed to provide extensive counseling and accurate placement of adult students at their "competency level," yet we have found little counseling and wide distributions of "competency levels" within classrooms.

To be sure, there are some teachers who make good use of some of the CBAE principles, such as Wes Popham whose work using CBAE in an electronics vocational English as a second language (ESL) class is reviewed in Chapter 8. But this is a rare exception to the more traditional classroom environment that characterizes instruction in the system in which the CWELL Action Research Center has been immersed.

On a positive note, we should acknowledge that without the CASAS assessment tests and annual surveys we would not have been able to determine whether these various outcomes were being achieved and if the adult literacy education system is getting better. This is a salutary outcome of the effort to implement the CBAE philosophy, policy and practices in California.

Perhaps the adult literacy education system would be better able to accomplish positive change if there were more public attention given to these data that have been so arduously collected over the last decade or so. Perhaps then more people would care about the adult literacy education system and demand that it get the support and commitment that it deserves. This is the subject of Chapter 11, the final chapter of this report.

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Chapter 11

Adult Literacy Education: The Marginalized Education System We Should Care More About

Mar•gin•al•ize (mär2jú-nú-lhz1) v. tr. mar•gin•al•ized mar•gin•al•iz•ing mar•gin•al•iz•es 1. To relegate or confine to a lower or outer limit or edge, as of social standing. --American Heritage Dictionary

In the CWELL Action Research Center (ARC) community, adult literacy education students, including those studying English as a second language (ESL), are marginalized. As a group they earn well below the medium income in the greater San Diego area, they are confined largely to an inner city area with lower education, large numbers are below the national standards for literacy, there are higher than average crime rates, unemployment rates, and higher rates of other social problems (drug usage, teenage pregnancy, etc.). The neighborhoods are those recognized by San Diego locals as of lower social standing.

To serve the educational needs of these adults, state and local governments have established an educational system which, like the adults it is meant to serve, is marginalized among education systems. It is marginalized in the sense that it is a non-credit educational system in between the K-12 educational system and the college system of California. It receives much less funds per full time equivalent student than do these other educational systems and eighty to ninety percent of its teachers work part-time without benefits.

The adult literacy education system is also clearly of lower social standing. This shows itself dramatically by the fact that there is practically no coverage of the system by the news media. While the K-12 and college systems are the subject of literally hundreds of news stories per year in the local newspapers, television, and radio, there are few, if any, stories about the adult literacy education system. Occasionally, perhaps on or near the yearly International Literacy Day, the media will run a human interest

> It is easy to get the impression that few people know about or care about the adult literacy education system.

story about an adult who received literacy tutoring, or advertise a literacy day event. But one looks back over the last five years of the CWELL project in vain for the types of investigative news stories that provide citizen oversight of the K-12 and college systems.

The marginalization of the adult literacy education system shows itself even at the state level where there has been little legislative concern for the adult literacy education system since the 1990 California Workforce Literacy Task Force's report discussed in Chapter 1. Since then, while tens of millions of dollars have been spent and more are allocated just to develop assessment systems for the K-12 system, there have been no statewide evaluation studies of the adult literacy education system by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's office, no in-depth studies by the Legislature nor any interest by the Governor's office in this system that spends close to $500,000,000 of California's taxpayer's funds each year.

From the lack of attention to it, it is easy to get the impression that few people know about or care about the adult literacy education system. The few that do care about it are more than likely the adult educators themselves and the adult students that have come into contact with the system. But why is this? Why is this education system and the adult literacy students it serves marginalized by the larger society?

Cultural Beliefs That Hinder Adult Literacy Education

Literature review by CWELL ARC researchers provides evidence to suggest that there are cultural beliefs about "intelligence" and when it is possible to develop it that appear to contribute to the marginalization of adult literacy education students and the education system that serves them.

> Since the 1990 California Workforce Literacy Task Force's report there have been no statewide evaluation studies by the Legislature nor the Governor of the adult literacy education system that spends close to $500,000,000 of California's taxpayer's funds each year.

Early Childhood and Intellectual Development. One of the beliefs in our culture is that the brain and its intellectual capacity is developed in early childhood. If children's early childhood development is not properly stimulated, then there is likely to be intellectual underdevelopment leading to academic failures, low aptitude, and social problems such as criminal activity, teenage pregnancy and welfare. It will be difficult if not impossible to overcome the disadvantages of deficiencies in early childhood stimulation later in adulthood. So why invest much in adult literacy education.

That these beliefs about the consequence of early childhood development are widespread is revealed by articles written by prominent journalists in major newspapers. For instance, on Sunday, October 13, 1991 the *San Diego Union* newspaper reprinted an article by Joan Beck, a columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, that argued for early childhood education because, "Half of adult intellectual capacity is already present by age 4 and 80 percent by age 8, ... the opportunity to influence [a child's] basic intelligence - considered to be a stable characteristic by age 17 - is greatest in early life."

A year earlier in the same newspaper on October 14, 1990 an adult literacy educator was quoted as saying, "Between the ages of zero to 4 we have learned half of everything we'll ever learn in our lives. Most of that has to do with language, imagination, and inquisitiveness."

A report by the Department of Defense shows how these beliefs about the possibility of doing much for adults after age 17 can affect government policy. After studying the job performance and post-service lives of "lower aptitude," less literate personnel, on February 24, 1990, the Director of Accession Policy of the Department of Defense commented in the *Washington Post* newspaper, "The lesson is that low-aptitude people, whether in the military or not, are always going to be at a disadvantage. That's a sad conclusion." A similar report of the Department of Defense study was carried in the New York Times of March 12, 1990. Then on April 8, 1990 Jack Anderson's column in the *Washington Post* quoted one of the Department of Defense researchers saying, "...by the age of 18 or 19, it's too late. The school system in early childhood is the only place to really help, and that involves heavy participation by the parents."

Born to Lose: Bad Genes and Adult Basic Skills. Another widespread belief about intellectual development and learning in adulthood is that because of their inferior genetic endowment, many adults were unable to benefit much from childhood education and they cannot benefit much from adult education and training either.

The 1994 book called *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994) created considerable controversy because it promoted the foregoing belief. It strongly implied that IQ is largely genetically determined, not subject to much modifiability, and a strong influence on many of the social problems that our nation faces, including school dropouts, crime, poverty and welfare.

In a January 7, 1997 article in the *Washington Times* , a prominent conservative newspaper published in Washington DC and read by many members of Congress, columnist Ken Adelman wrote:

> The age-old nature vs. nuture debate assumes immediacy as the new Congress and new administration gin up to address such issues as poverty, crime, drugs, etc.
>
> This, the most intellectually intriguing debate around, is moving far toward nature (and far from nurture) with new evidence presented by an odd pair - gay activist Chandler Burr and conservative scholar Charles Murray.
>
> In brief, their new findings show that 1) homosexuality and 2) educational-economic achievement are each largely a matter of genes - not of upbringing.
>
> If true, as appears so, the scope of effective government programs narrows. Fate, working through chromosomes, bestows both sexual orientation and brainpower, which shape one's life and success.
>
> Little can be altered - besides fostering tolerance and helping in any narrow window left open - through even an ideally designed public program. ...
>
> Society's problems - poverty, crime, drugs, illegitimacy - come disproportionately from those with low IQ. In fact, half of poor people and three-fourths of high-school dropouts have IQs under 90. The average IQ of convicted felons is 92. A third of mothers of illegitimate children have IQs of 80 and under. ...
>
> No doubt many solid researchers differ with Burr and Murray....But these two social scientists have presented their cases clearly and courageously. It's now up to their opponents to be so clear and convincing. (page B-6)

The juxtaposition of homosexuals and those of lower educational and economic achievement is an obvious rhetorical device meant to stir negative emotions about both groups.

The Need to Dispel Harmful Cultural Beliefs

None of the articles about intellectual development in early childhood, the Department of Defense's study of disadvantaged veterans, nor the genetic basis of educational and economic achievement elicited what Adelman called a "clear and convincing" response from the adult literacy education community. Yet, if these widespread beliefs were true, they would have dire implications for the achievement of Goal 6 of the National Education Goals, which states that by the year 2000 every adult will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

These beliefs contribute mightily to the marginalization of adult literacy students and adult literacy education. They denigrate as apparently futile the work of those involved in the language and literacy education of youth and adults in any setting, including the military, job training, corrections, adult basic education, workplace literacy, and family literacy programs. Most sorrowfully, these types of beliefs defame the educational capacity of millions of adults who seek educational assistance in adult literacy education programs throughout the nation.

As we have heard earlier from adult students, many adults sense these cultural beliefs and incorporate them into their own self-images and come to believe that they are not smart enough to learn much. So they avoid adult education programs.

Towards Dispelling These Insidious Cultural Beliefs. While there is insufficient room here to "clearly and convincingly" dispel the beliefs about human intellectual development outlined above in the news media, a partial rebuttal can be given. At the outset it should be noted that none of the assertions in the news articles are true.

First, Joan Beck was quoting research by Benjamin Bloom in the 1960s (Bloom,1964). But Bloom did not show that half of one's intellect was achieved by age 4. Rather, he argued that IQ at age 4 was correlated .7 with IQ at age 17. Since the square of .7 is .49, Bloom stated that half of the variance among a group of adults' IQ scores at age 17 could be predicted from their group of scores at age 4. But half of the *variability among* a group of people's IQ scores is a long way from the idea that half of a given person's IQ is developed by age 4. This is not even conceptually possible because for one thing there is no universally agreed to understanding of what "intelligence" is. Further, even if we could agree on what "intelligence" is, there is no such thing as "half of one's intellect" because no one knows what 0 or 100 percent intelligence is.

Second, regarding the news articles about the Department of Defense studies of "low aptitude" troops, the conclusions are based on analyses of the job performance of hundreds of thousands of personnel in both the 1960s and 1980s with Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) scores between the 10th and the 30th percentiles, the range of scores which the Department of Defense studies called "low aptitude."

> None of the articles in the San Diego Union, New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Washington Post, or Washington Star about early childhood, low aptitude, disadvantaged adults or the genetic basis of low educational or economic achievement were true.

But contrary to what the Department of Defense researchers and accession policy makers stated, the actual data show that in both time periods, while the low aptitude personnel did not perform quite as well as those personnel with aptitudes above the 30th percentile, over 80 percent of the low aptitude personnel did, in fact, perform satisfactorily and many performed in an outstanding manner (Sticht, Armstrong, Hickey, & Caylor, 1987). As veterans they had employment rates and earnings far exceeding their rates and earnings at the beginning of the study. But this conclusion would not have supported the Department of Defense's policy for wanting to recruit only "high quality" personnel so they simply asserted in the newspapers and before the Congress that these adults were disadvantaged and always would be!

Third, though *The Bell Curve* book cited by Adelman presents detailed analyses of social problems and IQ, what is not generally understood, however, is that almost all of the analyses relating IQ with social problems were made using the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) as the measure of IQ. What should be of interest to adult educators, however, is that the AFQT does not measure IQ. This was made clear in the early 1980s when official Department of Defense spokespersons testified to Congress that the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) are *not* tests of intelligence or IQ. Richard Danzig, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Logistics spoke before a congressional committee. "The testing specialists note that we ought not to confuse these aptitude tests with intelligence tests as such" Danzig said. "Naturally there is some correlation between the two types of tests but to speak of somebody as being in category IV or category V is not per se to make a judgment about his intelligence. ... In fact, we don't want to test IQ which is traditionally the aptitude of school children to perform well in school. We want to test their ability to learn to perform military jobs. That is somewhat related to intelligence, not alone intelligence however. I want to avoid that implication" (U. S. Senate, 1980, p. 1298)

Instead of measuring IQ, the AFQT actually measures the basic skills of reading and mathematics. The AFQT is made up of four subtests: word knowledge (vocabulary), paragraph comprehension, arithmetic word problems, and mathematics knowledge (facts of geometry, algebra). Scores on the AFQT are highly correlated with years of education. They are also highly correlated with the Tests of Adult Basic Skills (TABE), the Adult Basic Learning Exam (ABLE), the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and other tests of basic skills.

Because the AFQT actually measures basic skills (reading and mathematics), and not IQ, all of the analyses in *The Bell Curve* can be reinterpreted as relationships between basic skills and various social indicators. A couple of these reinterpretations are given below (*The Bell Curve* presents data for whites only, with socioeconomic status held constant).

Poverty . The bell curve of basic skills indicates that 48 percent of the white poor in 1989 came from the bottom 20 percent in basic skills.

Note that the foregoing does not say that 48 percent of those in the bottom 20 percent of basic skills were poor. It says that 48 percent of the poor came from those in the bottom 20 percent of basic skills. In fact, *most of the adult in the lowest levels of basic skills were not poor*. Some 74 percent of young, white adults (with socioeconomic status held constant) who were in the lowest 2 percentiles of basic skills (two standard deviations below the mean) were not in poverty. Over 85 percent of those at the 16th percentile (one standard deviation below the mean) were not in poverty. This indicates that one's poor basic skills (what *The Bell Curve* called IQ) do not automatically cause one to be poor. Still, poor basic skills were a more accurate predictor of poverty than parent's socioeconomic class. This is good news because while adults cannot go back and change their parent's socioeconomic status, they can change their own basic skills by studying and learning.

High School Dropouts (white, permanent dropouts who did not later return to get the GED). The bell curve of basic skills shows that two-thirds of high school dropouts came from the bottom 20 percent in basic skills.

This is good news because while one's poor basic skills do not automatically cause one to be a permanent school dropout, poor basic skills are a more important predictor of permanently dropping out than are parents' socioeconomic class. Yet, some 35 percent of young, white adults of average socioeconomic status who were in the lowest 2 percentiles of basic skills (two standard deviations below the mean) were not permanent dropouts. Some 75 percent of those at the 16th percentile (one standard deviation below the mean) were not permanent dropouts. Importantly, parent's socioeconomic status is a more important predictor than poor basic skills for those who are temporary dropouts and who later get their GED. This suggests a strong role for parents and the social groups they belong to in motivating adults to get their GED. Note that all these data are for whites only.

There are other data in *The Bell Curve* book to help us understand the relationships of basic skills to employment, crime, and other social concerns. But for now it is sufficient to note that the arguments in *The Bell Curve* about IQ and its immutability, are actually arguments about the basic skills of reading and mathematics. If reading and mathematics skills contribute to or actually constitute "IQ," as *The Bell Curve* books indicates, then there is evidence to suggest that, contrary to the conclusions of the journalists in the *Chicago Tribune, Washington Post* and *Washington Star*, "IQ" can be improved in adult literacy education programs. The CWELL ARC research reported in earlier chapters and an even larger body of evidence in published literature indicates that the basic skills are teachable, learnable and improvable across the life span.

The Centrality of Adult Literacy Education
to the Achievement of the National Education Goals

In opposition to the cultural beliefs that contribute to the *marginalization* of the adult literacy education system, there are actually reasons to argue for the *centralization* of adult literacy education in national education reform activities. As the following indicates, adult literacy education is central to the achievement of the eight national education goals of the National Governor's Association supported by legislation endorsed by both the Executive and Legislative branches of the U. S. government (National Education Goals Panel, 1997).

Goal 6 of the National Education Goals listed in the GOALS 2000 legislation is called "Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning." It states that every American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. While Goal 6 is the only goal that focuses directly upon adults, most of the other seven goals also rest largely upon success in achieving Goal 6 if they are to be achieved.

Goal 1, "School Readiness," calls for all children in America to start school ready to learn. This places direct responsibility upon youth and adults, both parents and parents-to-be to provide proper planning for the conception of children, the prenatal care of babies, and the post-natal, preschool care and stimulation that produces children with the oral language skills and experience with literate environments that will prepare them to enter the culture of the school ready to learn. Undereducated youth and adults whose literacy skills are low will likely find it difficult to contribute to the achievement of Goal 1 unless they achieve Goal 6 - literacy.

Goal 2 calls for the high school graduation rate to increase to a least 90 percent, while Goals 3 and 5 call for greater achievement in learning by students across the grades, with an emphasis upon science and mathematics. Goal 8 calls for greater parental participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

All these goals presuppose, in the general case, the literate youth and adults called for in Goal 6. The recognition that the education of youth and adults is not an incidental, marginal activity, but rather the key to accomplishing the remaining education goals offers a challenge for adult literacy education in the new millennium. It places greater responsibility upon policy makers to increase their attention to and find resources

Table 11.1. Some effects of higher levels of mother's education at different phases of child bearing and schooling.

Phase of child bearing/schooling	Effect of higher levels of mother's education
Before pregnancy	Higher economic productivity; better personal health care; lower fertility rates; smaller families
During pregnancy and at birth	Better prenatal care; more full term births; higher birthweight babies; fewer learning disabilities
Before going to school	Better health care; better development of language, cognitive, and literacy skills; better preparation for schoolwork
During the school years	Higher participation rates in the schooling process; better management of homework; better advocacy for children's education and negotiation of school/child conflicts; higher academic achievement by children

for the creation of a system of adult literacy education that is not a marginalized, piecemeal collection of services but is rather an integral component of the educational commitment of the nation. It places further responsibility upon adult literacy educators to develop effective

119

programs that produce demonstrable, sustainable, useful gains in literacy and a commitment by adult students to continue their learning beyond the classroom walls.

The Multiplier Effects of Adult Literacy Education

The major cultural beliefs about cognitive development that pervade our society have lead many to underestimate the importance of adult literacy education. But research by the CWELL ARC staff leads us to suggest that is a mistake. Here are four reasons why.

Better Educated Adults Produce Better Educated Children. Better educated parents send children to school better prepared to learn, with higher levels of language skills, knowledge about books, pencils and other literacy tools needed for school and life. Better educated mothers have healthier babies, smaller families, children better prepared to start school, and children who stay in school and learn more (Sticht & McDonald, 1989).

Table 11.1, above, summarizes research on the effects of mothers' education on children and their educational development at various developmental stages, beginning with the role of education on the initial propensity to have children. Girls' and mothers' education is important in determining fertility rates, that is, just how many children there will be in the household. The latter, in turn, is related to the preschool cognitive development of children and their subsequent achievement in school.

Given that conception and motherhood have occurred, the next question concerns the pre- and postnatal conditions that permit the birth of healthy children who will survive. Mortality rates and the health of young, preschool children determine how many children will be available to benefit from primary education. Mothers' education level is a major factor in ensuring high survival rates and healthier children with whom the schools can work.

More highly educated mothers not only produce healthier preschool children, they also produce children who are better prepared with knowledge, oral language and literacy skills upon entry into primary schooling. There is no denying the importance of preschool parent and child interaction, particularly in activities such as reading together, for the development of cognitive, oral language, and preschool literacy skills that will later serve the child well in the schools.

Finally, parents', and especially mothers' education is strongly related to children's tendency to stay in school and to achieve at higher levels. Mothers' education level is particularly important for students in the later grades of school, where more difficult assignments may make more demands on the mother's knowledge for help with homework, and where the mother's knowledge of and willingness to become involved in the schools on behalf of her children may make the difference between children's school success or failure. All of these positive effects of women's education offer compelling arguments for greatly expanding efforts to include women in literacy and adult education programs.

Better Educated Adults Demand and Get Better Schooling for Children. Wider Opportunities for Women in Washington, DC found that mothers in women's education programs, most of whom were on welfare, reported that at the end of their education program they spent more time with their children talking about school, helping them with their homework, taking them to the library, and reading to them. They also said their children attended school more, and showed improvements in their school grades, test scores, and reading. In visits to the homes of some of these mothers their children confirmed what their mothers had reported.

Children said things like, "I do my homework just like Mommy!" or "she reads him and his sisters stories" (Van Fossen & Sticht, 1991).

Better educated adults provide better communities for learning. AC Rochester, a supplier of components for General Motors automobile manufacturing in New York State, was losing business and was in fear of closing, putting thousands of workers out of jobs. In response, management, labor union members, and educators got together, and provided adult education programs for employees. They provided full time education with full pay to over two hundred employees for up to ten months. These changes in workforce education permitted the introduction of new management and production techniques. In turn, these changes helped bring in several new contracts, including a billion dollar contract with Russia. This increased the local tax base for community services, including better public education (Rosow & Zager, 1992).

The Intergenerational Transfer of Literacy in a GAIN-ABE Lab
Judy Quinton, CWELL ARC Teacher Researcher

[Note: In her CWELL ARC research project, Quinton introduced activities in her GAIN welfare-to-work computer lab for adult basic education (ABE) to help adult women who were mothers help their children with school. In a survey of 16 mothers Quinton found the following percentages of responses to the survey questions.]

1. Will you take part in more of your children's activities such as PTA?   Yes-88%
2. Will you provide assistance and help with your children's homework?   Yes-100%
3. Will you feel more comfortable talking to your child's teacher?   Yes-100%
4. Will you provide more educational type activities for your children.?   Yes 100%

Quinton also asked the mothers, "What would you do to ensure your child's graduation from High School?" Again, 100% gave positive responses such as "I will encourage them by continuing to educate myself, and attending night school. Teaching them to be proud of their scholastic achievements." Another said [she would tell them] it is easier to find a job and come out well in life. One more said, "They need to have a good education. It's hard but the reward comes later."

In response to another question, "Is there any other important effect the GAIN program has had or will have on your children?", several mothers mentioned an increased ability to help their children, and one stated that her children's grades had improved.

Better educated adults are more productive for society. In recent years, due primarily to the now defunct National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP), a body of research has emerged on workplace literacy programs that integrate English as a second language (ESL) or other basic skills education with job skills training, much as in Wes Popham's Vocational ESL program discussed in Chapter 8. The general results of this body of research is that such programs may contribute not only to improving adults' job-related literacy and numeracy skills, but also to improved productivity on the job, increased reading to children at home, thereby better preparing them for and helping them in school, increased use of language and literacy skills in the community, and the decision to pursue further education (Hollenbach, 1993).

In one study, ten manufacturing companies in the area of Chicago, USA, making products ranging from hydraulic valves to bubble gum, provided basic English language, reading and mathematics education for over 700 employees. In evaluation studies conducted in six of the companies, many supervisors reported that the programs had a variety of positive effects on organizational effectiveness, including increased productivity, employees became easier to train, their job performance, safety, and communication improved, many became more promotable, and a third of them said their companies would continue the programs (Sticht, 1994, pp. 6-9).

The majority of the employees themselves said that the workplace literacy programs had helped them not only at work, but also at home, where they read more to children or grandchildren and helped them with mathematics homework, and in the community, where they spoke up more in grocery stores to guard against overcharges, they got driver's licenses, and participated in school and other community activities that contributed to a safer and sounder community, and most were encouraged to seek further education (Figure 11.1). Through all these changes in behavior, which resulted from a very brief, focused set of adult literacy education programs, the workplace literacy programs contributed to a number of the National Education Goals concerned with improving the K-12 system.

Figure 11.1   Effects of Workplace Literacy Programs in the Chicago Area, 1994
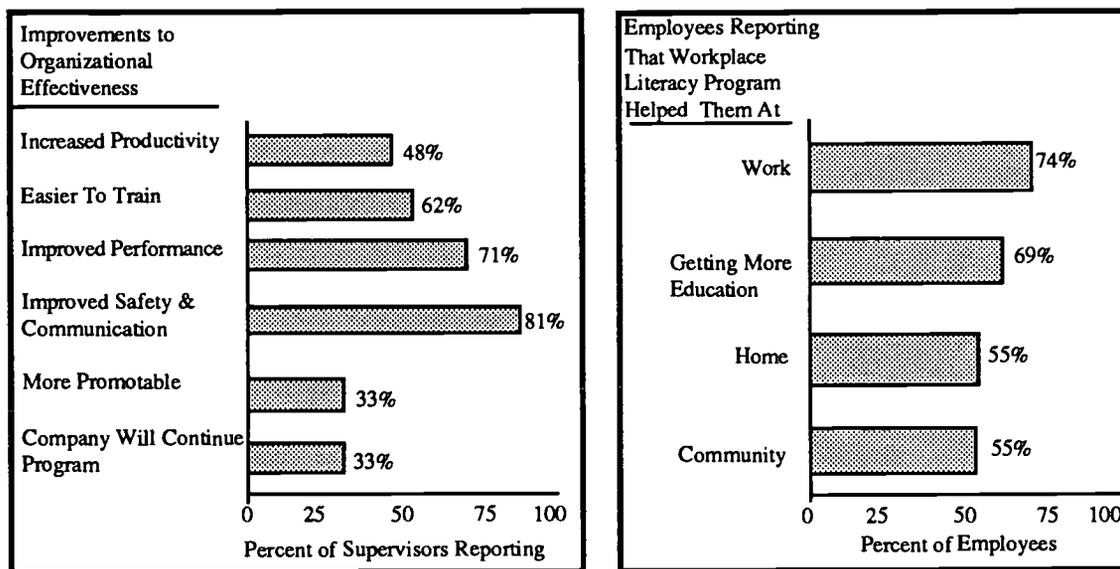
Summary and Discussion

In this chapter we have argued that the marginalization of adult literacy students and the adult literacy education system is based, at least in part, on incorrect cultural beliefs about the development of human intellectual abilities. Articles in the *San Diego Union* reprinted from the *Chicago Tribune* that expressed the beliefs that adults have half of their intelligence by age 4 were shown to reflect an incorrect understanding of the research of Benjamin Bloom, and to be conceptually unfounded because there is no general agreement on what "intelligence" is and no one knows what 0 or 100 percent intelligence is, a prerequisite for knowing that someone has "half" of "it".

CWELL ARC research revealed that articles in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* about the Department of Defense studies of low aptitude personnel were based on faulty understandings of the Department of Defense research, in which contrary to the statements of Department of Defense researchers, 80 percent of low aptitude personnel did, in fact, perform satisfactorily and raise themselves from poverty to middle class employment and income 20 years later.

An article in the *Washington Star* about the genetic basis and unmodifiability of intelligence was found to reflect a misunderstanding of the nature of the "IQ" tests used in *The Bell Curve* book. The latter were actually the reading and mathematics tests that make-up the Armed Forces Qualification Tests (AFQT). Because the AFQT actually measures basic

skills and not IQ, and because extensive evidence indicates that adults can modify their basic skills through education and learning, the claims of the *Washington Star* article were found to be invalid.

ROI: Return On Investment in Adult Education Gives "Double Duty Dollars"

The research summarized in this report on the outcomes of adult literacy education provide evidence to suggest that "double duty dollars" may be obtained through the intergenerational transfer of educational benefits from parents to their children. When we provide adults with education and training, we invest in one generation, but we get a return on investment in two generations. We are not helping just one person, but an entire family.

Research on workforce education and workplace literacy programs provides evidence that by integrating academic and jobs skills training, we can reduce the amount of time needed to both educate and train adults in a job field, they can more quickly enter into employment and more rapidly return the investment in their training through tax revenues.

> By investing in the education of adults, we improve the educability of children.

We can teach those on welfare job skills and parenting skills by integrating these content areas with basic skills instruction, rather than thinking that one has to first get the basic skills and then use them to learn job or parenting skills. Making such learning sequential adds to education and training time and costs, and keeps adults out of the productive workforce longer. Greater returns to education and training dollars can be obtained by changing existing regulations to require the integration of basic skills, job training, and parenting education, much as the Department of Education's National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP) regulations called for teaching basic skills in the context of work skills.

By investing in the literacy education of adults, we are not just getting people *off* welfare roles, we are helping to *keep them off* welfare in the future if they find themselves back in the job market again. Importantly, the research on workplace literacy programs reviewed above provides evidence that investments in adult literacy education improves productivity at work *today*, while improving the productivity of the future workforce by reforming the K-12 schools will take decades.

We Need to Care More About Adult Literacy Education

For all the reasons given here, we should care more about the adult literacy education system. Presently, the adult literacy education system gets almost no consideration in the news media, the California Legislature, or the Governor's office. This lack of caring constitutes a failure in providing citizen oversight of this critically important education system.

There is almost no investment by California's state or local governments, businesses or private charitable foundations in *research and development* that could lead to improvements in California's adult literacy education and workforce education training systems. This is unconscionable given all the information presented in this report that shows the importance of adult literacy education to both the improvement of K-12 education, the improvement of workforce competitiveness, and the general improvement of the quality of human life.

Government agencies should consider the *multiplier effects* that may be possible for investments in adult literacy education. By investing in the education of adults, we make the schools more productive and the community more productive. We help in the

achievement of all of the National Education Goals. We promote democracy and good citizenship. And we do it all today, without having to wait 20 years for reform of the preschool and K-12 system to produce returns on investment.

Given the evidence for the multiplier effects of adult literacy education, it seems imperative that more attention be given to this system. It is time for this critical educational activity to move from the margins to the mainstream of California's educational systems.

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