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ABSTRACT

This volume of newsletters focuses on connecting research and practice in adult literacy programs. Issue A of August 2001 includes: "Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults" (Ashley Hager); "Beginning ESOL Learners' Advice to Their Teachers" (MaryAnn Cunningham Florez); "The Neurobiology of Reading and Dyslexia" (Sally E. Shaywitz, Bennett A. Shaywitz); "Using a Multisensory Approach To Help Struggling Adult Learners" (Gladys Geertz); "Reading for Pleasure" (Sondra Cuban); "Theory to Practice, Practice to Theory" (Anne Murr); and "Teaching Reading to First-Level Adults" (Judith A. Alamprese). Issue B of October 2001 contains: "Describing the NCSALL Adult Development Research" (Eleanor Drago-Severson, et al); "Three Developmentally Different Types of Learners" (Eleanor Drago-Severson, et al); "Three Different Types of Change" (Eleanor Drago-Severson, et al); "The Power of a Cohort and of Collaborative Groups" (Eleanor Drago-Severson, et al); "A Conversation with FOB" (Sylvia Greene, Matthew Puma); "A Mingling of Minds" (Carol Eades); "Four Adult Development Theories and Their Implications for Practice" (Lisa M. Baumgartner); "Letting Learners Lead" (Debby D'Amico, Mary Ann Capehart); "TV411 and the Transformation of Self" (Earle Reybold); and "Common Ground" (Lynne M. Bedard). Issue C of February 2002 includes: "A Maturing Partnership" (Rima E. Rudd); "'Struggles': Writing as Healing" (Leslie Ridgway, Dale Griffith);

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"Reflections on the Women, Violence, and Adult Education Project" (Elizabeth Morrish); "Literacy, Health, and Health Literacy: State Policy Considerations" (Marcia Drew Hohn); "ESOL Teachers: Helpers in Health Care" (Kate Singleton); and "The Elizabeth West Project: A Health Professional Joins a Literacy Program in Downeast Maine" (Beth Russett). Issue D of June 2002 contains: "Pathways to Change" (Cristine Smith, Judy Hofer); "Teachable Moments: Videos of Adult ESOL Classrooms" (Reuel Kurzet); "Using a Learning Organization Approach To Enhance ABE Teachers' Professional Development" (M. Cecil Smith, Amy D. Rose); "Study Circles Challenge the Intellect and Strengthen the Professional Community" (Tom Smith); "PDK Couples Web Resources with Peer Interaction" (Shelly Ratelle); and "New Directions for Professional Development: Kentucky's Journey" (Sandra Kestner). Each newsletter also includes an annotated listing of literacy-related publications and information on literacy-related events. (MN)

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Focus on Basics

Volume 5

nA-D Aug-Jun 2001-2002

Barbara Garner, Editor

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Focus on
Basics
CONNECTING RESEARCH & PRACTICE

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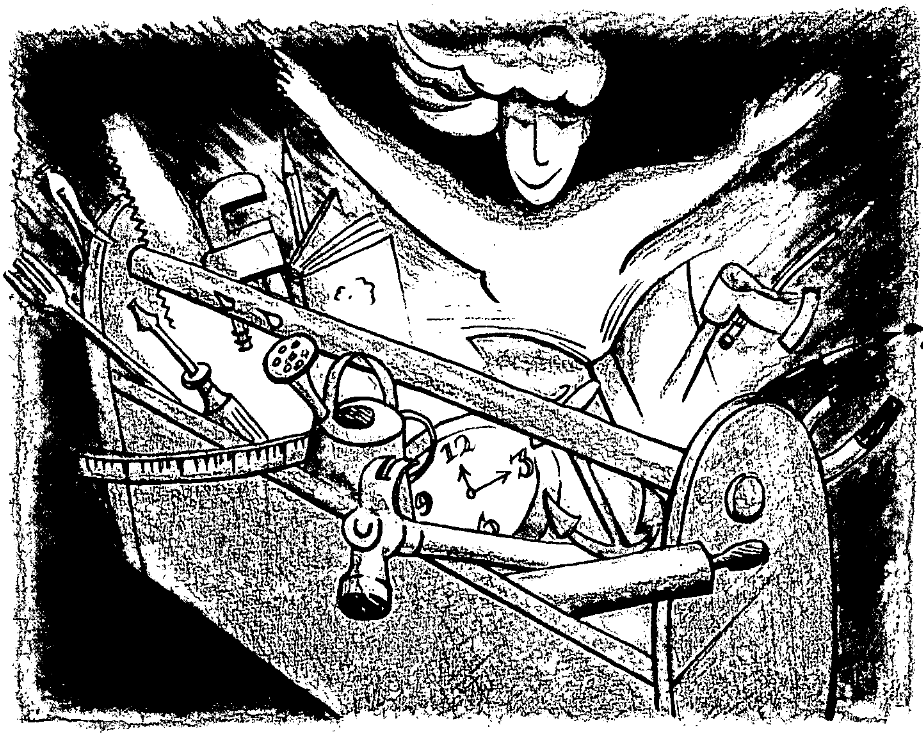

Techniques for Teaching Beginning-Level Reading to Adults

by Ashley Hager

I have been teaching beginning-level reading (equivalent to grade 0–2) at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, MA, for the past eight years. The majority of students in my class have either suspected or diagnosed reading disabilities (dyslexia). The difficulty they experience learning to read is as severe as the urgency they feel about mastering the task. One of my students, a former Olympic athlete, had to turn down a job offer as a track coach because of his inability to read the workout descriptions. He describes his life as "an ice cream that he is unable to lick."

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WORLD EDUCATION NCSALL

Focus on Basics is the quarterly publication of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. It presents best practices, current research on adult learning and literacy, and how research is used by adult basic education teachers, counselors, program administrators, and policymakers. *Focus on Basics* is dedicated to connecting research with practice, to connecting teachers with research and researchers with the reality of the classroom, and by doing so, making adult basic education research more relevant to the field.

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NCSALL
National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

WORLD EDUCATION

Welcome!

"First-level readers," "beginners," "new readers," "0-4 level," adult basic education has struggled with what to call those learners who are really still building decoding and comprehension skills. This inability to settle on a name may be masking a larger issue: Why are we, as a field, failing to serve these learners well?

I can think of three general reasons.

The first is the system. The funding structure for many adult basic education programs does not encourage service to beginners, because beginners often progress slowly.

Discomfort with providing direct instruction, which can feel childish to teachers who are attempting to create adult learning environments, is another stumbling block.

A third is that serving first-level learners well is hard work and requires specific training. Native English-speaking adults who have not learned to read probably have some learning difficulties or disability. Teachers must know a lot about the craft of reading to teach someone with a learning disability, and many adult basic education teachers, while well intentioned, lack the formal training in reading instruction they need to reach these learners effectively.

The teachers writing in this issue of *Focus on Basics* do know a lot about teaching reading. Ashley Hagar, of Cambridge, Massachusetts; Gladys Geertz, of Anchorage, Alaska; and Anne Murr of Des Moines, Iowa, all bring immense skill to their classrooms and programs. They all have found that very structured classes, with direct instruction in specific subskills such as phonological awareness, word analysis, and sight word recognition, among other skills, provide the best results. Their students don't chafe under direct instruction, they welcome it: finally, they have the tools they need to join, however belatedly, the reading club.

The beginning learners in MaryAnn Cunningham Florez's English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) program had valuable feedback to share about the strengths and weaknesses of their instructors. Included in their list was the suggestion to "talk to us about learning and the learning process." It echoes the metacognitive strategies provided to students by Hagar, Geertz, and Murr. Florez shares her students' complete list of suggestions, and her techniques for getting such input from students.

Drs. Sally and Bennett Shaywitz, in their overview of the neurobiology of dyslexia, explain that an inability to segment the written word into its underlying phonologic elements results in readers having difficulty in decoding and identifying words. But, they remind us, the phonologic deficit is "domain-specific." That is, other cognitive skills are intact. This is important information to share with first-level learners. It explains the paradox so often encountered of otherwise intelligent people who experience great difficulty reading.

We hope that the articles in this issue provide first level teachers with an introduction to the techniques useful for teaching first-level learners. Let us know what works for you.

* * *

You've noticed that this issue of *Focus on Basics* looks different. We decided to "freshen" our layout and design with new typeface and a few other small changes. "Blackboard" is now inside the back page, and we've added the section "All About NCSALL" to the back cover. We hope that the editorial content remains as relevant and useful as it has always been.

Sincerely,

Barbara Garner

Barbara Garner
Editor

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Techniques for Teaching

continued from page 1

Little research is available on the most effective methods for teaching reading to beginning-level adults. My continuing challenge has been to determine how reading acquisition research conducted with children can be applied to teaching reading to adults. In this article, I describe the techniques I have found most useful; I hope other teachers working with beginning readers will find them helpful.

Our Class

This year our class includes nine students: six men and three women. Three are from the United States, five are from the Caribbean, and one is from Ethiopia. Their ages range from late 20s to late 50s and all are employed. Their educational experiences range from completing four to 12 years of school; one student has a high school diploma. One student has documented learning disabilities (LD). Students typically enter my class knowing little more than the names of the letters and a handful of letter sounds. They are usually only able to write their name and, in most cases, the letters of the alphabet. However, one student had never held a pencil before he entered my class.

Our class meets two evenings a week for three hours each evening. Because skilled reading depends on the mastery of specific subskills, I find it helpful to teach these explicitly. I organize the class into blocks of time in which, with the help of two volunteers, I directly teach eight components of reading: phonological awareness, word analysis, sight word recognition, spelling, oral reading for accuracy, oral reading for fluency, listening comprehension, and writing. These components embody the skills and strategies that successful readers have mastered, either consciously or unconsciously. My curriculum also includes an intensive writing component.

Typical Lesson Plan for a Three-Hour Class

Component	Time (min)
Phonological Awareness	10
Word Analysis	20
Word Recognition "Sight Words"	10
Spelling	20
BREAK	10
Oral Reading (Accuracy)	20
Oral Reading (Fluency)	35
Comprehension	25
Writing	30

Over the last 30 years, a significant amount of research has compared the effectiveness of different approaches to teaching beginning reading to children. It consistently concludes that approaches that include a systematically organized and explicitly taught program of phonics result in significantly better word recognition, spelling, vocabulary, and comprehension (Chall, 1967; Curtis, 1980; Stanovich 1986; Adams, 1990; Snow et al., 1998). For this reason, I directly teach the structure of the English language using a phonics-based approach.

I draw from a number of phonics-based reading programs, including the Wilson Reading System, the Orton-Gillingham System, and the Lindamood-Phoneme Sequencing Program (LiPS; see the "Blackboard" on page 31 for contact information). The Wilson Reading System is a multisensory, phonics-based program developed specifically for adults. Unlike phonics-based programs for children, the Wilson system is organized around the six syllable types, which enables even beginning level adults to read works with somewhat sophisticated vocabulary (see the box on page 4 for the six syllable types). The Orton-Gillingham program is a phonics-based program similar to the Wilson Reading System but designed for dyslexic children. Students learn about syllables much later in the program. I find particularly helpful the Orton-Gillingham technique for learning phonetically irregular sight words (see page 5). The LiPS Program is useful for helping students acquire an awareness of individual sounds in words. This ability, referred to as phonemic awareness, is a prerequisite for reading and spelling.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness, which involves the ability to differentiate and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes, in words, is the strongest predictor of future reading success for children (Adams, 1995). No research exists that describes the affects of phonological awareness on reading for adults. However, I have found that teaching phonological awareness to my beginning-reading adults significantly improves their reading accuracy and spelling, especially for reading and spelling words with blends.

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Three phonological tasks that I use with my students, in order of difficulty, are auditory blending, auditory segmenting, and phonemic manipulation. Auditory blending involves asking students to blend words that the teacher presents in segmented form. For example, I say "/s/-/p/-/l/-/a/-/sh/" and the students responds with "/splash/." Auditory segmenting is exactly the opposite. I present the word "/sprint/" and the student must segment the word into its individual sounds "/s/-/p/-/r/-/i/-/n/-/t/." Phonemic manipulation, which is the strongest predictor of reading acquisition, is also the most difficult. The student must recognize that individual phonemes may be added, deleted, or moved around in words.

The following exchange is an example of a phonemic manipulation task. I ask the student to repeat a word such as "bland." Then I ask the student to say the word again, changing one of the phonemes. For example, "Say it again without the "/l/." The student responds with "/band/." While phonological awareness does not include the student's ability to associate sounds with letter symbols, and tasks are presented orally, the research concludes that the most effective way to promote phonemic awareness is in conjunction with the teaching of sound-to-symbol relationships (Torgesen, 1998).

Word Analysis

Word analysis, or phonics, involves teaching the alphabetic principle: learning that the graphic letter symbols in our alphabet correspond to speech sounds, and that these symbols and sounds can be blended together to form real words. Word analysis strategies enable students to "sound out" words they are unable to recognize by sight. Explicit, direct instruction in phonics has been proven to support beginning reading and spelling growth better than opportunistic attention to phonics while reading, especially for students with suspected reading disabilities (Blackman et al., 1984; Chall, 1967, 1983). Beginning readers should be encouraged to decode unfamiliar words as opposed to reading them by sight, because it requires attention to every letter in sequence from left to right. This helps to fix the letter patterns in the word in a reader's memory. Eventually, these patterns are recognized instantaneously and words appear to be recognized holistically (Ehri, 1992; Adams, 1990).

I use the Wilson Reading System to teach phonics because the six syllable types are introduced early on. This enables even beginning-level adults to read words that are part of their oral vocabulary and overall cognitive abilities. After learning the closed syllable rule, for example, students are able to read three-syllable words such as "Wisconsin," "fantastic," and "Atlantic." Reading multisyllabic words provides my students, who have acquired a history of reading failure, with an unexpected sense of accomplishment and opens

Syllable Types

SYLLABLE TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Closed Syllable (vc/cv)	– one vowel per syllable – ends with one or more consonants – the vowel has a short sound *example:* pit, bath, splash, mitten
Vowel-Consonant-e Syllable (vce)	– one vowel, then a consonant, then an e – the first vowel has a long sound – the e is silent *example:* hope, mine, bedtime
Open Syllable (v/cv), (vc/v)	– one vowel – ends with the vowel – vowel has a long sound *example:* me, so , flu, why
R-Controlled Syllable	– one vowel, followed by an r – vowel sound is neither short or long – vowel sound is controlled by the r – /ar/ as in "car," /or/ as in "Ford," / er/, /ir/, /ur/ all sound alike as in "her," "bird," "church"
The Consonant-LE Syllable	– has three letters: a consonant, an "l," and an "e" – the e is silent – the consonant and the "l" are blended together *example:* little, grumble, table
The Double-Vowel Syllable	– two vowels side-by-side making one sound – usually the first vowel is long, and the second is silent *example:* maid, may, leaf, seen, pie, goat

Credit: *Wilson Reading System*

possibilities for them. Recognizing syllable types is important because the syllable pattern determines the sound of the vowel and how the word must be pronounced.

I have found that the Wilson Reading System Sound Tapping technique is a particularly effective way to teach decoding. In this technique, each sound in a word is represented by one tap. Students tap the first sound with their index finger and thumb, the second sound with their middle finger and thumb, the third sound with their ring finger and thumb, etc. If the student runs out of fingers, he or she returns to the index finger. Digraphs — two letters that make one sound (/sh/, /ch/, /th/, /ck/, /ph/) — are represented with one tap. Example: bed = 3 sounds, 3 taps; shed = 3 sounds, 3 taps; stint = 5 sounds, 5 taps. This technique helps students to hear all the sounds in a word.

"Sight Word" Recognition

Since many of the words that appear most frequently in print are phonetically irregular, even beginning readers must learn to recognize some words by sight. Students with reading disabilities have typically relied almost entirely on their ability to memorize words. In most cases, however, their strategies for remembering the way words look in print have proved ineffective. I have experienced some success in teaching sight words using the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic-Tactile (V-A-K-T) method that is part of the Orton- Gillingham program. The VAKT method, which emphasizes memorization through visualization, involves asking the student to say the name of each letter in a word and to trace each letter with his or her finger in the air before covering the word and attempting to spell it on paper. The VAKT method may be used to help students with both the reading and spelling of phonetically irregular words. To avoid unnecessary frustration, it is best to tell beginning readers which words they should decode and which words they must recognize by sight.

Spelling

Spelling is an effective way to reinforce both word analysis skills and automatic word recognition. Research consistently indicates that fluent, skilled readers (both children and adults) make use of spelling patterns when they read and, conversely, reading itself reinforces a knowledge of spelling patterns (Adams, 1995). Spelling for practicing word analysis skills and spelling for promoting word recognition (usually of phonetically irregular words), however, involve different tasks and call for different teaching techniques. The VAKT method, described earlier, is a process for teaching learners how to spell phonetically irregular words. When dictating phonetically regular words, include only those words that include letter sounds and spelling rules that have been taught directly.

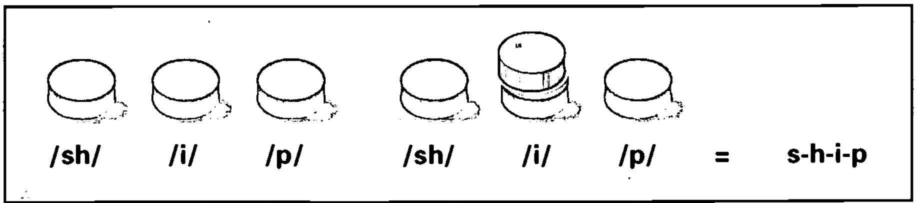
An especially effective technique for the spelling of phonetically regular words is the LiPS technique. This involves asking students to put down a poker chip for each sound they hear. After identifying the correct number of sounds in the word, students locate the vowel sound and place a different-colored chip over the chip that represents the vowel sound. Only after they have identified the sounds and isolated the vowel sound are students asked to select the letter symbols that represent the sounds in the word. This places a lighter burden on short-term and working memory.

For beginning-level readers who are native speakers of English, it is important to include nonsense words as part of dictation practice. Nonsense words require the student to use word attack strategies as opposed to sight recognition.

Oral Reading

Oral reading builds accuracy and fluency, both of which contribute to improved reading comprehension. It is also the most practical way for me to monitor a student's progress. It gives a student an opportunity to practice applying word attack and word recognition skills in context. Because reading for fluency and reading for accuracy involve different objectives and require different materials, I find it useful to teach and evaluate them as two separate activities.

Oral reading for accuracy gives students an opportunity to use the word analysis skills they have been taught directly, so I choose reading selections from controlled texts. During accuracy reading, the emphasis is on using word analysis knowledge to decode unfamiliar words. The goal of fluency reading, on the other hand, is to encourage students to read smoothly and with expression. When asking my students to do fluency reading, I do not interrupt the flow of the reading to discuss the content of the text or to analyze a particular spelling pattern. If the student makes a mistake, I provide the word. Because it is difficult to find materials that are easy enough for a beginning reader to read fluently, I often address fluency in the context of rereading material students



have first read for accuracy. The Wilson Reading System describes a technique for promoting fluency called penciling that I have found particularly useful. I encourage the student to read more than one word in a breath by scooping a series of words together with a pencil. First, I model how the sentence should be read. For example: "The man with the hat is big." Eventually, students are able to pencil the sentences for themselves but, at the beginning, I scoop words into phrases for them.

When working on oral reading for either accuracy or fluency, I divide the class up according to ability. I assign my teaching volunteers to work with the higher-level groups. Periodically, I pair stronger readers to act as student teachers with their less skilled classmates.

Before being paired with a less skilled reader, however, student teachers receive explicit instruction in providing decoding clues and handling errors. I find this activity effective for two reasons. First, by teaching someone else, the more skilled student teachers consolidate their own knowledge and become cognizant of their own relative progress. Second, the more-skilled readers become a source of inspiration and support for the less-skilled readers in the class.

Comprehension

For readers at the 0–3rd grade level, I teach higher-level comprehension skills using materials other than those the students can read themselves. In my class, critical thinking usually takes place in the context of a classroom debate. Topics I have found particularly conducive to a heated discussion include "Why do you think it is or is not appropriate to hit your children when they misbehave?" and "Why do you think there is so much crime in this country?"

Using photographs is also effective in building higher-level comprehension skills. I ask questions such as "What do you think the people in the photograph are feeling?" "How can you tell?" or "What do you think may have happened to make them feel that way?" Open-ended questions encourage students to make inferences, draw conclusions, and express opinions.

Conclusion

Progress can be excruciatingly slow for beginning-level adult readers. The volunteers who work in my class are struck by the lack of novelty in my classes. Each class follows the same routine (see the Typical Lesson Plan) and a significant amount of class time is spent reviewing previously taught skills and rereading texts. For beginning-level readers, and especially for those with reading disabilities, a predictable routine helps to alleviate anxiety. Students get upset when the class does not follow its expected course. The volunteers are also surprised that students do not feel insulted or embarrassed working with the letters of the alphabet and reading texts that may appear babyish. On the contrary, after years of only using a hit or miss approach, my students are extremely relieved to discover that reading involves patterns of letters with predictable sounds.

One student describes his early experience with reading: "When I was in grade school, I would listen to the other kids read aloud and I had no idea how they knew that those letters said those words. When it was my turn, all I could do was guess. Now it makes sense! It's like I found the key."

The challenge of teaching reading to beginning-level adults can be daunting. In my opinion, however, teaching at the beginning level is also the most rewarding. It is extremely moving to witness an adult who, after years of struggling with the sounds of individual letters, is able to read a letter from a family member or a note that his or her child brings home from school.

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About the Author

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Beginning ESOL Learners' Advice to Their Teachers

by MaryAnn Cunningham Florez

"They [the teachers] have a lot of 'esfuerzo'."

It seemed like an innocuous comment from a learner about a two-teacher team, and it was only one of many that I furiously noted as I talked with a focus group of adult learners from a beginning-level class in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). When I opened my notebook a day or two later, however, I realized exactly how much this learner and others were telling me. The word "esfuerzo" made me stop and think. The English translation from a dictionary — effort, spirit — might not seem that informative, but we were holding these discussions in the learners' native Spanish, and the implications of that word in Spanish and the comments it sparked provided a wealth of insights into the instructional process in that classroom. The learners were telling me what they valued in their teachers' practices: not only their heart and dedication, but also the focus, pace, activity, and sense of purpose in the lessons they conducted. It provided me with a wonderful window into what teachers need to know and do to support beginning-level English language learners, and also gave me valuable information for planning and implementing the training of their teachers.

In ESOL, we often talk about learner-centered instruction and the value of including learners' perspectives and realities in our program and classroom planning and implementation. Teachers and administrators everywhere work to gather learners' input on issues from content topics to teaching methods. I began conducting learner focus groups as a way of including learners' voices in our small program's end-of-semester evaluation. In what specific areas did I think learners' comments might be applied? I was probably expecting them to be helpful in identifying barriers to participation or providing comments that might help me as I talked with individual teachers about their practices.

I was missing the potential impact that direct comments and ideas from learners could have on staff development, especially for teachers working with beginning-level

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learners. Until, that is, I began to see the quality, thoughtfulness, and depth of the comments they were providing. These comments added enriching dimensions to the approaches, techniques, and information that are usually a part of training for teachers working with beginning-level learners.

Ours is a community-based volunteer program at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, Falls Church, VA. We began this year with approximately 140 predominantly Central American learners assigned to five different classes. Sixty percent of the learners enrolled were placed in the three beginning-level classes. They attend classes two evenings a week for two hours, working primarily on basic language development within a life skills context. The learners exhibit a range of literacy skills (from nonliterate to highly literate) and educational backgrounds in their native language, as is typical in beginning-level classes (Brod, 1999; Shank & Terrill, 1997). There are 12 volunteer teachers for the program's five classes: three two-person teams and six individual teachers. All of the teachers teach one night a week; one teacher teaches both nights of her class. Only one of the teachers has experience teaching English to non-English speakers.

The advice that follows — representing a collection of the most frequently heard statements — is drawn from the comments of 28 students in the beginning-level classes who participated in three different focus groups with me. All of the learners are native Spanish speakers; I conducted the focus groups in Spanish to ensure that all could participate as fully as they wanted.

Self Assessment

I ask learners to self-assess what they have learned at the end of each unit in our textbook. I give each learner a three-column chart and I draw a similar one on the board. The first column will be filled in with items we studied in the unit. Learners put a check in one of the other two columns to indicate if they have mastered the item or not. I use symbols (a simple drawing of a person smiling and another of a person frowning) or words ("I know;" "I don't know") to head these columns, depending on the proficiencies of my learners and their comfort with the process.

I ask learners to look back through the unit and think about what we have studied. We then brainstorm together and I record the items on the chart on the board while the learners record them on their individual charts. (I may write one or two items in the first column as examples, to get them started.)

Depending on the learners' language levels, I might use words, symbolic drawings, or a combination of both to list the items that we brainstorm. As I list items, I make sure that I point to the page or pages in the book where they were covered, to remind learners of the context and to make sure everyone is clear about what we are naming. Learners then indicate individually what they have learned and what they need to practice more. Afterward, we debrief, either as a whole group or in pair or small groups that then report back to the large group, to determine the items that people had in common. On that basis, we decide what we may need to review as a class or as individuals.❖

The Learners' Advice

Repeat, but differently. One of the most consistent suggestions was that teachers need to create opportunities for learners to practice material repeatedly but in different ways and in different contexts. For some learners, this meant a better balance of opportunities to engage in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. For others, it meant different practice structures: pair work, individual work, round-robin, choral response, etc. For still others, it meant changing the context in which the content or material is used: saying, copying, and printing lists of numbers as a first step for pre- or nonliterate learners and later practicing them again as times, dates, and prices.

Spend more time on topics and go more deeply into them. Learners were generally very happy with the topics and themes typically covered in beginning-level classes: health, personal information, jobs, or shopping. They appreciated the fact that these topics involved language they needed to know and use in their daily lives. However, they suggested that teachers spend more time on each topic, offering more and different ways to practice the material and exploring issues and situations associated with it. They wanted teachers to move more deliberately through the language and materials being presented and to be open to studying related language and issues identified by the learners.

Don't fall into a vocabulary rut. Many learners felt that teachers spent more time on practicing vocabulary than on actually using it. Flash cards, matching games, labeling of pictures, copying of words, and similar vocabulary development exercises are useful, but they shouldn't constitute the whole lesson. The learners want to use the words in sentences, in dialogues, and completing other tasks.

Do more reading and writing. The majority of learners felt that reading and writing are the skills most often neglected in their beginning-level ESOL classes. While most acknowledged that speaking and listening (or "understanding," as many learners called it) were the immediate needs in their lives, reading and writing were the areas in which they felt they needed the most practice. They wanted teachers to make concerted efforts to incorporate level-appropriate reading and writing as regular parts of the class, as they did with speaking and listening.

Let us know how we are doing. A number of learners expressed a desire for more tests and quizzes in their classes. With further probing, however, I found that what they really wanted were more opportunities of any type that would help them to check on their progress. Paper-and-pencil tests were mentioned, perhaps because learners are familiar with this means of assessment. More consistent, concrete feedback from the teacher was also mentioned. Teachers may feel that, at the beginning levels, learners will find tests or direct feedback too intimidating or even discouraging. The challenge may be for teachers to introduce learners to the variety of forms that assessments can take and to the concept of self-assessment. The latter, in particular, is a valuable concept to introduce, although it may be difficult because learners may not have experience with it; or if they do it, they may not know it as self-assessment.

Give us more than the "simple present." As one learner put it, how can teachers expect learners to talk or write about important experiences, their homelands, or even their families when so many of these things are in the past and all students have to work with is the present tense? If teachers are going to involve learners in activities that ask them to use life experiences as their basis, the learners want at least a start on the language tools required to do so. This may mean introducing and using some past

Ideas for Eliciting Learner Feedback

What if you want to get feedback from your learners about the learning process in your classroom, but you do not share a native language with them?

□ Use picture or word prompts to stimulate role plays or brainstorming sessions to preface a new topic. As you and the learners do this, you will gather clues about what they already know or have experienced and any special needs or interests they may have in relation to the topic.

□ Create a Language Experience Approach (LEA) story about studying English. Find or draw pictures in which people are writing, listening, speaking, looking in a dictionary, talking collaboratively, etc. After the story has been completed, ask learners to circle the ways they like to study English, compare with each other, and even create a consensus list of advice that you can use to inform your lesson planning.

□ Take a picture of your classroom on a typical day. Ask learners to create (draw, assemble a collage, for example) pictures of classes they have attended in the past. Ask them to compare the pictures they create with the picture of your current classroom. Write or discuss what your students like and dislike about each.

□ At the end of a class period, ask learners to comment on the various activities in which they participated. They can do this by voting yes or no on whether a specific activity was helpful, or by rating it. Use pictures, symbols, recognizable words or phrases, and refer back to concrete handouts or products of the activities to support the learners as they tackle the task.❖

tense verbs or a sentence using a modal. It does not mean, however, that beginning learners should be expected to learn everything about that past tense verb or modal and be able to reproduce it out of the context in which it was presented.

Know when to say "That's all you need to know right now." These beginning-level learners respect when a teacher tells them that they do not need to know all the intricate explanations behind a grammar point or a common, but structurally more advanced, phrase, such as "May I help you?" In fact, they are sometimes relieved simply to memorize what they need to know and proceed to the practice that is more appropriate and necessary for their level. The learners discussed this issue primarily in terms of grammar and a few simple, practical idioms. However, I think it is worth considering when planning other aspects, such as vocabulary or even content to be covered. (For example, do beginning-level learners really need to know "veins" and "arteries" and the differences between them, or can that wait for the next level?) Teachers need to make clear for themselves the knowledge they absolutely need to frame their lessons and the extent of information they actually need to impart to their students.

Watch your "teacher talk." Many of the learners reported that teachers used very complicated language that distracted or confused them in the course of presenting materials and lessons. Teachers often devote a great deal of time to determining what content and material are appropriate for the beginning-level learner. In an ideal situation, they then spend additional time figuring out how to present them in an understandable way. Teachers need to be doubly aware of the vocabulary and language structures that they use to present, explain, and even "fill" the time in and around lessons.

Talk to us about learning and the learning process. Learners wanted their teachers to talk to them about what learners need and what helps them most in the classroom. They were willing to share their strategies for learning, their goals, and their difficulties in order to help the teacher adjust instruction. They were very sophisticated and thoughtful in their analysis of the learning process in their classroom. Teachers may want to look at ways in which pictures, role playing, and similar techniques could be used to gather feedback on the ways that learners learn best, topics or themes they want to explore, or even the sequence in which learners want to cover chapters or units in a textbook.

Conclusion

These comments are not necessarily innovative ideas for working with beginning-level learners. In fact, most are a part of good teaching practices for students of any level (see Holt, 1995; Wrigley & Guth, 1990). They helped me focus, however, not only on what the learners need but also on what inexperienced teachers often overlook, forget, or do not completely understand about working with beginning-level ESOL learners. In a "church basement" program like ours, the amount of time that you can ask volunteers to contribute beyond their weekly teaching commitment is limited both by their schedules and by the desire not to over-tap their generosity. However, you also want to make sure that volunteers are sufficiently prepared and supported in their teaching efforts. I think these learner comments will help me to focus better the training for teachers in beginning-level classes. Such classes constitute more than 50 percent of our program and tend to attract new, less-experienced volunteers. They remind me to include aspects and strategies that are second nature to me as an experienced beginning-level teacher.

These learner voices were practical and thoughtful. They revealed the cognitive, intellectual, psychological, and social savvy and capability that inexperienced teachers can sometimes overlook in learners with beginning-level English language or literacy proficiencies and skills (Brod, 1999; Shank & Terrill, 1997). They will resonate strongly when used in teachers' preparation and training in our program. I had a distinct advantage in gathering these comments, since I spoke the students' native language. It would be interesting to see if program planners or teachers using role plays, responses to pictures, Language Experience Approach (LEA), or similar techniques might get the same types of responses from mixed native-language groups. These beginning learners have a great deal of useful advice to offer to their teachers as well as to staff developers and trainers like me. It would be worth the effort to find ways to tap that resource.

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The Neurobiology of Reading and Dyslexia

by Sally E. Shaywitz, M.D., and Bennett A. Shaywitz, M.D.

Developmental dyslexia is characterized by an unexpected difficulty in reading experienced by children and adults who otherwise possess the intelligence and motivation considered necessary for accurate and fluent reading. It represents one of the most common problems affecting children and adults; in the United States, the prevalence of dyslexia is estimated to range from five to 17 percent of school-aged children, with as many as 40 percent of the entire population reading below grade level. Dyslexia (or specific reading disability) is the most common and most carefully studied of the learning disabilities, affecting 80 percent of all individuals identified as learning disabled. This article reviews recent advances in the neurobiology of dyslexia and their implications for teaching adults with dyslexia.

Epidemiology of Dyslexia

Like hypertension and obesity, dyslexia fits a dimensional model: within the population, reading and reading disability occur along a continuum, with reading disability representing the lower tail of a normal distribution of reading ability. Good evidence based on sample surveys of randomly selected populations of children now indicate that dyslexia affects boys and girls equally (Figure 1); the long-held belief that only boys suffer from dyslexia reflected sampling bias in school-identified samples.

Dyslexia is a persistent, chronic condition; it does not represent a transient "developmental lag" (Figure 2). Over time, poor readers and good readers tend to maintain their relative positions along the spectrum of reading ability.

Causes

Dyslexia is both familial and heritable: both environmental and genetic influences affect the expression of dyslexia. This observation provides opportunities for early identification of affected siblings and often for delayed but helpful identification of affected adults. Thus 23 to 65 percent of children who have a parent with dyslexia, 40 percent of siblings of dyslexics, and 27 to 49 percent of parents of dyslexics may have the disorder. Studies implicate loci on chromosomes 6 and 15 and, more recently, on chromosome 2 in the causation of dyslexia.

The Cognitive Basis of Dyslexia

The phonologic deficit hypothesis — There is now a strong consensus among investigators in the field that the central difficulty in dyslexia reflects a deficit within the language system, although other systems and processes may also contribute to the difficulty. The language system is conceptualized as a hierarchical series of components: at higher levels are neural systems engaged in processing, for example, semantics, syntax, and discourse; at the lowest level is the phonologic module dedicated to processing the distinctive sound elements that constitute language. The functional unit of the phonologic module is the phoneme, defined as the smallest discernible segment of speech; for

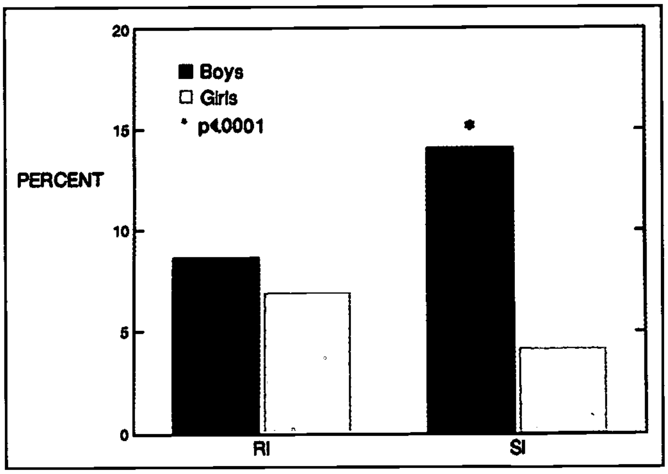

Figure 1. Prevalence of reading disability in research-identified (RI) and school-identified (SI) boys and girls. Schools identify about four times as many boys as girls, reflecting primarily externalizing behavioral characteristics that are more likely to bring boys to a teacher's attention. This skewed prevalence rate reflects referral bias. When actual reading scores are used to identify children, there is no significant difference in the prevalence of dyslexia between boys and girls (based on data in Shaywitz et al., 1990).

example, the word "bat" consists of three phonemes: /b/ /ae/ /t/ (buh, aah, tuh). To speak a word, the speaker retrieves the word's phonemic constituents from his or her internal lexicon, assembles the phonemes, and then utters the word. Conversely, to read a word, the reader must first segment that word into its underlying phonologic elements. The awareness that all words can be decomposed into these basic elements of language (phonemes) allows the reader to decipher the reading code. In order to read, a child has to develop the insight that spoken words can be pulled apart into phonemes and that the letters in a written word represent these sounds. This so-called phonemic awareness is largely missing in dyslexic children and adults. Results from large and well-studied populations with reading disability confirm that in young school-aged children, as well as in adolescents, a deficit in phonology represents the most robust and specific correlate of reading disability. Such findings form the basis for the most successful and evidence-based interventions designed to improve reading. While children and adults with a phonologic deficit represent the vast majority of subjects with dyslexia, other subtypes may account for some cases of dyslexia. Examples include dyslexia resulting from deficits in naming-speed in addition to phonological deficits, the so called double-deficit hypothesis.

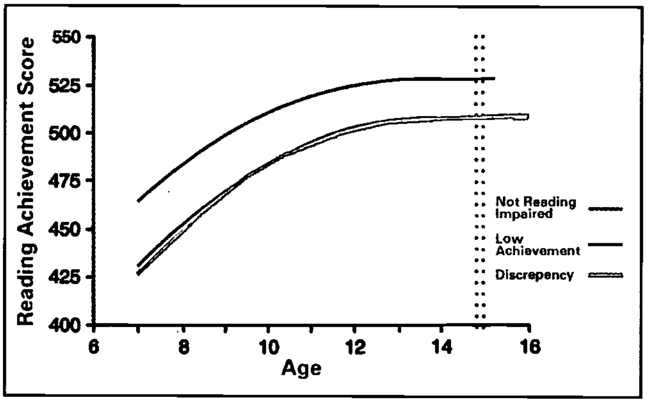

Figure 2. Trajectory of reading skills over time in nonimpaired and dyslexic readers. Ordinate shows Rasch scores (W scores) from the Woodcock-Johnson reading test (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989) and abscissa shows age in years. Both dyslexic and nonimpaired readers improve their reading scores as they get older, but the gap between the dyslexic and nonimpaired readers remains. Thus dyslexia is a deficit and not a developmental lag (from Francis et al., 1996).

Implications of the phonologic model of dyslexia — Reading is comprised of two main processes: decoding and comprehension. In dyslexia, a deficit at the level of the phonologic module impairs the reader's ability to segment the written word into its underlying phonologic elements. As a result, the reader experiences difficulty, first in decoding the word and then in identifying it. The phonologic deficit is domain-specific; that is, it is independent of other, non-phonologic, abilities. In particular, the higher-order cognitive and linguistic functions involved in comprehension, such as general intelligence and reasoning, vocabulary, and syntax, are generally intact. This pattern — a deficit in phonologic analysis contrasted with intact higher-order cognitive abilities — offers an explanation for the paradox of otherwise intelligent people who experience great difficulty in reading.

According to the model, a circumscribed deficit in a lower-order linguistic (phonologic) function blocks access to higher-order processes and to the ability to draw meaning from text. The dyslexic reader cannot use his or her higher-order linguistic skills to access the meaning until the printed word has first been decoded and identified. For example, readers who know the precise meaning of the spoken word "apparition" will not be able to use their knowledge of the meaning of the word until they can decode and identify the printed word on the page and will appear not to know the word's meaning.

The phonologic deficit in adolescence and adult life — Deficits in phonological coding continue to characterize dyslexic readers even in adolescence; performance on phonological processing measures contributes most to differentiating dyslexic from average readers, and average from superior readers as well. Children with dyslexia neither spontaneously remit nor do they demonstrate a lag mechanism for "catching up" in the development of reading skills. That is not to say that many dyslexic readers do not become quite proficient in reading a finite domain of words in their area of special interest, usually words that are important for their careers. Such individuals, while able to decode words in this domain, still exhibit evidence of their early reading problems when they have to read unfamiliar words, which they do accurately but not fluently and automatically. In adolescents, oral reading, the rate of reading, as well as facility with spelling may be most useful clinically in differentiating average from poor readers.

From a clinical perspective, these data indicate that as children approach adolescence, a manifestation of dyslexia may be a very slow reading rate. Children may learn to read words accurately, but they will not be fluent or automatic, reflecting the lingering effects of a phonologic deficit. Because they are able to read words accurately (albeit very slowly), dyslexic adolescents and young adults may mistakenly be assumed to have "outgrown" their dyslexia. These older dyslexic students may be similar to their unimpaired peers on untimed measures of word recognition, yet continue to suffer from the phonologic deficit that makes reading less automatic, more effortful, and slow. The provision of extra time is therefore an essential accommodation; it allows them the time to decode each word and to apply their unimpaired higher-order cognitive and linguistic skills to the surrounding context to get at the meaning of words that they cannot entirely or rapidly decode.

Neurobiological Influences

A range of neurobiological investigations using postmortem brain specimens and, more recently, brain morphometry and diffusion tensor magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) suggests that there are differences between dyslexic and nonimpaired readers in the back of the brain, specifically in the temporoparieto-occipital brain regions. Functional brain imaging studies also show a failure of left hemisphere posterior brain systems to function properly in adult dyslexic readers while they perform reading tasks.

In principle, functional brain imaging is quite simple. When an individual is asked to perform a discrete cognitive task, that task places processing demands on particular neural systems in the brain. To meet those demands requires activation of neural systems in specific brain regions and those changes in neural activity are, in turn, reflected by changes in cerebral blood flow. We use the term "functional imaging" for technologies that measure those changes in blood flow in specific brain regions while subjects are engaged in cognitive tasks.

Gender-Based Differences

In an early study of 19 neurologically normal right-handed men and 19 women, the subjects had to decide whether two pseudowords rhymed. (For example, do [LEAT] and [JETE] rhyme?) Nonword reading is perhaps the clearest indication of decoding ability because familiarity with the letter pattern cannot influence the individual's response. Of particular interest were differences in brain activation patterns in men compared to women. Figure 3 illustrates that activation during phonological processing in men was more lateralized to the left inferior frontal gyrus, known as Broca's area; in contrast, activation during this same task in women resulted in a more bilateral pattern of activation of this region.

These findings provide the first clear evidence of gender-based differences in the functional organization of the brain for language. They support and extend a long-held hypothesis that language functions are more likely to be highly lateralized in males but are represented in both cerebral hemispheres in females.

Studies of dyslexic readers indicate a significant disruption in the neural systems for reading in dyslexic subjects as they try to decode pseudowords. Thus, as shown in Figure 4 during nonword rhyming in dyslexic readers, we found a disruption in several critical components of a posterior system involving the posterior superior temporal gyrus (Wernicke's area) and the angular gyrus, and a concomitant increase in activation in the inferior frontal gyrus.

These data indicate that dyslexic readers demonstrate a functional disruption in an extensive system in the posterior cortex encompassing both traditional visual and language regions as well as a portion of association cortex. The involvement of this latter region, centered about the angular gyrus, is of particular interest since this portion of association cortex is considered pivotal in carrying out those cross-modal integrations necessary for

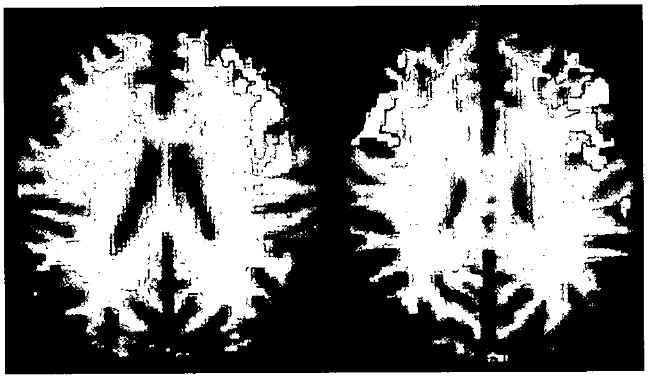

Figure 3. Gender-based differences in the brain during phonological processing. Composite fMRI images show the distribution of brain activation patterns in men (left) and women (right) during a nonword rhyming task. In men, activation is lateralized to the left inferior frontal regions; in women the same region is active bilaterally (data from Shaywitz et al., 1995).

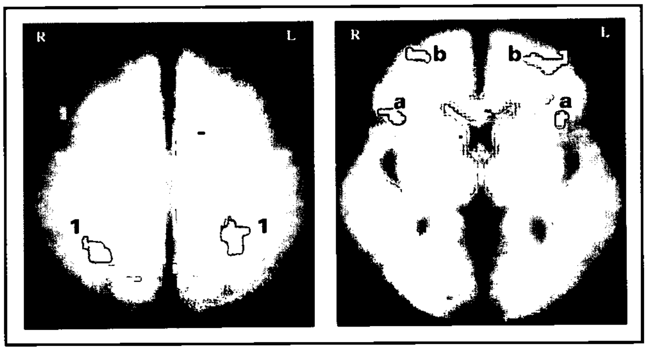

Figure 4. Composite fMRI activation maps in nonimpaired and dyslexic readers engaged in phonological processing during the nonword rhyme task show that nonimpaired readers activate a large region involving the angular gyrus (1), supramarginal gyrus, and posterior portions of the superior temporal gyrus. In contrast, dyslexic readers demonstrate a relative underactivation in this posterior region and an increased activation in the inferior frontal gyrus (a) and middle frontal gyrus (b) bilaterally(data from Shaywitz et al., 1998).

reading (i.e., mapping the visual percept of the print onto the phonologic structures of the language).

Consistent with this study of developmental dyslexia, a large literature on acquired inability to read (alexia, for example, following a stroke) describes neuroanatomical lesions most prominently centered about the angular gyrus. It should not be surprising that both the acquired and the developmental disorders affecting reading have in common a disruption within the neural systems serving to link the visual representations of the letters to the phonologic (language) structures they represent. While reading difficulty is the primary symptom in both acquired alexia and developmental dyslexia, associated symptoms and findings in the two disorders would be expected to differ somewhat, reflecting the differences between an acquired and a developmental disorder. In acquired alexia, a structural lesion resulting from an insult (e.g., stroke, tumor) disrupts a component of an already functioning neural system and the lesion may extend to involve other brain regions and systems. In developmental dyslexia, as a result of a constitutionally based functional disruption, the system never develops normally. The symptoms reflect the emanative effects of an early disruption to the phonologic system. In either case the disruption is within the same neuroanatomical system.

A Neural Model for Reading

These data from laboratories around the world indicate that a number of interrelated neural systems are used in reading: at least two in posterior brain regions as well as distinct and related systems in anterior regions (Figure 5).

In order to read, the beginning reader must break the reading code, that is, transform the visual features (the letters) of the word into the linguistic sounds (the phonemes) they represent and then access the meaning of the word. As early as 1891, Dejerine suggested that a portion of the posterior brain region (which includes the angular gyrus and supramarginal gyrus in the inferior parietal lobule, and the posterior aspect of the superior temporal gyrus) is critical for reading.

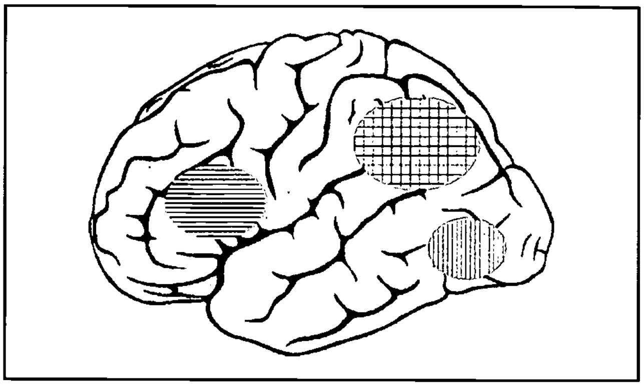

Figure 5. Neural systems for reading. Converging evidence indicates three important systems in reading, all primarily in the left hemisphere: 1) anterior system in the left inferior frontal region; 2) dorsal parietotemporal system involving angular gyrus, supramarginal gyrus, and posterior portions of the superior temporal gyrus; 3) ventral occipitotemporal system involving portions of the middle temporal gyrus and middle occipital gyrus. See text for details.

Rather than the smoothly functioning and integrated reading systems observed in non-impaired readers, disruption of the posterior reading systems results in dyslexic readers attempting to compensate by shifting to other, ancillary, systems (e.g., anterior sites such as the inferior frontal gyrus and right posterior sites). The anterior sites, which are critical in articulation, may help dyslexic readers develop an awareness of the sound structure of the word by forming the word with their lips, tongue, and vocal apparatus and thus allow them to read, albeit more slowly and less efficiently than if the fast occipitotemporal word identification system were functioning. The posterior sites, for example the right occipitotemporal area, may be used by the dyslexic reader to facilitate visual pattern recognition, compensating for the impaired word analysis systems in the left posterior regions. The shift to ancillary neural systems in dyslexic readers may support accurate, but not fluent and automatic, word reading.

Delineation of the circuitry for reading in dyslexia may now allow strategies for specific interventions designed to facilitate the function of these ancillary systems, and a method to measure the efficacy of such interventions in a more focused and efficient way. Such studies are now underway.

For dyslexic readers, these brain activation patterns provide evidence of an imperfectly functioning system for segmenting words into their phonologic constituents; accordingly, this disruption is evident when dyslexic readers are asked to respond to increasing demands on their phonologic analysis. These findings now add neurobiological support for previous cognitive/behavioral data, pointing to the critical role of phonologic analysis, and its impairment, in dyslexia. The pattern of relative underactivation in posterior brain regions contrasted with relative overactivation in anterior regions may provide a neural signature for the phonologic difficulties characterizing dyslexia.

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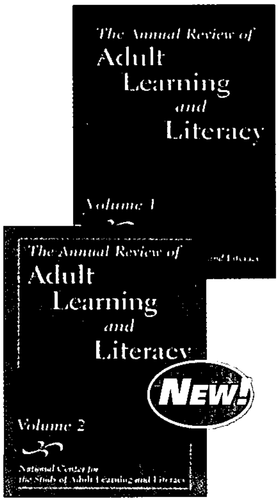
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"The Review, in only its second year, has become an important part of the curriculum for those of us in adult basic education trying to become literate about literacy." — Israel Mendoza, "Forward" to *Volume 2*

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Using a Multisensory Approach to Help Struggling Adult Learners

by Gladys Geertz

I have been a teacher for about 25 years. When I taught elementary school, it seemed that most kids learned to read almost by osmosis. Even the students of some truly lackadaisical teachers usually learned to read. But what about the children who didn't? I spent many hours working on ways to help these special children, sometimes finding a technique that helped, other times passing a child on to the next grade in hope that another teacher would find the key. What happened to these kids? They are the adults I work with every day at the Anchorage Literacy Project (ALP) in Anchorage, AK. Because no one ever found the answer, eventually many of them became frustrated and dropped out of school. Some of them graduated, but they still could not read.

About eight years ago, I observed the Slingerland technique being used with children in Slingerland classrooms in the Anchorage schools, and with adults at ALP. The Slingerland technique uses multisensory teaching techniques from Orton-Gillingham that were adapted for the classroom by Beth Slingerland (Slingerland, 1996). Orton-Gillingham developed their teaching techniques working one-on-one with dyslexic children and those with specific language disabilities. A colleague and I developed a program that uses these techniques in classroom settings with adult, low-level reading students. What differentiates our method from the Slingerland method is that we move through a lesson more quickly, teaching more concepts in a day than would be taught in an elementary school class.

Our Program

The ALP multisensory classes consist mostly of students who have gone through the school system in the United States. Some are dropouts; others are high school graduates. They range in age from 18 to 75 years. Our classes are limited to 15 students, but some classes have only four or five. All of our teachers are trained in the Slingerland method, and as of this writing, we have three instructors in the multisensory program who teach a total of nine multisensory classes. Two are spelling classes, three are a combination of reading and spelling, and four are reading classes at various levels, ranging from first to approximately 10th grade level. Each class meets three days a week for an hour and a half per class. Our quarter lasts 10 weeks.

Our classes are not open entry. We continue to accept new students for the first two weeks, but then we close the classes because it is too difficult for new students to catch up. The class atmosphere is casual, but the instructor is in charge. We have found that most adults relish humor and the feeling of camaraderie. Each group tends to become close-knit, and we foster group development.

We have expanded and modified the Slingerland techniques for use with adults with and without language disabilities. The modifications are minor; for example, we do not use tracing procedures (going over the same letter many times) as much with our students. Since our students are adults, and many of them are familiar with the letters, we require them to trace a letter three times, instead of the 10 or 20 that may be required in elementary school. We also proceed more quickly to paper and pencil tasks, rather than spending a lot of time using the pocket chart or board. We also introduce three or four letters during each class session; an elementary teacher may only introduce one or two letters a day. At the beginning of our basic classes, we discuss our teaching procedures with the students, explaining that because they have missed some of the educational experiences necessary for learning, we are starting over.

A Success-Oriented Program

The multisensory approach is a success-oriented program. We only expect students to know what they have been taught. We *provide* instruction, *guide* the students through a successful learning experience, and then *reinforce* this successful learning experience. We make sure that all students leave the classroom feeling that they have experienced success.

We begin with a single unit of sight, sound, or thought, and then proceed to the complex combinations of these units. We start with sight and sound association, following the same routine day after day, and adding a few consonant letters and then, slowly, the vowels. We usually begin with the short /i/ vowel sound, and the consonant sounds of /n/, /t/, and /p/, using the sequence in *Angling For Words* by Carolyn G. Bowen (1983). (Teachers could conceivably introduce letters in any sequence, but it is practical to start with high-frequency letters and those that correspond to a selected text.) We spell and read words from these letters, and then we move on. The time involved in teaching the letter sounds depends on the needs of the particular group of students.

> "We provide instruction, guide the students through a successful learning experience, and then reinforce this successful learning experience."

Once the sounds are learned, students move on to the more complex tasks of reading and spelling words, putting these words into sentences, and then mastering paragraphs. With these basic skills, students are able to handle more complex reading and writing material.

A Sample Multisensory Lesson

How does a typical multisensory lesson unfold? People tend to learn through different or unique stimuli. Some of us learn better visually, some auditorily, and others kinesthetically. I have found that most people probably learn best by using two of these modalities. The multisensory technique makes use of all these modalities and combines them into one simultaneous procedure. It requires learners to see, hear, speak, and do at the same time. We follow a set pattern of seven steps in every lesson. This strict adherence to structure provides a consistent, expectable routine that frees students to concentrate on learning.

From the first day of class, we begin class with **oral language skills,** because the spoken word is much more comfortable than the written word to a low-level reader. First, we, the teacher and the learners, talk, using complete sentences. We encourage each student to participate. Some oral language questions concern the students personally: "How long does it take you to get to class?" "How do you get to class?" "What is your favorite restaurant and why?" "What is your favorite holiday and why?" "How will this class help you?" "If someone gave you a thousand dollars, how would you spend it?"

In the second segment of the lesson, we introduce the **sound-symbol relationship.** We introduce a letter while writing it in the air: kinesthetic movement. If the students need instruction in writing the letter, we also do the writing procedure. Most early readers print; therefore, we teach them cursive writing. The left to right directionality of cursive makes it easier to write neatly, helps fluency, increases speed in writing, and gives our students the skill that most adults have: writing in cursive, which we expect our students to do also.

In the writing procedure, we write the letter on the board, using three lines — a head line; a belt, or middle, line; and a foot line — while communicating to the students exactly how the letter is made and that some letters are tall and go to the head line, some fall below the foot line, and some are crossed or dotted. We then make the letter in the air, while explaining exactly how it to make it. Next, the students make the letter in the air, very large, using their pointers and index fingers as their writing tools.

After making the letter in the air, each student receives a 12 X 18 inch sheet of newsprint, which has been folded to create lines. We write a cursive letter in crayon on this newsprint. Now the students can trace the letter with their fingers, "feeling" it and saying it. We trace the letter at least three times with our fingers, three times with the blunt end of a pencil from which the eraser has been removed, and three times with the pencil point. Learners then move on to the next box on the paper, tracing with no crayon letter as a guide, using their fingers, then the blunt end of the pencil, and then the pencil point. Then on to the next box using the same procedure. This is the Slingerland technique used for teaching writing. It involves seeing, saying, feeling, and doing simultaneously. We repeat it every

Typical Lesson Plan Components

- Using oral language skills
- Learning a sound-symbol relationship, and using cards to review the sound-symbol relationship
- Decoding
- Vocabulary enrichment
- Phrase reading
- Structured reading
- Story reading using comprehension skills

day for every lesson.

After saying the name of the letter and writing the letter in the air, we show the class a picture of a **key word** beginning with that letter, such as turtle for /t/. Next, the sound of /t/ is made as it is heard in the key word turtle. After the instructor demonstrates the procedure, the class follows the procedure as a group, then each student does it. "Write the letter in the air, say the keyword, say the sound of the letter." They have *felt* the letter, *spoken* the letter, *heard* the name of the letter and letter sound, and *said* the letter sound.

After we have introduced the sound-symbol relationship for a specific number of letters, we review this sound-symbol relationship by displaying flash cards of the letters. This is a review with emphasis on both enabling the learners to feel success and allowing the teacher to ascertain whether everyone has learned the relationship. The students write the letter in the air, speak the name of the letter, hear the name of the letter and the sound of the letter, and then say the sound of the letter. Every lesson has a review of letters using this sound-symbol relationship.

The third lesson segment involves the **decoding of words.** We decode, or sound out, a list of words every day. We develop these lists by using words that incorporate the sounds taught in the second segment of the lesson. We do not include words that contain sounds that we have not taught. So, for example, if we have only taught the sounds for short /i/, consonants /t/, /n/, /p/, then we can spell or decode only words containing those sounds, such as tip, nip, nit, it, tin, pin. To encourage students to sound out words rather than memorize or sight read them, we often use nonsense words such as "nin," or "ip." The more vowel and consonant sounds the students learn, the more words we can use. We begin with one-syllable words, progress to two syllables, three syllables, and so forth. We usually decode 20 to 25 words in a lesson, of which one-third are nonsense. To decode a word, the student underlines the vowels, divides the word into syllables, shows what each vowel "says" by writing above each vowel a diacritical mark, pronounces the word, and then defines it. We teach this entire procedure, one step at a time, with each step modeled by the teacher.

The fourth segment, after we decode several words, is learning **vocabulary.** From conversing with our students, and from answering their questions about words, we know that many of them have limited vocabulary skills. When introducing a story, we teach the definitions of new words and the learners put them into sentences. One of the reading series that we use with low-level readers is *Early Reading Comprehension in Varied Subject Matter* (Ervin, 1999), which has four levels. Written for the older elementary school child, the series seems to be successful with adults. New vocabulary in this story includes "shrubs," "snug," and "den." We also use the Kim Marshall (1999) series for readers above the fourth grade level, which is targeted for adults. Newspapers or *Reader's Digest* are other sources of informational stories. Our students tend to find nonfiction more interesting than fiction.

The fifth lesson segment is **phrase reading,** or reading by ideas. We put five to eight phrases on a chart, read a phrase, and the students repeat it. All phrases are read once with the teacher modeling and the students repeating. After that, the students and instructor discuss any new vocabulary, hyphenated words, or grammar. Then a student approaches the chart at the front of the classroom. We say a phrase, the student underlines the phrase with a yard stick, reads it aloud, and the other students repeat the phrase. All the phrases on the chart are read a second time using this procedure. Then a different student comes to the chart and we pose questions formatted as "Find the phrase that . ." The student finds the phrase that answers the question, underlines it, and reads it aloud. The other students read the phrase aloud. We do all the phrases in the same way. A fourth student comes to the chart. That student begins at the bottom phrase, reads it, and the other

Procedure for Phrase Reading

The teacher puts the following on a chart:

a very lazy cat
in the shrubs
cold and snowy
He would moan
and eat them

The teacher might ask the learners to:

"Find the phrase that tells where"

"Find the phrase that has a word that means the opposite of warm"

"Find a phrase that begins with an article"

"Find a phrase that is the beginning of a sentence"

"Find a phrase that begins with a conjunction"

Taken from Early Reading Comprehension, Book A, "The Lazy Cat" Paragraph 1, by J. Ervin.

students repeat it. The student at the chart reads from the bottom to the top of the chart, focusing on comprehension. During this phase, we build comprehension skills, lengthen eye-span, make functional use of word attack skills, make predictions, and build cognitive skills.

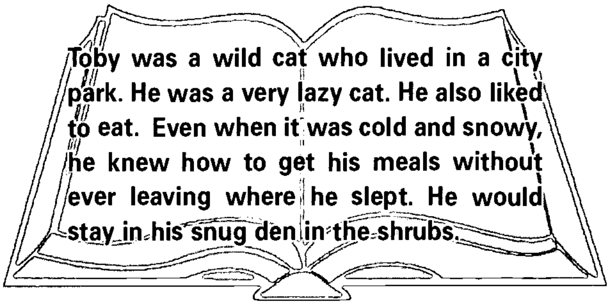
The sixth segment, after phrase reading, is **structured reading.** The first paragraph of the story is read aloud using structured reading: a student reads a certain number of words (a phrase) specified by the teacher. The phrase may answer a where, what, why, how, or when question. We say to one student: "Read the first three words that tell why." The student reads the first three words. We ask another student to: "Read the next four words that tell who." The student reads the next four words. We choose another student: "Read the next two words that tell where." The student reads the next two words. This phrase reading is done throughout the first sentence. When the first sentence is finished, we pick a student to read the entire sentence using phrasing. The objective is to get students to read by ideas or thoughts, not by words.

Each sentence is read in sequence using the same method. Eventually, the first paragraph — and only that paragraph — is read using phrase reading designed by the teacher.

In lesson segment seven, each student gets a turn to **read orally.** Each student reads aloud a different paragraph in the story. This enables us to hear the learners' decoding, expression, and fluency. We discuss every paragraph, always pressing for good comprehension. After answering some specific questions about the last one or two paragraphs, the learners read them silently. Then the class discusses the last two paragraphs and someone reads them aloud.

Structured Reading

Students read directly from the book using the phrases the instructor indicates to them:



Toby was a wild cat who lived in a city park. He was a very lazy cat. He also liked to eat. Even when it was cold and snowy, he knew how to get his meals without ever leaving where he slept. He would stay in his snug den in the shrubs.

Instructor says:	*Read the first five words that tell who.*
Student 1 reads:	Toby was a wild cat.
Instructor says:	*Read the next two words telling what.*
Student 2 reads:	who lived.
Instructor says:	*Read the next four words that tell where.*
Student 3 reads:	in a city park.
Instructor says:	*Read the complete sentence using that same phrasing.*
Student 4 reads:	Toby was a wild cat (pause) who lived (pause) in the city park.
Instructor says:	*Read the next two words that tell you what.*

The procedure continues until the end of the paragraph. To conclude, a student reads the entire paragraph using good phrasing.

Taken from Early Reading Comprehension, Book A, "The Lazy Cat" Paragraph 1, by J. Ervin.

Challenges

Finding appropriate reading materials for adult students reading at a low level is extremely difficult. Several publishers print books at a fourth-grade reading level and above; materials for adults reading at lower reading levels lower are scarce. Another major challenge is time. Every day we struggle to include all seven steps in our 90-minute class. We may modify the lesson by making steps shorter, decoding fewer words, or reading half the story and assigning the rest for homework, but we do not continue the lesson the next day. Repetition of the seven-step sequence provides useful structure, freeing learners to focus on content rather than methodology.

Results

Since I have started using this multisensory approach, I have witnessed success. During the winter and spring 2000 instructional sessions, for example, our learners improved their skills in word reading and word attach at a statistically significant level as measured by the WRAT3 (word reading) and the Woodcock Johnson-Revised (word attack) tests. But more than statistics, the successes come from the students. They are now willing to pick up a newspaper and they can laugh and joke about their reading, because they have experienced some success. They tell us that the structure and continuity of the instruction as well as the interactive teaching methods were particularly helpful. They have discovered that they are not the only people in the world with reading difficulties and know that, with time and diligence, they can achieve their educational goals.

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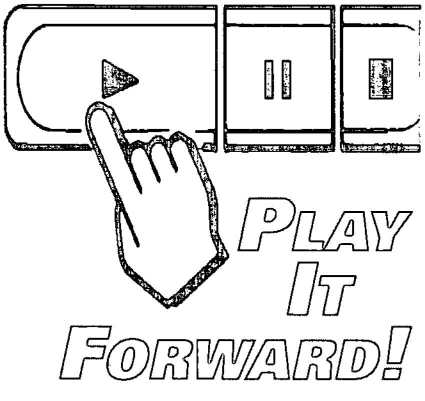

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Reading for Pleasure

Learners' personal reading choices can provide teachers with ideas on how to motivate and support them

by Sondra Cuban

After tutoring, teaching, and doing research in literacy programs, I wanted to know more about how literacy fit into women's lives, thinking that this could help me understand how better to serve women learners in programs. I conducted a lengthy qualitative study of 10 women learners for my doctoral dissertation. I wanted to find out if the women learners I was studying read outside of the program, what they wanted to read about, and what their purposes were for reading. I focus here on my interviews with four women and what their experiences suggest for curriculum and instruction in literacy programs.

Gloria, Donna, Lourdes, and Elizabeth were enrolled in a computer-assisted literacy program in a semirural area of Hawaii. Gloria and Donna were beginning adult basic education (ABE) students; Lourdes and Elizabeth, both students of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), were at slightly higher levels in the program. Donna was at the lowest level of literacy of the four women and rarely read. She told me she really wanted to read love stories but felt she couldn't. She said, "I guess my mind's so tired that I get frustrated and give up. I guess, like I said — too much stuff going [on] in my mind." Her desire to read love stories was fueled by the romances and comedies she watched on TV, which she enjoyed and which distracted her from her family problems.

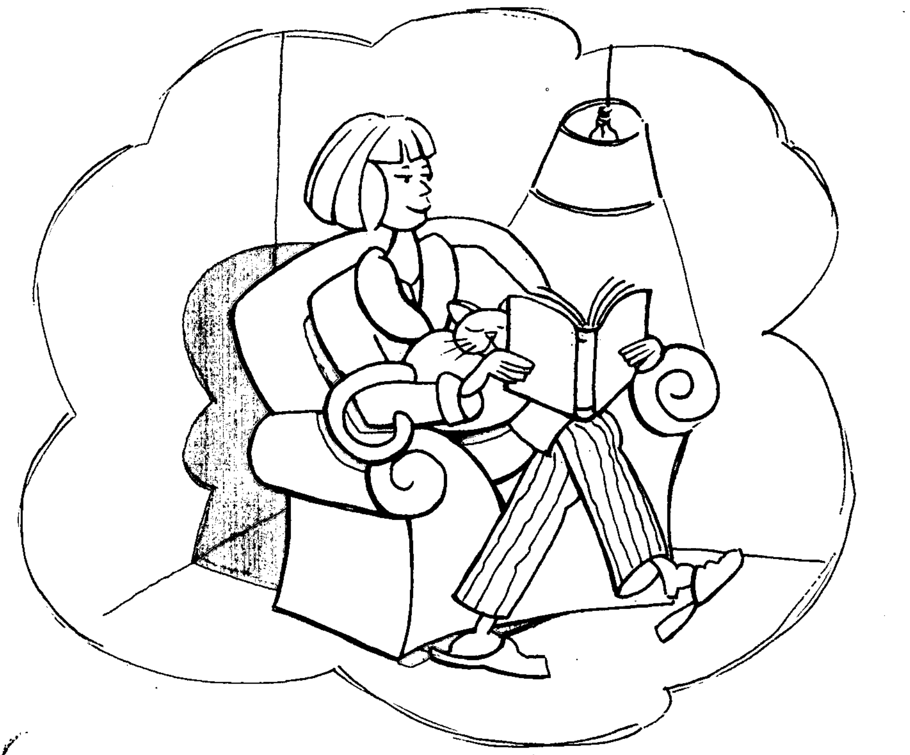
The women in the study all read and wanted to read popular-culture materials — commercially published books also referred to as genre and trade books — that were not, for the most part, used in the literacy program they attended. They also used reading for similar ends: they read to make themselves feel better. I interviewed the women over the course of a year about their schooling and work experiences, the ways they learned in their families of origin, and about their use of mass media: anything from watching television to reading books. I also observed them and interviewed staff in the program within this period. I discovered gaps between what the women read and wanted to read outside of the program and what the program offered.

In the literacy program, they learned basic keyboarding skills, English grammar, phonics, and oral pronunciation. Instruction in the program tended towards skills-based learning from commercial texts such as student dictionaries, Laubach books such as the *Challenger* series, reading skills workbooks such as the Steck-Vaughn *Reading for Today* series, as well as pre-GED materials. The program also used educational and diagnostic software and typing program tutorials. Library books and newspapers were sometimes brought into the tutoring instruction but were not central to the curriculum.

The Research

Each woman participated in five interviews between August, 1997, and May, 1998. Four of the interviews lasted between one and two hours and concerned the women's literacy and learning in school, their work, families, and social networks, as well as their use of mass media. The biographical interview was shorter and valuable for obtaining background information.

Gloria, Lourdes, and Elizabeth did read outside of the literacy program, and although I did not ask them how much they read or venture into the technical aspects of their reading, they described memorable reading experiences and the effects the books had on them. They read mainly for pleasure and to reduce tension, reading stories that nurtured them emotionally. The reading materials they referred to in the interviews would, by most standards, be considered too difficult for the learning level in which the program placed them. Lourdes, for example, was at an ESOL level of competency 2 (between grades 4.5 and 6.5). She described what she learned from reading Gail Sheehy's *The Silent Passage*, a book that deeply affected her. Lourdes also said she read the Bible and small prayer books. She read these books regularly, and as needed, sometimes on a daily basis.



Elizabeth

Elizabeth, a 70-year-old naturalized Japanese woman, was a meat wrapper for most of her working years. She confided in me with both excitement and shame that she had gotten hooked on soap operas through a friend, even videotaping them while she was away. She told me about the character development in these shows and that an advantage to watching them was that they helped her learn standard English. She also read books that had romantic storylines.

Reading and eating in conjunction with TV watching were important and ritualized for Elizabeth, who also read Japanese novels. Elizabeth explained how she read when she was younger, "every day because I'm home alone so breakfast, lunch, dinner, I have a book stand in the center. I have the book there while I'm eating — I read books." She read trade books, for example, *The Joy Luck Club*, by Amy Tan, which helped with her English vocabulary and was stimulating to her. She also listened to tapes of this book. Her family members and acquaintances were uninformed about the intense pain a serious back problem gave her. So, turning to books and going to classes seemed like a smart move. "I have lots of pain. [Be] cause I don't complain... I'm not expecting that person always feels sorry for you," she said.

Gloria

Gloria, a Hawaiian woman in her early 50s who spent her younger years working on macadamia farms and in pineapple factories, was worried about being able to pay her rent due to welfare cuts. She explained, "and, you know, like welfare — even though you know you're true [being honest], they don't know, they just give you hard time." She read the Bible every day and related to it as "a love letter" and a source of wisdom. She also listened to Bible tapes, used Bible software, discussed the Bible with her pastor and his wife, and used biblical resources to teach children in Sunday school. These activities invigorated her and distracted her from her worries. When she felt trapped by the welfare system, she sought spiritual materials for the direction and comfort they provided.

"The book. It's more intimate [than the computerized version of the Bible].... because that is more like a study tool. And then when you're reading, this is what the pastor said, when you're reading, it's like a love

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letter. Like somebody wrote to you and say how much he loves you. So the Bible is actually a love letter and he telling you what's taking place in the world."

Lourdes

Lourdes, a naturalized Mexican mother who used to sew aloha shirts and grade papaya, was in her 50s. Now a health aide, she was married to a local man. When facing problems with co-workers and her husband, Lourdes read her prayer book and inspirational books. She also watched a nun on television every night to relax and to seek encouragement. Oprah Winfrey and her guests, many of whom were authors, inspired her, and inspirational books gave her a sense of hope. This and other popular-culture books she read helped her to feel independent. As she described it, "The first book I read — I'll never forget it. Was back in 19…, maybe 1981, was with Norman Vincent Peale, the positive thinker. Oh that book was good. So from then on I start you know, in my head I can do it. They interest me to go back to work and to be indep[endent]… you know what I am now. Not to listen to my husband too much…"

She carried books in her purse and consulted them when she had "the blues." She learned to use them as a shield from pain, using them for comfort:

"…I have another one [a book], pick-me-up-prayers. Pick me up. And it's, like, if I do a lot of those things for somebody, then something goes wrong, and I remember what that book says…So these little books help me a lot. Oh, it make me feel good because you know that God is here."

Lessons for Practice

Lourdes, Elizabeth, and Gloria turned to books for love, pleasure, and comfort, and I think Donna would read for similar reasons, if she felt she could. These women related to books in ways that nourished them emotionally and reflected their life concerns and gender roles. They also used electronic media, such as television, computers, and video, to supplement their pleasure reading. This reflects newer theories about electronic and print literacy technologies as intertwining and complex social activities: part of people's everyday social relations and identities, not divorced from public activities and institutions (see Brandt, 1990; Hemphill & Ianiro, 1995; Merrifield, 1997; Pattison, 1982; Tuman, 1992). Lourdes, for example, used two different types of media (prayer books and a television show featuring a nun) for the same purpose: comforting herself during rough times and to

The Theory

Cultural theories of reading for pleasure, including reading response theory (see Storey, 1993; Simonds, 1992; Radway, 1991; Fiske, 1989; Modleski, 1982), focus on the psychological benefits readers receive from reading mass-produced materials, otherwise called "popular texts." Pleasure reading is pleasurable because it can bring out the "melodramatic imagination" of women readers (Storey, p. 141). It provides "a terrain on which to dream" (Storey, p. 148) with fantasies that both reflect and counter "the very real problems and tensions in women's lives" (Modleski, 1982, p. 14).

"Popular culture texts" or "genre literature" (self-help books, mysteries, romance novels, Christian literature, even the Bible) may be favored by casual readers over other "classical" literature (i.e., "great books") because they evoke readers' emotions and are not intimidating. They carry familiar messages from the media that are open for interpretations. John Fiske refers to these texts as "*producerly*" (p.103) because the story lines do not follow strict rules and they contain many "loose ends" and "gaps" that seduce readers to fill them in and produce new meanings. These meanings are themselves relevant to readers' lives, feelings, and cultures. This process is possible because the texts are open and accessible. Readers identify with strong and weak characters because the characters act out their problems in ways that readers understand and desire. The readers can imagine themselves as treasured heroines and feel emotionally strong.

Janice Radway (1991) studied 42 women romance readers, many of whom had some college education. She learned that the women often read romances when they were under stress and depressed or just to relax: it had tranquilizing effects. Reading these stories allowed them to unwind and focus on their "personal needs, desires and pleasures." (p. 61). It also fulfilled their fantasies of being cared for by another person. The women knowingly read and reread the formulaic accounts for a desired emotional experience, in part, as a "reversal of the oppression and emotional abandonment suffered by women in real life" (p. 55).

Reader-response theory offers another way to understand the role of reading in women's lives by asking not only about the meanings women receive from texts but also the feelings they bring to reading. Reader-response theory provides an approach for understanding and building on students' reading interests and their imaginations.

Other research demonstrates how pleasure reading can be used effectively in the classroom. Cho and Krashen's study (1994) found that women studying English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) who read romance novels (the *Sweet Valley* series) felt that this reading increased their vocabularies and their interest in reading as it helped them learn English. A practitioner-researcher, Donna Earl, reported that students in a literacy program read more outside when she focused on increasing their outside reading practices. She felt that providing learners with high-interest, easy-to-read materials is one factor in enabling learners to "learn to love reading" (1997, p. 1).❖

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connect to her emotions. Her use of these sources also related to her gender, her access to technological resources, her generation, and her ethnicity.

Asking about and then listening to women's struggles and problems allows you to see their interests and needs at different life stages and under particular circumstances. It also allows you to understand their coping strategies and the resources and people to which they turn. The process of describing themselves helps them to become the "experts" and assert more control over the curriculum (see, CCLOW, 1996; Imel & Kerka, 1997). The same process can assist teachers to create curriculum based on learners' changing needs. It may be difficult to ask sensitive questions at intake, but as soon as rapport is established, this can be a very useful activity.

> "*Women students may be ashamed or too shy to admit they enjoy these books and find them moving.*"

Learners like Donna, who claim they want to read love stories but still feel embarrassed about their literacy levels, might be doubly embarrassed to "come out" and admit to literacy staff that they want to read these stories and popular psychology books. She said, "I really feel stupid because I didn't do this long ago. Should of. Like I said, I was so embarrassed to tell it. To face somebody and tell them. I still cannot do that you know and say, 'I cannot read.' It's really hard to come out." Pleasure reading and inspirational books may appear frivolous and inconsequential to instructors. Women students may be ashamed or too shy to admit they enjoy these books and find them moving (see Simonds, 1992). Yet these materials can motivate students to read because they reinforce emotional responsiveness between the reader and the text and relate to students' cultures (see Rowland, 2000). These texts give students opportunities to practice reading without the pressure to "get it right." Teaching students to see reading as a tool for relaxation (see Horsman, 2000; Kortner, 1993) rather than a forced and difficult activity is important in creating in learners a desire to read.

Conclusion

Offering pleasure reading to a woman learner as one of many reading choices in a literacy program may make her feel that the program is an oasis rather than a tax on her energy. Offering pleasure reading that makes women feel good can "hook" women into reading because it is an enjoyable, emotionally stimulating practice. This type of reading can connect to women's emotional lives in a nonthreatening way and potentially turn reading a satisfying daily ritual.

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Theory to Practice, Practice to Theory

A tutor-based program goes through multiple changes to serve its first-level learners better

by Anne Murr

I entered the adult literacy field four years ago as a volunteer tutor in the Drake Adult Literacy Center in Des Moines, Iowa. In my current role as Center Coordinator, I screen and place adult learners with volunteer tutors, train volunteers, and teach the initial lesson with all new students and tutors. I learn as much from the adult new readers as they learn from me. Along with teaching me about the varied and skilled ways in which they have succeeded in their lives, they have taught me about the depth of difficulty they have in processing language. Their struggles have taught me about the determination to learn and the obstacles they face.

As a Head Start teacher earlier in my career, I learned two valuable principles. The first was to reflect daily on what did and did not work in the classroom and to make changes based on those reflections. The second was to move from theory to practice, from practice to theory. I will examine here how critical reflection on the Drake Adult Literacy Center's practice, and on the theory and research that support it, intertwine.

Adult Center

The Drake University Adult Literacy Center is a community outreach service of the Drake University School of Education. Community and university volunteers meet one-to-one twice a week with adult new readers. Learners range in age from late teens to 70, with most in the 30 to 45 year range. The majority work full- or part-time but feel they could get better jobs if their reading skills were better. Many attended special education in school, but declare, "I know I can learn. I just never got the chance."

Theory

As I began to craft a literacy curriculum for adults I asked, "Do adults learn to read in the same way children do?" I downloaded *Learning to Read: Literacy Acquisition by Children and Adults* by Perfetti & Marron (1995) from the National Center on Adult Literacy's web site. Their study of the research led them to conclude that the cognitive process by which children and adults learn to read is the same. Of course, adults have more experiences, knowledge, and vocabulary in some areas, and more emotions linked to learning failure. Young children, I knew, learn through sensory stimulation while interacting with their environment. This principle guided my decisions as I began to design our curriculum. I wanted adult learners also to have interactive experiences that would stimulate their literacy learning.

Our First Practice

With guidance from Drake's professor of early childhood literacy, we adopted the America Reads tutoring model: read together, write together, and incorporate spelling and skills development. Since phonemic awareness is a necessary part of literacy learning, we encouraged tutors to use phonemic awareness activities. Every tutor received Edward Fry's *Phonics Patterns* (1997a), a resource to guide practice in phonemic awareness and spelling patterns. Each student received Fry's *Introductory Word Book* (1997b; the 1,000 most commonly used words) for use in building sight vocabulary and was encouraged to bring in reading materials that had personal meaning for him or her. We purchased books written for adults at the beginning reading level. Students wrote during each tutoring session, because writing promotes the practice of phonological processing skills.

We hoped to address reading skills development with computerized drill and practice. We used the Academy of Reading (Autoskill, 1998), which provides individualized training in phonemic awareness and reading. Adults were free to come to the Literacy Center to work on basic skills at their own pace. No keyboard skills were necessary. With all these pieces in place, we were confident that we had a balanced approach to literacy instruction for adults: use of personally meaningful text and writing in the context of real tasks as well as independent computerized skill work.

Reflections

Mary, the woman I was tutoring, chose to read from her children's Bible story easy reader. Despite practicing computer skills for hours and reading familiar stories repeatedly, she continued to make the same decoding errors. One of her goals was to be able

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to spell all her grandchildren's names so she could write them on each child's Christmas presents. For several months we practiced and practiced, but those names never became automatic and accurate. Our first year together, Mary's spelling improved slightly in letters she wrote to her pen pal, but she was not making progress toward her goal of learning to read. She wanted to learn and worked hard to learn, but my teaching did not help her skills to improve.

> "The lack of progress informed us that our learners needed a different type of instruction."

During the first year, not one adult learner had made measurable progress in learning to read. The lack of progress informed us that our learners needed a different type of instruction. It was time to find a better way.

More Theory

I had been searching the National Institute for Literacy's electronic discussion lists — covering such topics as learning disabilities, Equipped for the Future, and technology — for suggestions on improving literacy instruction. Barbara Guyer, who works with college students with learning disabilities, wrote "When all else fails, we go to the Wilson." Since all else had indeed failed for adults at our Literacy Center, we decided to try the Wilson Reading System, (WRS; Wilson, 1988). With funds donated by R.R. Donnelley, a publishing corporation with a plant in Des Moines, we bought a Wilson starter kit. Our initial expenses were less than $500.

WRS is written specifically for adults with dyslexia (defined as language-based learning disabilities) and is based on Orton-Gillingham multisensory principles. First, students learn letter-sound correspondence and how letters and sounds combine in words (phonemic awareness and phonological processing skills). The WRS 10-part lesson plan provides both structure and flexibility to allow students multiple opportunities to build skills and to receive immediate feedback on their learning. Instructional materials also give volunteer tutors the specifics they need to teach with confidence.

A New Practice

The Literacy Center Advisory Committee decided that all new volunteers would use the WRS to instruct adults with low literacy skills. Although we were not yet proficient in the WRS, it met our learners' needs more than our previous instruction had. The WRS also gave volunteer tutors a specific structure and materials they had lacked. (At a pilot training session for adult literacy providers I attended months later, Barbara Wilson confirmed that this is the way all adult literacy programs begin using Wilson materials. After we had sheepishly admitted the we were "sort of" using the Wilson Reading System, Barbara told us, "You start by doing as much as you know and can do. Then return to the instructor's materials and refine your skills as you are ready.")

Volunteers initially attend three hours of orientation. The first hour and a half session is an overview of reading disabilities and how the Wilson Reading System addresses those deficits. The second session addresses lesson planning and gives volunteers practice with the lesson plan format. Tutors meet with me occasionally in follow-up seminars to continue learning. The Center's limited budget precludes formal Wilson training for our tutors, but WRS instructors' materials give tutors detailed and specific guidance. Currently 22 tutors and students are learning together using the Wilson Reading System.

Informed by the Learners

During our initial assessment, adults are often frustrated when they cannot name the sounds that go with the letters. While many of our learners know most of the consonant sounds, no one is able to name all the vowel sounds (phonemes) accurately. They struggle with perceiving sounds in words: they seem to be in a fog of sound from which they can identify few individual phonemes. They also are angry that no one ever taught them what they need to know in order to learn to read.

Most of our adult new readers have a bank of words they know by sight, but the "little words" give them difficulty. When asked in the initial assessment to read word lists beginning with three-letter closed syllables and progressing to increasingly more complex words, many have more difficulty with the smallest words (ship or den versus mascot or pumpkins). The small words have fewer visual clues from which students can make their best guess.

> "... they seem to be in a fog of sound from which they can identify few individual phonemes."

Many of our learners tell me

that they do not know that letters represent the sounds in the words we speak, or that when you see a letter, that letter tells you the sound. During the introductory lesson, most are able to recognize the individual sounds in three-letter words for the first time. As they systematically learn letter-sound correspondences and how to blend and segment sounds in words, learners stop relying on the "guess and check" method of reading, and move to the more reliable "see and say" method.

Adults in our Center have shown me that no step in the process of learning to read comes easily. They must repeatedly practice each new sound, each new combination of sounds, often for months, before skills and concepts become automatic. One task in the Wilson lesson is to read 15 words, three words per line. Learners must read three words silently, then return to the beginning of the line and read the three words aloud. After carefully decoding each word, they often return to the beginning of the line and cannot remember the first word. These are persons with many abilities and accomplishments, but they can master holding sounds and words in short term memory only after a multitude of repetitions.

Informed by Research

A year after beginning to use the WRS, I enrolled in a research class that was a requirement for my masters degree in adult education. I began to research the question, "Why do children fail to learn to read?" Research confirms what I have learned from our adult learners. The lack of phonemic awareness and inability to manipulate sounds in words, which I see in our adult new readers, is one of the causes of reading failure (Bradley & Bryant, 1983).

These reading deficits are neurologically based and span all levels of cognitive ability. New brain scanning technologies have identified that brains of children and adults with reading problems do process language differently (Shaywitz, et al. 1998; Richards, et al. 2000). A large proportion of reading failure is the result of neurological difficulties that must be addressed directly.

Substantial research indicates that effective instruction for persons with reading deficits should be systematic and intensive, and should involve directly teaching how to recognize sounds in words and how letters represent sounds (Liberman & Shankweiler, 1985; Torgesen et al., 1997). Instruction must include multisensory approaches, with extensive opportunities for practice that allow the learner to attain automaticity. Instruction about word structure and comprehension must also be included. The WRS contains these necessary components, and adults respond positively to this instruction.

Reflections on our Present Practice

In contrast to our first, less structured language experience approach, we now have a way to track learner progress, and learners are making progress. Every WRS level (Step) is divided into substeps. During each lesson, the learner reads a list of 15 words and graphs the number of words read correctly. When the learner easily and consistently reads 14 or 15 out of 15 words, he or she moves to the next substep. Every learner in our Center has progressed through at least several substeps. 13 have moved from step one to step two. Three learners are now in step three and four are in step four (out of a total of 12 steps). Progress is slow; however, each person is taking the time he or she needs to build reading skills. Adult learners in our program are forming the foundation of skills necessary to become independent readers, and they are pleased with the results of their hard work.

When Mary started with the WRS, she didn't like it because she thought she already knew the alphabet. "But I found out I didn't know the sounds," she said. "When my employer left me a note, I panicked: back to old habits. Then I took my time and I read it!"

Jesse, who also attends a center where he is working on job skills, said, "At that center they don't teach me the sounds. I need that."

One of our youngest students, a 20-year old college student diagnosed with learning disabilities, exclaimed, "This is productive. Learning is fun." Adult learners are learning to trust what they know about letters and sounds.

"... we now have a way to track learner progress, and learners are making progress."

Volunteers also are responding positively. "I like the fact that the WRS program is so well organized. It's a step-by-step approach with many helps for both the student and tutor," said one.

Another commented, "I like the flexibility. My student can move ahead while continuing to review previously learned concepts."

We continue to refine our tutoring skills, and we know that we are not yet proficient. With more training resources, tutor preparation and support could be greatly improved. To become more effective, tutors need to be active independent learners. Wilson tutor materials are clear and explicit, but volunteers need to spend time reading and practicing their skills.

The Future

Our Center's process of practice and praxis continues. Are we providing the best possible literacy instruction for adults with language-based learning disabilities? How can we improve vocabulary and comprehension development? How can we address emotional blocks to help adults create the conditions for their learning? What more can we do that we have not yet discovered?

Research clearly identifies the criteria of instruction for children with reading disabilities, and has measured the effectiveness of this instruction. However, I have found no research that measures the effectiveness of reading instruction for adults with low literacy skills. I want to know if we are doing all we can to give our learners the most effective instruction. I have begun my own research to measure the impact on adults' reading skills of direct, systematic instruction in phonological processing skills by volunteer tutors using the Wilson Reading System.

Research informs our practice in the one-to-one tutoring setting with adults. Individuals in the Adult Literacy Center also instruct me about their needs and the challenges of remediating their reading difficulties. What will the next adult learner teach me and how will that inform our practice? Together, we move from theory to practice, practice to theory, in the continuing process of reflection and learning.

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Teaching Reading to First-Level Adults

Emerging Trends in Research and Practice

by Judith A. Alamprese

Reading has always been a fundamental concept taught in adult basic education (ABE). The methods and contexts for reading instruction, however, have varied over time according to practitioners' theoretical perspectives and belief systems about the reading process. For example, the teaching of reading often has been imbedded in instructional content rather than addressed as a discrete skill. Because of the variations in instructional approach, it sometimes has been difficult to discern the extent to which reading is being taught in ABE programs.

The past five years have witnessed a national call to improve the teaching of reading in elementary education. Reading is now a priority in key education legislation, such as the Reading Excellence Act and Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It has been the subject of research syntheses sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Service's National Institute on Child Health and Human Development in conjunction with the US Department of Education (DOE). Reading instruction is also one of the key areas under program quality in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) of 1998.

ABE practitioners' concerns center on teaching reading to first-level learners, generally are defined as those scoring at a 0 to 6th grade equivalent on a standardized reading test or at Level 1 on the National Adult Literacy Survey. First-level adults enter ABE programs with a range of reading skills. This variation in abilities sometimes poses challenges for instructors. The enrollment of first-level learners in ABE programs remains constant: about 17 percent of those participating in programs funded under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (US Department of Education, 1999). ABE practitioners have voiced a desire to learn about effective instructional methods for them. Furthermore, as states implement the National Reporting System for ABE accountability, ABE staff at all levels have a need to understand the amount of improvement it is reasonable to expect from a first-level learner over a specified time. All of these circumstances have led to the teaching of reading emerging as critical topic in ABE, particularly as a focus for staff development and program improvement.

Emerging Research on Adult Reading

The literature on teaching reading to children is extensive, but few national studies have examined effective strategies for reading instruction with adults. Most studies on adult reading have been small in scale and descriptive in design. As a result, few empirical data exist about the particular instructional approaches that are associated with reading improvement in adults. To address this gap, the US DOE funded two national studies on reading for adults: the Evaluation of Effective Adult Basic Education Programs and Practices, conducted by the research firm Abt Associates Inc.; and the What Works Study of Adult English as a Second Language Programs, undertaken by the American Institutes for Research. The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) is also studying the instructional strengths and needs in reading of adults enrolled in ABE and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes.

Key Issues

Although not based on research on adults, the syntheses presented in the report prepared by the National Reading Panel (2000) provide a useful perspective for understanding key issues in reading instruction. Taking into account the work undertaken by the National Research Council Committee — *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) — National Reading Panel research syntheses examined how critical reading skills are most effectively taught and the instructional methods, materials, and approaches most beneficial for students of varying abilities. The Panel examined three topics in reading: alphabetics (phonemic awareness and phonics instruction), fluency, and comprehension (including both vocabulary and text comprehension instruction). The implications of the Panel's report for teaching adults are that direct instruction on these topics may be beneficial to first-level adult learners, and that teachers must understand adults' relative strengths in these areas prior to beginning instruction. A recent review of the literature on adult reading research (Venezky et al., 1998) supports these findings.

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Questions for ABE

The emerging research on K-12 reading raises issues for teaching first-level adult learners. Will adults be receptive to being taught with a direct instruction method? How much emphasis should be placed on each of the key reading areas? How can adult text materials be incorporated into instruction focused on these reading areas? These questions and others concern instructors as they consider using research in refining their practice. One source of forthcoming information about these questions is Abt Associates' study of reading instruction for first-level learners, which is attempting to answer two critical questions:

- How much do first-level adult learners who participate in ABE programs improve their reading skills and reading-related behaviors after participation?
- How are adults' personal characteristics, as well as the operational and instructional characteristics of ABE programs, related to the amount of improvement in reading skills or reading-related behaviors among first-level learners?

> ***"Our intent is to develop a better understanding of the ways in which ABE programs can both organize reading instruction and provide the resources to foster participation."***

Studying Direct Instruction

We are attempting to answer the fundamental question of whether adults improve their reading skills as a result of attending ABE programs by examining ABE programs serving English-speaking, first-level learners in reading classes across the country. Our study is also investigating factors that may be associated with learners' improvement: their personal background and prior experience in education and work; the amount that they participate in instruction; the type of reading instruction that they receive; and the characteristics of the ABE program in which they participate.

While learners' background and amount of the instruction they receive are factors often examined in research, the operation of an ABE program is a new area of inquiry. We are attempting to address the gaps of previous studies of adult education programs, for example, National Evaluation of the Adult Education Program (Young, et al., 1994), the Evaluation of the Even Start Program (St. Pierre et al., 1995), and the Evaluation of the National Workplace Literacy Program (Moore et al., 1998). These examined the impact of ABE programs but did not develop in-depth enough information that allows us to understand the instructional and organizational approaches that local ABE programs use to administer services and produce learner outcomes.

Our assumption is that while quality instruction may be necessary for learners to improve, it may not be sufficient to address all of the needs that adult learners bring to the instructional setting. We are studying the instructional leadership that programs provide, the background and experience of instructors, the types of learner assessment that are used, and the support services that programs provide to learners. Our intent is to develop a better understanding of the ways in which ABE programs can both organize reading instruction and provide the resources to foster participation.

In selecting ABE programs and classes for our study, we are targeting programs offering reading instruction that is organized and structured and taught by individuals with training and or extensive experience in reading instruction. Since prior research (e.g., Young et al., 1994) has indicated that instruction in ABE often is not organized or systematic and thus may not contribute to learner outcomes, our approach has been to exclude programs that would not provide a good test of the study's questions. We also want to determine the extent to which teachers' prior experience or training contributes to learners' growth.

In our initial analyses of five ABE programs, we found structured, organized classes where reading is taught explicitly and includes activities aimed at developing phonemic awareness as well as fluency and comprehension. The amount of time spent on these topics varies with the level of the learners. Classes for learners at the 0 to 3rd grade equivalent level spend more time on phonemic awareness and phonics than classes for learners at the 4th to 6th grade equivalent level. The instructional content moves in a sequence. An attempt is made to build vocabulary with words from the text used in developing reading comprehension. Reading passages used in comprehension exercises are selected for high relevance to adults and are appropriate for the learner's reading level.

Observations of classes indicate that instructors monitor learners by moving around the room to make sure that they are on task and providing feedback by correcting a mistake when it is made. Teachers foster high learner engagement by involving all participants in the class, by having learners take turns working at the board to complete exercises, and by encouraging all learners' participation in discussion.

To provide opportunities for learners to practice the knowledge and skills that they are learning, teachers use exercises to guide learners in developing their reading skills. They use a variety of learning modalities, including oral reading, the completion of exercises on the board, and group recitation. They also have learners complete out-of-class assignments. Instructors gives concrete feedback; offer verbal praise when a learner gives a correct response or demonstrates initiative; encourage self-monitoring by pointing out specific strategies; and elicit verbal praise from other learners. In addition, teachers attempt to involve all participants by asking frequent questions, calling on learners by name, having learners take turns in oral reading, providing responses to learners' written exercises, asking learners to volunteer to participate in class exercises, and providing opportunities for learners to ask questions in class.

The instructors organize their reading instruction into a series of exercises or activities. They have an overall plan for the semester, term, or session, and their instructional activities follow a sequence based on the reading framework that they are using. Those who have been trained in reading instructional approaches such as the Slingerland Approach, the Wilson Reading System, and the Lindamood-Bell Learning Process are likely to adapt lesson plans these training programs provide. Other ABE teachers create their own lesson plans, which include instruction on the reading components (e.g., word analysis and word recognition, vocabulary development, comprehension development) in various amounts of time and sequence. The emphasis on any one reading component depends on learners' reading level and specific instructional needs. In carrying out these lessons, instructors use a variety of materials, including those produced by the reading programs noted above, as well as commercially produced materials, artifacts such as the newspaper, and exercises they create. The classes are based on a predetermined set of activities that may vary depending on learners' pace and progress (Alamprese, 2001).

Learners' Perspectives

Adults participating in the study are asked to describe which aspects of the instructional process facilitate or impede their learning as well as their perceptions of their experience in the ABE program. Participants in the first group of five ABE programs have cited the pace and structure of teaching, the repetition of content, the feedback provided to them, and instructors' personal interest in their well-being as important factors affecting their learning. These adults also have a high rate of attendance (67 percent), and many have enrolled in more than one term or semester in the program. Overall, they assess their experience in the reading classes as positive, productive, and motivating (Alamprese, 2001).

Conclusion

The instructional methods used by teachers in the first group of programs in this study are consistent with the research reported by the National Reading Panel and the synthesis of reading produced by Venezky and colleagues. Since the data collection is not yet complete, an analysis of the relationship between these methods and learners' capacity to improve their reading skills is not yet available. The study is scheduled for completion in 2002, when the final results will be available. In the interim, however, the trends in instruction that are being documented in the study offer some insight into current reading instructional practices that are of interest to teachers serving first-level learners and who are interested in offering group-based instruction.

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Judith A. Alamprese is an educational researcher with Abt Associates, in Washington, DC. She has worked closely with many states, including Connecticut and Pennsylvania, on adult education change initiatives, and has conducted a variety of studies of ABE over the past 15 years.❖

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BLACKBOARD

Resources on Teaching First-Level Learners

- ***Bridges to Practice: A Research-Based Guide for Literacy Practitioners Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities (1999).*** Funded and supported by the National Institute for Literacy, this resource consists of five guidebooks and a video designed for use by literacy programs to enhance the quality of services provided to adults with learning disabilities. Each guidebook covers a different topic: understanding learning disabilities, legal issues related to adult with learning disabilities, systems and program change, resources, the assessment process, the planning process, the teaching/learning process, and creating professional development opportunities. For more information, visit the NIFL web site (http://slincs.coe.utk.edu/special_collections/learning_disabilities/) or phone the Academy for Educational Development, which distributes the publication: (202) 884-8186.

- ***Teaching Adults Who Learn Differently, An Extensive Guide for Literacy Teachers and Tutors (2000)*** by L. Skinner, P. Gillespie, & L. Balkam, is published by Red Van Publishers and includes teaching and intervention strategies, information on language structure and learning differences, teaching tips, and sample lessons. It is available for $49.95 plus shipping and handling from Farnsworth's Books, 3911 Pacific Highway Suite 105, San Diego, CA 92110; phone (619) 299-4041.

- **http://www.ldonline.org** is a service of The Learning Project at WETA, Washington, DC., in association with The Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities. While it focuses primarily on kids, it also has useful information relative to adults.

- **http://www.cast.org/bobby/, or "Bobby,"** is a free Web-based tool that analyzes web pages for their accessibility to people with disabilities. It also analyzes web pages for compatibility with various browsers. Any URL can be submitted for analysis. The site provides links to approved accessible sites, online discussion, and other information.

- **http://slincs.coe.utk.edu/special_collections/learning_disabilities/** includes resources on learning disabilities for teachers, learners, and administrators. It is part of the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS system, a national electronic information and communication system for adult literacy.

- An electronic discussion list on learning disabilities is maintained by LINCS http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/discussions.html.

Contact Information for Reading Programs

- **The Wilson Reading System,** Wilson Language Training, 175 West Main Street, Millbury, MA 01527-1441; telephone (508) 865-5699; fax (508) 865-9644.

- **The Orton-Gillingham Program,** Academy of Orton-Gillingham, P.O. Box 234, Amenia, NY 12051-0234; telephone (845) 373-8919.

- **LiPS- Phoneme Sequencing Program,** Lindamood-Bell San Luis Obispo, 416 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401; telephone (800) 233-1819; fax (805) 541-8756.

Previously Published in *Focus on Basics*

- ***Accommodating Math Students with Learning Disabilities***
  Rochelle Kenyon
  (Volume 4, Issue B, September 2000)

- ***Beginning Math for Beginning Readers***
  Linda Huntington
  (Volume 4, Issue B, September 2000)

- ***Seven Easy Pieces***
  Shirley Brod
  (Volume 3, Issue D, December 1999)

- ***Reading***
  (Volume 1, Issue B, May 1997)

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CONNECTING RESEARCH & PRACTICE

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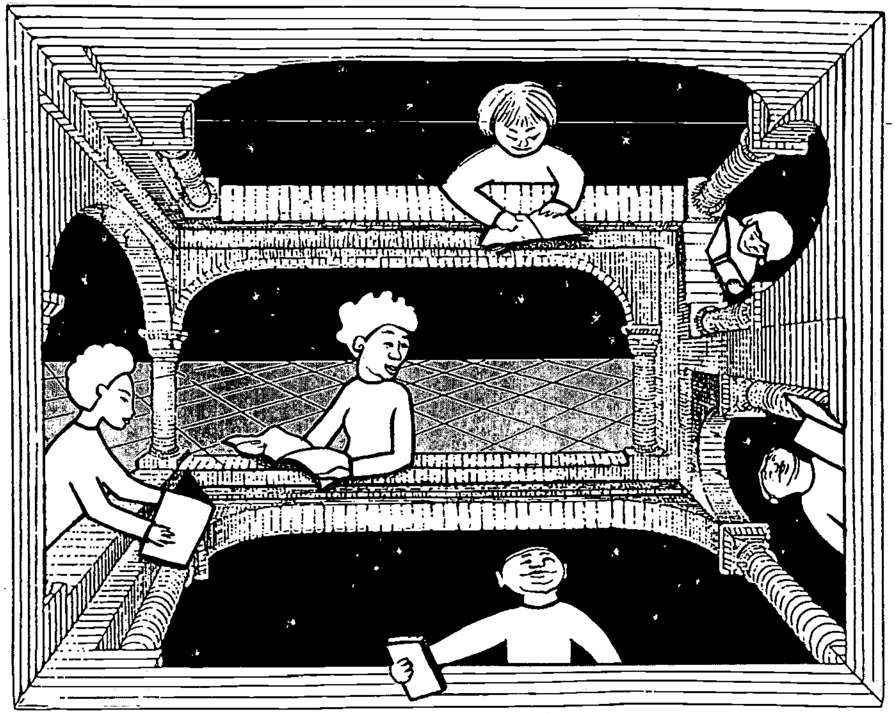

Findings From the Adult Development Research Study

Adult development has much to offer adult educators: it provides one more window through which we can understand learners and therefore better meet their needs. The NCSALL Adult Development Research Group study examined how the developmental levels of learners shape their experiences in their literacy programs. The research team views adult development as an interactive process between the individual and the environment, with adults moving from simpler to more complex ways of understanding the world. Concrete acts shape and organize the world of Instrumental adults; Socializing adults understand the world in relation to other persons or ideas; while Self-Authoring adults prioritize and integrate competing values according to their own ideology. Turn to page 3 for an overview of the research; separate articles on each of three findings follow on pages 7, 10, and 15. On page 23, two teachers whose learners participated in the study talk about their experiences. —Editor

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Focus on Basics is the quarterly publication of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. It presents best practices, current research on adult learning and literacy, and how research is used by adult basic education teachers, counselors, program administrators, and policymakers. *Focus on Basics* is dedicated to connecting research with practice, to connecting teachers with research and researchers with the reality of the classroom, and by doing so, making adult basic education research more relevant to the field.

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WORLD EDUCATION

Welcome!

Being the parent of two youngish children (6 and 8), child development is often on my mind. I subscribe to stage theory, as in "one I hope he'll move out of soon" and "it's only a . . .". I never thought about adult development and its role in my instructional choices when I was a classroom teacher, but, after putting this issue of *Focus on Basics* together, if I return to the classroom or to training teachers, I will.

As in most fields of research and theory, adult development has a variety of "camps" — different schools of thought on how adults develop — four of which are described by Lisa Baumgartner in the article that starts on page 29. Behavioristic / mechanistic; psychological / cognitive; contextual / sociocultural; and integrated, Lisa points out that our teaching choices reflect the school of thought we subscribe to, whether that subscription is conscious or not.

The NCSALL Adult Development Research Group takes that concept one step further. They suggest that, since adult basic education classes are comprised of learners at a variety of developmental levels, educators need to ensure that their program design and instruction supports learners at all developmental levels. Their research findings also reveal that the group plays an important part in supporting learners, regardless of developmental levels. Read about their research and related findings, then learn how Sylvia Greene and Matthew Puma, Massachusetts teachers, support the developmental growth of their learners in the interviews on page 23.

Carol Eades, of Kentucky, shares techniques she uses to support learners' developmental transformation in the article that begins on page 26. At TV411, Debby D'Amico and Mary Ann Capehart explore the dynamics that occurred in a group of learners who, working with a facilitator, used specially designed television shows and related materials as instructional guides. See this article and a commentary on the developmental theories implicit in TV411 in the section starting on page 41.

* * *

You can discuss the findings of the NCSALL Adult Development Research — and all NCSALL's research — via the *Focus on Basics* electronic discussion list. The researchers are eager to get feedback and answer questions about their work. See page 22 for information on how to participate.

Sincerely,

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Barbara Garner

Barbara Garner
Editor

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Describing the NCSALL Adult Development Research

by Eleanor Drago-Severson, Deborah Helsing, Robert Kegan, Maria Broderick, Kathryn Portnow, & Nancy Popp

How adult learners experience what we call "program learning" was the focus of the NCSALL Adult Development Research Group's two-year study. Program learning refers to how learners experience learning in their programs; how this learning transfers to their social roles as parents, workers, or learners; the ways in which learners experience program supports and challenges to their learning; and how this learning helps them to change. By listening to adult basic education (ABE) participants' experiences over the course of a year or more, the Adult Development Research Group was able to trace their processes of learning and, in some cases, transformation.

Research Sites and Participants

During 1998-1999, we evaluated a group of 41 adult learners from around the world who were enrolled in three different US ABE programs: a community college, a family literacy site, and a workplace site. The participant sample was diverse with respect to race, ethnicity, age, past educational experiences, socioeconomic status, and social roles. Of the participants, 38 were nonnative speakers of English.

At Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC), in Charlestown, MA, we studied how a group of recently immigrated young adults, who were mostly in their late teens or early 20s, experienced a pilot program aimed at helping them become better prepared for academic coursework in college. These learners were enrolled in the same two classes at BHCC during their first semester (i.e., an English for speakers of other languages ((ESOL)) class and an introductory psychology class designed for ESOL learners). During the second semester the group disbanded, and learners independently selected courses from the full range of academic courses available at BHCC.

At the Even Start Family Literacy Program in Cambridge, MA, we evaluated one group of parents who were members of a pre-General Educational Development (GED) class, and another parent group enrolled in an ESOL class. These parents, who were mostly in their 30s, had emigrated from various countries and been living in the United States for an average of nine years. Family members in this program also had at least one child who attended the Family Literacy Program.

At the Polaroid Corporation, Norwood, MA, we studied a group of workers who participated in a 14-month Adult Diploma Program designed and delivered by the Continuing Education Institute (CEI) of Watertown, MA. Most of these learners were in their 30s and 40s, had lived in the United States for more than 20 years, were married, and had children.

Site Selection Criteria

As developmental psychologists and educators, we embarked on a process-based research study: our focus was to understand the processes of students' learning more than the content of what they learned. The sites we chose were running programs widely considered to be best practice (see e.g., Harbison & Kegan, 1999). Best practice programs are commonly celebrated because they use effective methods for achieving excellent and targeted results, and because such model programs often set benchmarks or standards for other programs to emulate (Hammer & Champy, 1993). In our case, we selected programs that were longer term (nine to 14 months), enabling us to explore long-term growth in students' understanding, and allowing us to examine the developmental dimensions of transformational learning.

We also looked for programs that intentionally incorporated a variety of supports and challenges to facilitate adult learning, including, for example, tutoring, advising, and technological support for learners. As part of our research process, we examined how program design, teacher practice, learner expectations, and curricula might support and challenge learners with different ways of knowing and possibly lead to transformation. We selected

continued on page 4

Adult Development Research

continued from page 3

programs that supported the enhancement of adults' specific role competency in one of three social roles: student, parent, and worker. For example, at Bunker Hill Community College we could study the role of student. We selected Polaroid to study the role of worker and an Even Start Family Literacy site to study the role of parent. We examined the ways in which participants, over time, reported program learning as helping them to perform their specific social roles differently.

Research Questions

Prior studies that have used Robert Kegan's theory of adult development (see page 5) and research methods have largely been composed of white, highly educated, middle class adults who speak English as their first language. Our research study extends the use of this framework to ABE settings and applies a constructive developmental perspective of adult growth and learning to a sample of adults who are **not** economically privileged, mostly **not** native-born American, and mostly **non**native English speakers. This study was, therefore, among other things, an attempt to understand whether and how this particular theory of adult development could be extended to a very different population from that in which it was originally formulated.

By looking at the developmental dimensions of transformational learning, we sought to examine, both from the learners' and our developmental perspective, how the mix of supports and challenges provided by the three programs helped these adults in their learning. While the findings for all these research questions are not presented in the following three articles, these are questions that guided our exploration:

1. How does developmental level (i.e., way of knowing) shape adults' experiences and definitions of the core roles they take on as learners, parents, and workers?

What are the similarities in the ways in which adults at similar levels of development construct the role demands and supports in each of these domains?

2. How do adult learners' ways of knowing shape their experience and definition of programs dedicated to increasing their role competence?

What are adult learners' motives for learning, definitions of success, conceptions of the learners' role, and understandings of their teachers' relationship to their learning?

3. What educational practices and processes contribute to changes in the learner's relationship to learning (vis-à-vis motive, efficacy, and meaning system) and specifically to any reconceptualizations of core roles?

4. To what extent does the level of people's development or transformation predict their success or competence?

Are the similarities in experiences across roles related to developmental levels (i.e., ways of knowing)?

Methodology

We used a variety of data collection methods and tools, including qualitative interviews, structured exercises, classroom observations, focus groups, and quantitative survey measures and Likert scales that we administered to each adult learner on at least three different occasions during the study. Although we considered interviewing each adult learner in his or her first language, because of the diversity of our sample across the three research sites and the expense associated with hiring interviewers who spoke each of the represented languages, this was not feasible. All interviews were administered individually, in English.

Talking with the same adult learners at different points over the course of a year or more helped us to learn about their internal experiences of change and any ways in which their views had changed. For example, during each visit we asked participants about what makes a good student, what makes a good teacher, and how program learning was helping them in their social role. In other NCSALL publications (see Kegan et al., 2001), we discuss more fully what the processes of transformational learning looked like, how learners with different ways of knowing experienced such processes, and the practices that learners named as support to these changes.

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Nancy Popp is a Research Associate at NCSALL. ❖

Our Developmental Perspective

We employed a constructive developmental perspective of growth, based on the work of psychologist Robert Kegan (1982, 1994), to understand: how the adults in this study experienced — or made sense of — what they learned in their programs; and the supports and challenges they named as facilitating their growth. Our perspective is informed by the past 30 years of research in the field of adult development, which suggests that developmental principles can be applied to adults (Basseches, 1984; Belenky et al., 1986; Daloz, 1986; Kegan 1982, 1994; Kohlberg, 1984; Piaget, 1952; Weathersby, 1976).

The first premise in a constructive developmental perspective is that **growth and development are lifelong processes**. Growth does not end in adolescence; as adults we continue to grow and develop. Another is that these **growth processes are gradual and in the direction of greater complexity**. Adults evolve from one way of knowing, or underlying meaning system, to another more complex way of knowing at their own pace and depending on the available supports and challenges. While these developmental processes are sequential, people of similar ages and phases of their lives can be at different places in their development (Broderick, 1996; Drago-Severson, 1996; Goodman, 1983; Kegan, 1982; Popp, 1998; Portnow, 1996; Portnow et al., 1998; Stein, 2000). Moving from one developmental stage to another is a progression of increasing

continued on page 6

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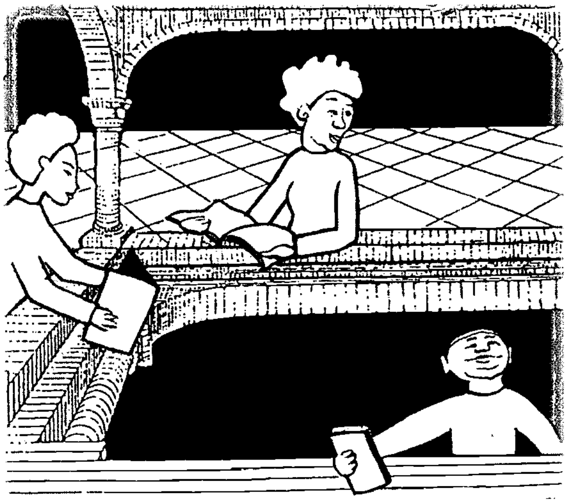
Our Perspective

continued from page 5

complexity in an individual's cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities. Each stage includes the capacities of the prior stage, but adds new capacities as well. Some readers may wonder therefore whether we are suggesting that a higher stage is necessarily a better stage. We prefer to look at this question in terms of the natural learning challenges (or "hidden curricula") people face in their lives. If the complexity of one's meaning system is sufficient to meet the challenges one faces, it would not necessarily be better to construct a more complex meaning system. But if the complexity one faces outstrips the current complexity of one's meaning system, a change in one's meaning system in the direction of greater complexity **would** indeed be better, in the practical sense. We do **not** believe that a person is a better person for having a more complex meaning system.

Development, from our point of view, involves more than learning new skills or acquiring new knowledge, which we refer to as informational learning. Development also involves transformational learning: a qualitative shift in how people know and understand themselves, their worlds, and the relationship between the two. Transformational learning enables people to take broader perspectives on themselves (seeing and understanding different aspects of the self) and others (Cranton, 1994; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Mezirow, 1991). In our view, transformational change is intimately linked to the way in which people conceive of their adult responsibilities. This transformational learning, which underlies changes in how people construe their roles, helps them enhance their capacities to manage better the complexities of their daily lives as learners, parents, and workers. In our view, transformational development occurs across domains. Therefore, people tend to, but do not always, exercise the same meaning systems across all domains of life.



To understand how adults made sense of and interpreted their experience, we used a framework (Kegan 1982, 1994) that considers the way people *construct* — or make sense of — the reality in which they live, and the way these constructions can change or develop over time. We refer to an adult's underlying meaning system — through which all experience is filtered and understood — as a way of knowing or a developmental level. People's ways of knowing organize how they understand their experience of themselves, others, and life events and situations. Our ways of knowing may feel more to us like the way we are; and the world we construct through our way of knowing may seem to us less the way things look to us, and more like the way things are.

Each way of knowing has its own logic, which is different from and builds upon the previous logic by incorporating the former into its new meaning system. We are all engaged in the universal and continuing processes of meaning making. Understanding how a person is making sense of her world creates an opportunity to join her and offer support in a way that she will experience as being supportive. Three qualitatively different ways of knowing (and several identifiable transition points between any two) are most prevalent in adulthood: the Instrumental, the Socializing, and the Self-Authoring. Instrumental learners tend toward a concrete, external, and transactive orientation to the world. To Socializing learners, the self is identified with its relationship to others or to ideas. Self-Authoring knowers take responsibility for and ownership of their own internal authority.

People's ways of knowing shape how they understand their responsibilities as students and how they think about what makes a good student. It also frames how adults think about themselves as family members, learners, and workers. We used this lens in our research analysis to understand how participants made sense of their motives and goals for learning, expectations of themselves as learners and for their teachers, supports and challenges to their learning, and sense of themselves in their social roles. This framework also allowed us to trace how participants' sense making changed — and grew more complex — over time. ❖

Three Developmentally Different Types of Learners

by Eleanor Drago-Severson, Deborah Helsing, Robert Kegan, Maria Broderick, Nancy Popp, & Kathryn Portnow

How is it that the very same curriculum, classroom activities, or teaching behaviors can leave some learners feeling excited and their needs well met, while others feel deserted or lost? Research findings from the NCSALL Adult Development Research shed some light on this question. Despite similarities in the study participants, all of whom were participating in adult basic education (ABE) programs, the students demonstrated a diversity of ways of knowing. In this article, the NCSALL Adult Development Research Group demonstrate how a developmental perspective can be a tool for better understanding how adults make sense of the learning they experience in their programs. Our intention is to broaden conceptions about how to support adult learners in their educational processes.

Diversity of Learners' Ways of Knowing

Learners in any one of the three research settings in which we gathered data (see page 3 for a description of the study) were primarily of similar age and oriented to a common and particular social role (e.g., at one site, all participants were parents, at another, all participants were workers). We nevertheless discovered a diversity in learners' ways of knowing in each site. At the same time, the learners demonstrated a range of ways of knowing similar to the range found in previous studies with samples of native English-speaking adults with similarly widespread socioeconomic status (see e.g., Kegan, 1994). For example, at each of our research sites, an Instrumental way of knowing was dominant for at least one learner. At each of the sites, Self-Authoring ways of knowing were dominant for several learners. At all three sites, the majority of learners demonstrated some degree of a Socializing way of knowing (a person can have two ways of knowing operating at the same time). Instrumental knowers tend toward a concrete, external, and transactive orientation to the world; Socializing knowers identify self through its relation to other persons or ideas; and Self-Authoring knowers take responsibility for and ownership of their own internal authority. The differences in complexity of learners' ways of knowing were not highly associated with level of formal education. That is, some learners with limited formal education nonetheless demonstrated developmentally complex ways of knowing.

Interesting similarities and patterns emerged both within and across sites that illuminate how learners bound by a particular way of knowing commonly understood their program learning experiences, themselves as students, teacher expectations, and their social roles. Adults of markedly different ages, from very different cultures, and from different parts of the world shared these commonalities. Furthermore, people of similar ages or from similar cultural backgrounds were sometimes differentiated by very different ways of knowing. Hence a "new pluralism" of significance for the teacher emerges: that of developmental level. Tables 1 and 2 on pages 8 and 9 illustrate how, across all three sites, learners who shared a way of knowing demonstrated similar understanding in their conceptions of good students and good teachers.

> *"This less visible form of diversity in adults' ways of knowing is one aspect of what we call a* ***new pluralism.****"*

Implications

Our findings teach us that ABE and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classrooms are likely to be populated by adults with a range of qualitatively different ways of making sense of their experiences. Therefore, teachers and programs that recognize students' developmental diversity and support their growth accordingly will be especially effective. Attention paid to development may allow ABE and ESOL programs to better scaffold students who have a diversity of learning needs and ways of knowing.

In our study, we found that participants' experiences varied across different ways of knowing, and that there were intriguing commonalities among the experiences of learners who shared a particular way of knowing. This less visible form of diversity in adults' ways of knowing is one aspect of what we call a "new pluralism." The diversity of learners' ways of knowing that will likely exist in any ABE or ESOL classroom calls for what constitutes the second aspect of our new pluralism. Educators need to be mindful of and orient toward this new variable by including a variety — or plurality — of pedagogical approaches in their classroom practice.

A final aspect of our new pluralism is that a person's way of knowing can become more complex (i.e., change) if she or he is provided with developmentally appropriate supports and challenges. Attending to the diversity of ways in which adults interpret and make sense of their experience — in addition to other more visible types of diversity — can provide new and important insights into learners' experiences.

To return to our opening

Table 1: Learners' Constructions of Good Students (across all three sites)

Way of Knowing	Good Students . . .	Sample Quotations
Instrumental Knowers	Study hard, follow clear directions and rules provided by teachers. Gather a lot of information and skills (i.e., knowledge is constructed as an accumulation of facts and skills). Focus on finding the right answers and the right ways to do things. Do well academically and they assess this by getting good grades, which are assigned by teachers.	"If we spend some time and we study much, there will be no difficulty." A good student will "come on time, do your homework, respect the teacher, you do what she told you to do." Good students "get the right answers," and in taking notes, "write down [the explanation] exactly."
Socializing Knowers	Have the right internal characteristics to learn. Maintain positive attitudes about themselves and the subjects they are studying. Rely on their teachers to tell them what they should know.	"The more [students] are open, they learn new things." Good students feel "comfortable" and "self-confident." "I always ask my teacher, and he always explain, and I think this is wonderful."
Self-Authoring Knowers	Can create and explain their own complex ideas. Are comfortable holding ideas or opinions that differ from their teachers'. Can evaluate their own learning experiences by how well they meet their self-constructed goals. Are able to take responsibility for their own learning.	"I can use the English writing to express my thought, my feeling." "I have a deep impression that I can talk it." "No matter how good teacher you have, if you don't want to learn, you're not going to learn nothing." "Before I thought... teachers [were] supposed to know... But now I know it's up to me."

Table compiled by Deborah Helsing.

question, familiarity with learners' different ways of knowing may help to explain how the very same curriculum, classroom activities, or teaching behaviors can leave some learners feeling excited and their needs well-met while others feel deserted or lost. In such cases, teachers may unknowingly be using materials or teaching strategies attuned to one way of knowing while neglecting others. For example, asking one student to critique another student's idea may be threatening to a Socializing knower, who depends on feeling a sense of empathy and agreement with her peers. Teaching the English language only as a collection of specific and concrete rules to be learned may leave both Socializing and Self-Authoring learners feeling frustrated, while an Instrumental learner may feel comfortable. A teacher's enhanced capacity to support all students in a class, across a range of ways of knowing, can increase the chances of more students feeling recognized and valued for the meanings they

Table 2: **Learners' Constructions of Good Teachers (across all three sites)**

Way of Knowing	Good Teachers . . .	Sample Quotations
Instrumental Knowers	Show them how to learn. *Give* them their knowledge and the rules they need to follow to get the right answers.	Good teachers... "give you that little push;" "make me learn." "Explain how do to it, ask you write it down, and you write down exactly how to do it. Then we'd do it."
Socializing Knowers	Care about them. Explain things to help them understand. Really listen and support them. *Know* what is good for them to know, and they tell them what they *should* know. Have certain qualities: kind, patient and encouraging. Acknowledge when the learner has learned something.	"If you don't have a good teacher, you're not going to be self-confident." "If [the teacher] doesn't teach you the way you learn good, that doesn't help you." Good teachers "keep explaining things in different ways, show you different ways to learn." "...help you feel important and accepted... never forget you." Good teachers have a "kind heart." "...don't give up on students. You can ask her anything—she's interested in your learning. She cares so much."
Self-Authoring Knowers	Are one source of knowledge, and they see themselves and their classmates as other sources. Listen to the feedback these learners offer to help them improve their practice. Use a variety of teaching strategies in their practice. Help them to meet their own internally generated goals.	Good teachers "understand their students." "She learn from me, I learn from her." "No matter how good a teacher you have, if you don't really want to learn, you're not going to learn nothing." "Make learning interesting. It has to be interesting to the student." "What you do with knowledge after it's given to you is of your own choosing." "I think it's very tough for a teacher to teach and listen and explain all the time."

Table compiled by Eleanor Drago-Severson.

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bring to their learning. Students who are adequately and appropriately supported and challenged academically are more likely to learn more.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that a new definition of the "resource-rich" classroom is needed including good pedagogical matches to a wide variety of adults' learning needs and ways of knowing. Thus, our study suggests that ABE and ESOL practitioners develop an understanding of this new variable — a diversity of learners' ways of knowing — as it expresses itself in the ABE or ESOL setting. By extension, we point to the need for educators to use a diversity of approaches in meeting and supporting learners with a diversity of learning needs and ways of knowing. Adult learners inevitably differ in ways that are less immediately apparent than that of more familiar pluralisms of race, gender, or age.

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Three Different Types of Change

by Deborah Helsing, Eleanor Drago-Severson, Robert Kegan, Kathryn Portnow, Nancy Popp, & Maria Broderick

As adult basic education (ABE) students progress, teachers know their students are changing. How can teachers best understand and support multiple types of changes? In this article, the NCSALL Adult Development Research Group presents findings from our longitudinal study. We found that adults' participation in ABE and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programs were adult developmental events in which the learners generally extended the reach of an existing way of knowing to a wider range of applications, and in which some learners actually transformed their ways of knowing.

The NCSALL Adult Development Research Group views development as a lifelong process, meaning that even as adults we continue to grow and become more complex. We mark this growth along a spectrum of sequential and qualitatively distinct levels of development. The three most common levels for adults are the Instrumental way of knowing, the Socializing way of knowing, and the Self-Authoring way of knowing. Instrumental knowers tend toward a concrete, external, and transactive orientation to the world; Socializing knowers have more a more abstract and internal orientation; and Self-Authoring knowers take responsibility for and ownership of their own internal authority. A given way of knowing may frame and influence one's experience of oneself, others, and events. To grow from one level to the next involves a qualitative shift in the ways an adult knows and makes sense of the world.

In researching the experiences of 41 adult learners at three literacy programs over the course of a year or more, we found that learners' descriptions of their experiences varied notably across different ways of knowing. Participants who shared a particular way of knowing had intriguing commonalities among their descriptions. We were also struck by the three types of changes occurring in learners' lives, which we will first introduce briefly and then describe in more detail.

Changes: An Overview

Most of the 41 participants in our study were undergoing changes of acculturation. As immigrants to the United States, they were confronting the formidable tasks of gaining fluency in the English language as well as in their new culture. How participants experienced and navigated these changes was related to their developmental levels. That is, learners with different ways of knowing demonstrated notable differences in their descriptions of these changes. Learners with the same way of knowing, on the other hand, gave descriptions of change that had striking similarities.

All participants were seeking to gain new kinds of information, skills, and ideas throughout the course of their program. Often, these changes contributed to consolidation and elaboration of their perspectives, through which learners made connections among and extended their ideas and values within their existing ways of knowing. Participants also described their learning as contributing either to occurring or hoped-for improvements in many other aspects of their lives, including their sense of identity, their careers, their social and economic status, their home lives, and their self-confidence.

Some participants experienced transformational changes. These learners not only made gains in what they knew, they also modified the shape of how they knew. They grew to demonstrate new and more complex ways of knowing, along the lines of the distinctions suggested in Tables 1 and 2 of the previous article, "Three Developmentally Different Types of Learners" on pp. 8 and 9. For these qualitative shifts in participants' ways of knowing to occur even for a few learners over the short span of one year is remarkable.

To give an overview of these changes here, as well as the developmentally driven similarities and differences among learners, we discuss each type of change as we saw it in one particular site and around one particular aspect of the program. Remember, however, that the changes we describe were evident at all three sites and were related to learners' conceptions of several aspects of the program (including for example, how they perceived themselves as students, their teachers, their peers, and their learning).

Acculturation

At all three sites, many learners experienced changes relating to acculturation and, in particular, to their understanding of what it meant to be a good student. At Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC), in Charlestown, MA, all participants were immigrants growing accustomed to their new roles as students in an American community college. To succeed in these new roles, the learners needed to acculturate: to understand and demonstrate the specific skills, behaviors, attitudes, and types of knowledge that are valued in these settings. As with other aspects of

Learners' Ways of Knowing

INSTRUMENTAL

☐ Knowledge is a kind of possession, an accumulation of skills, facts, and actions that yield solutions; a means to an end. You get it and then you have it.

☐ Knowledge is right or wrong.

☐ Knowledge comes from external authority that tells you the right skills, facts, and rules you need to produce the results to get what you want.

☐ Knowledge helps one meet one's own concrete needs and goals, and obtain Instrumental outcomes.

☐ The purpose of education is to get X.

SOCIALIZING

☐ Knowledge is general information one should know for one's required social roles and to meet expectations of teachers and authorities.

☐ Knowledge is equated with objective truth.

☐ Knowledge comes from high authorities and experts who hand down truth and understanding. Authorities and experts are the source of the legitimate knowledge and informed opinions.

☐ Knowledge helps one to meet cultural and social expectations, gain acceptance and entry into social roles, and feel a sense of belonging.

☐ The purpose of education is to be X.

SELF-AUTHORING

☐ Knowledge is understood as construction, truth, a matter of context. Bodies of knowledge and theories are seen as models for interpreting and analyzing experience.

☐ Knowledge comes from one's interpretation and evaluation of standards, values, perceptions, deductions, and predictions.

☐ Knowledge comes from a self-generated curiosity and sense of responsibility for one's own learning.

☐ Knowledge helps to enrich one's life, to achieve a greater competence according to one's own standards, to deepen one's understanding of self and world to participate in the improvement of society.

☐ The purpose of education is to become X.

(By K. Portnow & N. Popp, (1998). "Transformational learning in adulthood." *Focus on Basics,* 2D. Adapted from R. Weathersby, *A Synthesis of Research and Theory on Adult Development: Its Implications for Adult Learning and Postsecondary Education,* 1976; pp. 88-89.)

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their learning experiences, the ways that BHCC students described their understandings of a good student were shaped by their different ways of knowing.

Instrumental learners are oriented largely to the specific and concrete, externally observable behaviors and skills that they had to acquire to be successful as students. They described the importance of improving their academic English language skills, including learning new vocabulary, and constructing five-paragraph essays according to accepted rules of grammar, punctuation, organization, and style. They mentioned the importance of developing successful strategies for studying, such as note-taking, using a textbook effectively, and completing homework regularly and correctly. Other particular behaviors that Instrumental learners emphasized included asking questions and offering opinions in class discussions; attending all classes and arriving at them promptly; and utilizing institutional forms of academic support such as personal tutoring and computer software programs. Considering the identified behaviors and concrete skills as the keys to academic success, these learners were likely to evaluate their learning based on the grades and course credit they received and according to their ability to produce the "right" answers. While all learners name many of these concerns, Instrumental learners described only these concerns.

"Thus, the changes they experienced in the classroom carried over into other aspects of their lives."

Like Instrumental learners, Socializing learners saw the need to learn the skills and behaviors valued by American educational institutions and included these concerns in their explanations. However, they also gave weight to abstract purposes and internal characteristics, such as considerations of character and personality that could help them acquire and were augmented by particular skills and new types of knowledge. To become good students and learn effectively in their new environment, they emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive attitude, a sense of hope, and the will to learn. Accordingly, these students tended to refer to their attitudes and their personalities when evaluating their learning, judging themselves on their ability to remain open and receptive to new learning.

Demonstrating similar concerns about acquiring new skills and knowledge and acknowledging the importance of more abstract internal states, Self-Authoring learners referred to and concentrated on additional priorities. These students often described their struggles to master the English language in terms of how effectively they were able to communicate the complexity of their ideas. They showed interest in differences of opinion: each perspective could be considered as a possible and viable alternative that could inform their own understanding. Thus, rather than relying on teachers to communicate correct information or ideas as both Instrumental and Socializing learners did, Self-Authoring students regarded themselves and other students as additional valid sources of knowledge. These learners could evaluate their teachers and the subject matter by their usefulness in meeting the learners' own self-constructed goals.

Consolidation and Elaboration

Another dimension of the changes in participants' lives, across all three sites, centered on how acquiring new learning enabled participants to consolidate and elaborate on their existing social identities within a given way of knowing. In addition to gaining new skills, knowledge, ideas, perspectives, and values, learners formed new relationships among these ideas, and perhaps reconsidered their own beliefs. These changes in their perspectives on themselves and their roles — what we call consolidation and elaboration — are developmental changes: they allowed participants to build up and deepen their way of knowing. At an Even Start family literacy program in Cambridge, MA, learners described how various aspects of the curriculum helped them broaden their understanding of their parenting roles and supported them in enacting their visions of themselves as effective parents.

Instrumental parents had a concrete focus on their own and their children's needs and often found it difficult to put themselves in their children's shoes. They understood proper discipline as meaning that their children did what they were told, followed the rules, and met parental needs. In recounting how various aspects of their program enhanced their ability to parent, Instrumental learners described their increasing ability to perform practical behaviors. They reported that the program enabled them to help their children better because they were more effective in communicating with doctors and teachers, assisting their children with homework, and making better use of public transportation. Unlike their Socializing and Self-Authoring peers, Instrumental learners did not identify additional criteria by which they understood their parenting role.

Parents with a Socializing way of knowing demonstrated the ability to internalize their children's perspectives. They held values of parenting that were prescribed culturally or by authorities, and they disciplined their children according to the externally mediated values they had internalized. In many cases, Socializing learners at Even Start accepted the underlying values of the parenting curriculum, through which they were able to consolidate and elaborate their own views and values of parenting. These learners explained how their increasing ability to participate in educational activities with their children, such as reading aloud or working on a school project, deepened the emotional bonds between them.

Self-Authoring parents saw themselves as the creators and generators of their parenting philosophies. These parents were able to take into account both the child's internal psychological perspective and their own, and recognized that children's successes and struggles were distinct from and not determined by their parents'. At Even Start, Self-Authoring learners often adopted the program's approaches to or information about disciplining their children. However, they were able to assess the program's values according to their own self-generated parenting philosophies. Increased parenting skills and information were valued as important fuel for their own self-definition of parenting competence.

Transformational

At several points during their programs, we invited all learners at each site to describe their understanding of what makes a good teacher. Over the course of the program, we observed how several Polaroid learners experienced transformation, growing to demonstrate new ways of knowing and qualitatively changing their conceptions of, in this example, good teachers.

Learners with an Instrumental way of knowing wanted their teachers to provide clear explanations, corrections on written and oral work, and step-by-step procedures. They focused on their own concrete needs and felt supported when teachers gave them information and task-oriented scaffolding to help them build the mechanical skills they needed to complete their assignments. These learners identified good teachers as those who made them learn. At the end of the program, we noticed changes in how several of these learners conceived the teacher-learner relationship. In many of these cases, Instrumental knowers began to recognize a more internal psychological and abstract quality to their learning, describing, for example, the way that their teachers made them feel about themselves. We marked these transformational changes as the emergence of a Socializing way of knowing.

Socializing learners, like Instrumental knowers, felt supported in their learning when teachers explained concepts well and talked slowly. However, unlike Instrumental knowers, Socializing learners also expected their teachers to value their ideas and themselves. They felt most supported by teachers who really cared about them. While Socializing learners felt that good teachers helped them understand concepts so that they could complete assignments, it was the interpersonal connection they had with good teachers that helped learners to feel comfortable. They appreciated teachers who employed a variety of teaching strategies that helped them to apply their learning to broader goals. Learners with a Socializing way of knowing were not only interested in fulfilling their teachers' expectations of them, but they also identified with their teachers' expectations of them. In other words, the teachers' learning goals for them became their own goals for learning. They viewed their teachers as sources of authority and expected the teacher to know what they needed to learn. Although these learners could sense internally when they had learned something, they needed the teacher's acknowledgement to feel complete. During the programs, several learners grew to demonstrate a more Self-Authoring way of knowing operating alongside of a Socializing way of knowing. For instance, these learners began to see their teachers' perspective and expectations as separate from their own. Some learners developed a capacity to appreciate the complexity of a teacher's work and began to understand their own motivation to learn as independent of the teacher's influence.

> ***"Change also has associated risks."***

Self-Authoring knowers not only saw their teachers as authorities and sources of knowledge, but also viewed themselves and each other as generators of knowledge. These learners, unlike Socializing knowers, were often able to reflect on their teachers' instruction and offer constructive feedback. Like Socializing knowers, they voiced appreciation for teachers who employed a variety of teaching techniques and strategies to meet learners' needs. However, they were primarily concerned with meeting their own goals and internally generated standards on behalf of what they saw as their larger learning purposes. They had their own internally generated criteria for assessing and critiquing good teachers who, in their view, supported them in meeting their own goals for competence and self-mastery. Self-Authoring knowers also took greater responsibility for their learning both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, many of these learners talked about "growing" and feeling "strong" as they learned in the program.

Combinations of Change

The changes that participants in our study related and demonstrated were not as straightforward as the above descriptions imply. Instead, many learners at all three sites were experiencing multiple types of changes that influenced several, if not all, aspects of their lives. For example, some participants were making transitions of acculturation and transformation simultaneously, and these changes concerned not one but many aspects of their experiences. Participants were coming to many new understandings at once: of their role as students, of the teacher's role, of the subject matter they were studying, and of their relationships to their fellow classmates. We see all these dimensions of change as therefore interrelated and reciprocal.

Furthermore, these changes also combined with and fueled other changes. Across all three sites, as learners extended their skills and knowledge, their confidence and feelings of success also grew. Many adjusted the goals and expectations they set for themselves to incorporate larger and more ambitious dreams and plans. Thus, the changes they experienced in the classroom carried over into other aspects of their lives. In particular, students reported that the learning they did in their programs heightened their competency in their social role, enhancing their performance as students, workers, or parents.

Implications

In recognizing and welcoming continuing forms and expressions of growth and change, educators can support students' newly emerging identities. We submit that teachers can best aid, encourage, or spur change among their learners by understanding both the points where students are and where educators would like them to be. In terms of acculturation, teachers must therefore understand how any one learner might currently be making sense of her experiences and how her way of knowing shapes the way she might acculturate to the United States. In terms of developmental change, teachers must not only understand a learner's existing way of knowing but must also be alert to ways he might be exploring and gradually taking on new and more complex ways of knowing.

Change also has associated risks. In our study, Socializing learners were particularly at risk for internalizing empowering but also disempowering values transmitted by authorities and the surrounding culture. For example, in acculturating to the United States, these participants were not yet able to generate their own critiques of the ways that they might be devalued as immigrants, members of racial minorities, and nonnative speakers of English. Socializing learners might also be particularly vulnerable to feelings of distress and low self-evaluation in the face of teachers, administrators, or other authorities who might neglect or marginalize them. These students must receive appropriate supports from teachers, peers, and others to identify and contradict deprecating and disempowering cultural messages.

We suggest that one reason for the success of each program we studied was that the teachers were skilled in supporting learners' processes of change. Thus, while not focused consciously on their learner's developmental levels, rather than teaching in ways that cater to one way of knowing over others, they presented material, designed classroom experiences, and developed expectations that were flexible and responsive enough to meet a wide range of different learners at their current way of knowing. At the same time, in presenting learners with appropriate challenges, they were, in effect, inviting learners to move toward a slightly more complex or slightly more elaborate understanding.

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The Power of a Cohort and of Collaborative Groups

by Eleanor Drago-Severson, Deborah Helsing, Robert Kegan, Nancy Popp, Maria Broderick, & Kathryn Portnow

Being part of a cohort — which we define as a tight-knit, reliable, common-purpose group — was very important, in different ways, to many of the 41 adult learners at three different program sites who participated in the NCSALL Adult Development Research over the course of 14 months. This finding challenges the view that adults, who often come to their class-taking with well-established social networks, are less in need of entrée to a new community than, for example, older adolescents who are psychologically separating from their families of origin and who have not yet formed new communities of which they are a part (Knowles 1970, 1975; Cross, 1971, 1981; Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). Despite differences in the cohort design across the three sites, the interpersonal relationships that peers developed in the cohort made a critical difference to their academic learning, emotional and psychological well-being, and ability to broaden their perspectives.

The NCSALL Adult Development Research group sees development as a continuing and lifelong process. We understand growth as occurring along a continuum of successive and qualitatively different levels of development. We refer to these levels as ways of knowing or meaning systems that shape how people interpret — or make sense of — their experience. The three most common levels of development in adulthood are Instrumental, Socializing, and Self Authoring (please see the boxon page 5 for a discussion of our constructive developmental framework).

The Cohort as a Holding Environment

Robert Kegan's theory of adult development (1982, 1994) considers a person as a maker of meaning throughout his or her lifespan. We employ this framework to suggest why and how the use of cohorts in adult basic education (ABE) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) settings is important in different ways to a variety of students who have different ways of knowing and learning. Because every ABE or ESOL class will likely be populated by adults who make meaning with different ways of knowing, programs that recognize students' developmental diversity — and support students' growth accordingly — will be especially effective.

Growth processes, such as learning and teaching processes, depend on connections, and these processes, according to Kegan's theory, invariably occur in some context (Kegan, 1982). Students with different ways of knowing need different forms of

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support and challenge from their surrounding contexts to grow. We refer to such contexts as "holding environments" (Kegan, 1982, 1994), which, when successful, can help students grow to manage better the complexities of their learning and their other social roles.

A good holding environment serves three functions (Kegan, 1982, 1994). First, it must "hold well," meaning that it meets a person's needs by recognizing and confirming who that person is, without frustration or urgent anticipation of change. It provides appropriate supports to accommodate the way the person is currently making meaning. Second, when a person is ready, a good holding environment needs to "let go," challenging learners and permitting them to grow beyond their existing perceptions to new and greater ways of knowing. Third, a good holding environment "sticks around," providing continuity, stability, and availability to the person in the process of growth. It stays, or remains in place, so that relationships can be reknown and reconstructed in a new way that supports who the person has grown to become.

While this third characteristic of good holding may be difficult to provide in as short a period of time as a few weeks, any classroom can include the other two features: high support and high challenge. Both are essential for good holding. It was apparent in our study, despite differences in the designs of the three programs, that for most participants their learning group became more than "just a class" or "just a group." In all three settings participants spoke of the group as "like a family." We might also call them a "band of warriors," or "fellow strugglers": in short, a cohort. These cohorts served as dynamic transitional growth spaces that helped learners make good use of each other by providing both the *challenge* that encouraged learners to grow and the *support* they needed to meet those challenges.

Three Sites, Three Cohort Designs

The three sites in our study provided contrasts in their specific cohort designs. At the Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC) site, in Charlestown, MA, students started their program together and were enrolled in the same two classes during their first semester. The cohort disbanded by the start of the second term and students independently selected their own courses for that semester. At Even Start, a family literacy program in Cambridge, MA, parents determined their own entry and exit dates from the program. Many parents had enrolled in this program before our study began and continued after its completion. At Polaroid, in Norwood, MA, all workers began the adult diploma program at the same time, worked toward a common purpose, and left the program at the same time.

Despite these differences in the cohort shape and configuration (and differences in age and social role among participants), the importance of participating in a learner cohort held true at all three sites. Even though these adults, like adults more generally, utilized different ways of knowing, they all described how their cohorts served several key purposes. First, the cohort served as a holding environment spacious enough to support and challenge adult students in their *academic learning* (see Table 1). Participants at all sites reported that their academic learning was enhanced by their participation in collaborative learning activities within their cohorts. Second, the cohort served as a context in which students provided each other with a variety of forms of *emotional and psychological support* (see Table 2). Lastly, the cohort challenged learners to *broaden their perspectives* (see Table 3). Both within and across sites, learners who shared the same level of development demonstrated similar concepts of how the cohort and collaborative learning experiences supported and challenged them in multiple ways. Furthermore, students with different ways of knowing described important differences in these concepts. Overall, these findings suggest not only the importance of a cohort but also that elements other than a specific structure regarding entry and exit might be crucial in transforming a class into a true cohort.

Academic Learning

Sharon Hamilton (1994) provides helpful suggestions for teachers who wish to construct collaborative learning activities to enhance academic learning. She describes three distinct models (postindustrialist, social constructionist, and popular democratic) identified by John Trimbur (1993) and relates them to the characteristics, practices, and beliefs about collaborative learning she has observed in higher education over the past decade. She illustrates how these three models can be applied to classrooms and suggests that teachers adopt one particular model that aligns with their teaching philosophy or personal style.

Each model has its own goals and suggested processes. The "postindustrialist model" of collaborative learning "appears in classrooms in the form of group efforts to solve common problems formulated by an instructor whose curricular agenda determines group structure, time on task, goals, and anticipated answers" (Hamilton, 1994, p. 94). The "social constructionist model" consists of "engaging students more actively in their learning while concurrently developing social skills of negotiation and consensus building" (p. 95). In the "popular democratic model" of collaborative development the challenge for learners is "not to obliterate essential differences in the search for commonalties but rather to envision these essential differences as catalysts for the making of meaning within specific concepts of the particular course" (pp. 95-96). Not only do these models have different goals, but each also assigns different responsibilities to teachers and learners and recommends different principles for designing classroom environments. In our study, we noticed a remarkable correspondence between these three models of collaborative learning and the three different ways of knowing that learners demonstrated at each site. This raises questions about whether

Table 1: Learners' Constructions of the Cohort as a Holding Environment for Academic Learning

Way of Knowing	The Cohort . . .	Sample Quotations
Instrumental Knowers	Helped them obtain the "right skills, right answers, and facts" they needed to know. Provided information and concrete help. Was valued because they "made us" keep coming, "wouldn't let us quit," "made us do our work." Became informational resource.	"You have an idea but another person has an idea and can help you...it can help you change." "You give your opinion. I give my opinion, they give their opinions. If you like that you can take something, something good you take." "You work with group. There is teamwork. You can ask them if you have something difficult or you have something you don't know. Sometimes you call each other."
Socializing Knowers	Supported them by providing a comfortable and safe place to express themselves. "Knew them" as persons, knowing how they felt and thought. Accepted them, enabling them to ask questions and risk making mistakes. Was source of own self-confidence. Helped them evaluate their academic learning.	"We all got our strengths. We all have our weaknesses. Maybe what I, what I am good at, maybe they lack of it. What they are good at, maybe I lack at it. We have all got our weaknesses to work on."
Self-Authoring Knowers	Provided a place of joining together in collaboration and learning from that process. Helped them to discover their own capabilities. Provided an opportunity to improve upon and demonstrate how they wanted to carry out their own beliefs and purposes. Tolerated and appreciated conflict and difference.	"In groups, we share what we know. If someone knows something a little better, then that person helps others to know something a little better." "[Working with others] I realized I knew more than I thought I did." "When I learn math I try helping my co-students how to do the math, or you do your homework, let me see if you do exactly the way or why you don't try to do this work this way. [It's] a good way to learn, because if you see anything, anybody can help you. You can help work together, work in team. You learn more working together."

Table compiled by Eleanor Drago-Severson.

teachers really have the luxury of adopting a teaching model that most closely aligns with their personal style or philosophy.

Instrumental learners primarily valued opportunities to work collaboratively because doing so helped them achieve specific concrete, behavioral goals (see Table 1). Their reasoning aligns with the goals of the "postindustrial model." They said that cohort collaboration helped them to:

- "find the right answers" in math, or the correct sentence structure when writing.
- learn how to use the right words to express themselves better in English, and improve their vocabulary.
- learn how to communicate better with other people at work, at home, and in their daily interactions (e.g., with school officials, doctors, and/or their children's teachers).
- see classmates and even themselves as holders of knowledge (constructed as an accumulation of facts, and/or parenting practices they could then implement).
- understand the meaning of words and concepts.
- learn how to learn on their own (as evidenced by demonstrating a behavior).

While valuing the supports that were named by Instrumental knowers, Socializing knowers also spoke about appreciating the encouragement they received from

Table 2: **Learners' Constructions of the Cohort as a Holding Environment for Emotional Support**

Way of Knowing	The Cohort . . .	Sample Quotations
Instrumental Knowers	Embodied a community of concern (e.g., when a student missed a day of class, others inquired about the student's wellbeing). Provided more concrete form of support (e.g., help with homework).	"We work together with our friend...we talk and everybody is friends...we share food from different culture, we sit together...make a little party...when some friend not come in and not in school we ask our teacher what happened to her if she not come?"
Socializing Knowers	Increased their sense of belonging and decreased feelings of isolation. Eased the pressures of managing various responsibilities in their multiple roles and in their transition into US culture. Knew them, recognized and appreciated them. Encouraged them and enabled them to give encouragement to others.	"Everybody here cares so much for each other and I think that's so good...they become like part of your family." "I told [them] this 'we're going to breeze through this and even if it gets harder, we'll make it because we'll stick together and help each other." "Sometime I get frustrated, especially when I was doing math and sometime I'll be tired....But [a classmate] was a good encouragement. She always said, "don't get so mad with yourself."
Self-Authoring Knowers	Provided opportunities to share their goals and to learn about others' goals and feelings. Provided positive feelings from friendships with cohort learners; however, their commentary centered mostly on the connections the group created to a shared social status. Had a goal of group harmony not as an end to itself but as a means toward some greater end.	"I enjoy the relations with the other students. We meet, then sometimes we share our life, my life, each life. We are not American people so sometimes we can share our anxiety and our stress about language and that's good." "They are there for me so the fact...makes it even easier for me to push yourself." "Everybody's learning is different."

Table compiled by Eleanor Drago-Severson.

peers and fellow parents. Socializing learners especially valued the cohort and collaborative work for the important emotional and psychological support it offered as they balanced the multiple demands of work, family, and school. Their experience mirrors the goals of the "social constructionist model" of collaborative learning. It helped them to:

- feel "comfortable" asking questions when they did not know the answer or did not know what do to in particular situations.
- learn to "socialize with other people."
- feel less "afraid when speaking English" in front of others (both in and out of the classroom).

Although Self-Authoring knowers mentioned the instrumental, psychological, and emotional reasons why working with cohort members was helpful, they focused particularly on their appreciation of the different perspectives that members in the group brought to any particular activity. Their experience aligns closely with the goals of the "popular democratic model" of collaborative learning. Working with other cohort members helped them to:

- enhance their learning and teaching processes because they were exposed to varying perspectives (points of view) on particular issues.
- understand themselves and other learners' academic, parenting, and life experiences better.
- recognize and, at times, appreciate forms of difference and commonality across and beyond the cohort.

These three groups of learners' descriptions closely match those

Table 3: Learners' Constructions of the Cohort as a Holding Environment for Perspective Broadening

Way of Knowing	The Cohort . . .	Sample Quotations
Instrumental Knowers	Challenged them to think differently about their own and other people's life experiences.	"I just feel a lot of, I don't know, gratitude to meet them all [cohort members], and to learn about different things, different things about their countries." "If you have some idea you can share, you can share something good they can take, we discuss, because everybody has children too."
Socializing Knowers	Served as a safe haven for learning about other people's experiences, ideas, perspectives, and expertise. Provided a context in which they could broaden their perspectives by learning from "friends." Made difference okay because everyone was still connected and basically the same, which preserved the relationships. Relied upon lack of conflict.	"Everybody has different discussion, different ideas and you can learn from them and they learn from you." "We share a lot of experiences, we get a lot of advice." "They are friendly. They talk with me if I couldn't understand something they help me, they explain to me." "We come from different country that have different culture. We discuss and we learn something from, maybe other country is good, maybe other parents they teach something is different. I will try that, and everybody is different."
Self-Authoring Knowers	Provided information and ideas, which they used in service of self-understanding and self-expansion. Provided suggestions from others, which they could evaluate and integrate with their ideas. Could withstand conflict as a part of working with and learning from others.	"Like I was getting other people's ideas, and then I was trying to put my ideas, I was getting more ideas." "I...listen to other peoples' opinions and ideas, but compare their ideas and my ideas [and] think about it, see what happen."

Table compiled by Eleanor Drago-Severson.

described in the literature. This suggests that, in designing collaborative activities, educators, in contrast to Hamilton's suggestions, should perhaps give less priority to which individual approach they personally favor and more consideration to providing all three models in any one classroom: the "new pluralism" to which our research directs us more generally. We elaborate on this recommendation below.

Emotional Support

The literature on group learning points to ways these groups can serve as social and emotional support (see, for example Bosworth & Hamilton, 1994; Pedersen & Digby 1995). Our study demonstrates how learners experienced this emotional support differently according to their ways of knowing (see Table 2). While for many of the participants the cohort became "like a family," what "family" actually means differs according to different adult ways of knowing.

Instrumental knowers found the cohort to be a place where their ideas could be compared to those of other people and where peers created an active learning environment. For several of these learners, the cohort sometimes embodied a community of concern. For example, when a student was absent from a particular class, others inquired about the student's wellbeing. Support was discussed in concrete ways, such as help with homework, friendly encouragement, and help pronouncing words correctly.

Socializing knowers were less oriented to discussing the external facts of a situation and more oriented to their internal experience of the thoughts and ideas of cohort peers. For these learners, the cohort was about a way of being in relationship with one another, a way of giving an abstract level of support, and of accepting each other. Lack of conflict among cohort members was essential to their comfort. While individuals with any way of knowing might dislike or feel uncomfortable with conflict, those making meaning with a Socializing way of knowing often find conflict with people or ideas with whom they identify particularly difficult. These students will avoid conflict for its own sake, and feel the conflict as a breach in important relationships that tears them apart.

Self-Authoring learners, however, had a perspective on their feelings about conflict and saw the relationships among group members not as an end in itself but as a means toward some greater end. They did not experience conflict as a threat to their sense of cohesion with others. They were able to reflect upon their feelings and examine the roots and importance of those feelings. Like Socializing knowers, they noticed connections between themselves and others, cared about those connections, and offered them as important factors in their learning life. However, unlike Socializing learners, they reflected on what these relationships meant to them in a more abstract way. Many Self-Authoring students valued the process of working together because they felt it was effective, challenging, and supportive, not only for their own learning but also for other people's learning.

Perspective Broadening

Interpersonal interactions with cohort members also helped students to become more aware of and to share their own perspectives. Sharing ideas through dialogue and writing challenged and supported learners to broaden their perspectives by listening to and considering others' outlooks. Engaging with others in groups over time challenged cohort learners to experiment with and enact new ways of thinking and behaving. Collaboration with other cohort learners often became a catalyst for growth.

Many learners therefore began to understand their relationship to the cohort in new ways. We observed that some learners' notions of these group experiences expanded as they progressed through their programs. We refer to these changes as a consolidation or elaboration: learners extended their ideas within their existing way of knowing. Also, several students understood their cohort experience in more complex ways. We refer to this as transformational change: students evidenced qualitative and pervasive shifts in their underlying meaning system. The shapes of students' growth varied, depending on their ways of making meaning (see Table 3).

Several learners who were Instrumental knowers commented on how the experience of listening to and learning from cohort members transformed their thinking about themselves, their own families of origin, and people from other countries. These students began to think differently about their classmates and about life experiences in general. By coming to know others in the group whose backgrounds were starkly different from their own, several learners grew much better able to understand and empathize with other people.

For students with a Socializing way of knowing, working with others in the cohort created an opportunity for recognition and exploration of cultural differences that permeated cohort sharing and filtered into discussions. Several learners began to recognize commonalties across their cohort group that enabled them to manage their differences, rather than feeling threatened by them. A few students grew to be able to generalize their enhanced capacity for perspective-taking beyond the classroom and into other domains of their lives (e.g., work). The holding environment of the cohort supported several learners to be better able to take on other people's perspectives, which helped them in many aspects of their lives.

> **"The holding environment... served as a context where adults were often encouraged by each other, and by teachers, to challenge their own assumptions..."**

Self-Authoring knowers experienced the learner cohort as a context for analyzing and critiquing information, which they then used to enhance their competence as learners and in their social roles as students, parents, and workers. The cohort was a safe place that challenged and supported them as they broadened their perspectives on their own and on other people's learning process. Some of these students adopted a broader perspective on their own learning when they came to believe that they could learn from the process of working with cohort members who were different from them. Working with learners from different countries helped several Self-Authoring knowers to develop a new and deeper understanding of what it meant to be a person who came to the United States as an adult learner in their programs.

The holding environment of the cohort served as a context where adults were often encouraged by each other, and by teachers, to challenge their own assumptions, which we believe deeply influences the ways in which individuals think and act (Kegan & Lahey, 2000).

Summary

Our findings teach us about the different ways that the learner cohort served as a space of developmental transition and transformation: a holding environment for growth. Cohort members were indeed partners engaged in a community formed around a common learning endeavor, where students supported one another in their academic and cognitive development and emotional wellbeing as they participated in these programs. Furthermore, we have illustrated the ways learners with different ways of knowing experienced collaborative group learning. We have argued that these seem to mirror the goals Hamilton (1994) articulates for Trimbur's (1993) three models of collaborative learning.

Implications

The importance of cohorts and the different ways in which learners will experience them suggest implications for both teacher practice and program design. Since learners make sense of their cohorts and collaborative learning activities in qualitatively different ways, they need different forms of both support and challenge to benefit more fully from them. Some ABE teachers occasionally use group learning as a pedagogical approach directed toward building classroom cohesion and to facilitate learning (Garner, 2001). While Hamilton (1994) suggests that a teacher would benefit from selecting and implementing one particular model that suits his or her teaching philosophy or style, we submit that choosing only one model would support learners with one way of knowing better than it would others.

For example, a teacher who designs a highly structured activity, in which students are expected to arrive at predetermined answers, might leave Socializing and Self-Authoring knowers feeling inadequately challenged and possibly frustrated. Without appropriate supports, a collaborative learning experience that requires learners to share their own thoughts and feelings might be experienced as overly challenging to Instrumental knowers. Finally, collaboration that asks students to welcome diversity of opinion and conflict within a group might be experienced as threatening to learners who have not developed self-authoring capacities. Therefore, to create optimal holding environments for all adult learners, teachers need to adopt a plurality of approaches, flexibly incorporating aspects of all three models in any one classroom to meet a wide range of learners' ways of knowing and their diverse needs.

Some program designers refrain from using the cohort model because of funding requirements (Beder & Medina, 2001) or because the needs and life situations of their participants seem to dictate an open-entry/open-exit policy (Bingman, 2000). However, although our sites presented three very different cohort designs, most participants valued highly

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their sense of belonging in the group and benefited substantially from their cohort experiences. While some cohort designs might make for some bumps or challenges along the way, especially for a particular way of knowing, we do not claim that any one cohort design is preferable. Instead, we suggest that good matches to a variety of ways of being supported or challenged might be more crucial to success than a particular structure regarding entry and exit. And, above all, we recommend that educators look for ways to create some form of enduring and consistent learner cohort, employing practices by which students are regularly invited to engage in collaborative learning. Our participants show us that cohort experiences seem to facilitate academic learning, increased feelings of belonging, broadened perspectives, and, at least by our participants' report, learner persistence.

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A Conversation with FOB...

Reacting to the Research; Supporting Learners

Focus on Basics asked two teachers who participated in the NCSALL Adult Development research what the experience was like and what they do to support cohort development and learner growth. Sylvia Greene (SG), a teacher from the Community Learning Center Even Start program in Cambridge, MA, and Matthew Puma (MP), a teacher at Polaroid for the Continuing Education Institute, Norwood, MA, share their experiences.

FOB: *What was it like to participate in this research study?*

SG: It was really quite an extraordinary experience: a peek into what a major research study is like. One of the reasons I said yes was because I thought it would be interesting for me and my students to see how research works. A lot of them [my students] come from very faith-based societies and a western relativistic point of view is very foreign to them. They need to be able to adopt that point of view temporarily to get meaning from many texts, and, if it is one of their goals, to do well on a standardized test like the GED.

Being a practical person myself, I was fascinated and overwhelmed by the logistics of the project. Putting myself in the shoes of Kathryn Portnow and the other members of the team, the logistics seemed dizzying, in terms of telephone calls, letters, arranging times, unexpected changes, and then all of these things must have been multiplied threefold for them. Absenteeism comes with the territory with adult education students, so the researchers had to deal with make up interviews, and phoning people at home.

I was also interested in the instruments they were using. Kathryn was generous in sharing what she could about the instruments without violating the learners' confidentiality and privacy.

FOB: *Did you know anything about adult development before participating in the study?*

SG: I had taken an adult ed[ucation] certification course in 1977 given by Worcester State that touched a little on adult development, but it just skimmed over things. On my own, I had read some Maslow and Erik Erikson, but I've never taken a course in adult development. I learned the most at the end of the study when Kathryn sent me a rough draft of their monograph. [I learned] By reading that, about Robert Kegan's particular view, and a little about some of the theorists that he cites.

FOB: *What did you think of their findings?*

SG: They were consistent with my own experience over the last 25 years. I think what was most useful to me was their division into the three kinds of learners. That construct was very useful to have.

One of their main findings in relation to Even Start was how important the support of the group was. That's something I knew already and it corroborated what I knew. It was so nice to see that factor recognized and honored and put into print. It will be good for the adult ed community to see that validated by a major study.

Even Start mandates five components, one of which is some kind of parenting support. By nature, that gets people talking to each other about their own ideas about parenting. In addition, our particular Even Start believes in a strengths model. A lot of the focus of the component is getting the parents to share their own parenting strengths and concerns with each other, so they can support each other. We don't use a "canned" parenting program, which uses the premise that the parents have deficits. We do offer at the beginning of the year a menu of topics and participants choose the ones they want, prioritize them, choose the mode (speaker, videos, for example). That certainly gets the parents supporting each other.

FOB: *How do you support students?*

SG: The way we work in the two adult ed classes is to foster camaraderie, to try to encourage the parents to work together on whatever lesson they're doing. My colleague, Lally Stowell, is a master at that. She's very interventionist and proactive; she makes people talk to each other. She structures things in the class so people are always interviewing each other, reading aloud to each other. If they don't speak up, in her own way, she makes them. I think I've always created a safe and comfortable environment, but I haven't been as active in getting people in pairs or talking to each other. I've learned a lot from her about that. Those kinds of explicit habits foster a lot of camaraderie. I've seen people who are shy and nervous become the best leaders.

> "I never had the feeling we were being studied by lab-coated scientists."

The whole staff does a lot of individual counseling that provides support for people who are struggling in various ways and who face all the kinds of stress that many ABE students are under, but especially low-income parents. It could be anything, from helping write letters or making referrals to programs with good immigration lawyers; it could be referring people to a therapist if they're having extreme problems with their children; it could be helping them to advocate with their kids' teachers. One of the mandates for Even Start is helping parents become involved with their children's schools. Lally does a lot of role playing and rehearsing, and then debriefing after school events. We also help the parents navigate the medical system. One finding of the Even Start statewide evaluation was that our staff has been not as empowering as they might have been. So we've been trying to work on that.

We also design curricula that come out of the background, experiences, interests, and concerns of the students. Our parents know that when someone joins the class from a country that hasn't been represented yet, we drop everything and study that country, and the new person becomes a resident expert. We learn about and celebrate any of the holidays from their cultures.

In parent and child time, we try to design activities around themes that come from their countries. For example, around Chinese and Vietnamese New Year we take shoeboxes and paint them red and put feathers on them and those become dragon heads for a parade. Around Haitian New Year we make squash soup, which was made originally by the wife of Toussaint L'Ouverture, one of the heroes of Haitian independence.

I think a lot of adult education teachers do these things naturally and therefore many will relate to the study's findings.

FOB: *Will you do anything differently based on the findings of this study?*

SG: The social/emotional learner is in a good place [in general], but I want those people also to be able to think in a self-authoring way as a result of the study. I've now seen which of my students are which type, so one thing to do would be to try to have the students who are self-authoring model for the other students. To help them show their stuff in a way that isn't too didactic, to point out how helpful that way of thinking could be. I think it's a tough thing, because if you've lived 25, 35, 45 years of your life as a certain kind of learner, it's hard to shift into a different way. I'm not sure how to do it. The researchers saw some people who were on the cusp, so maybe that's the person to take a look at, and see how to support that change.

* * *

FOB: *What was it like to participate in this research study?*

MP: Being involved with the research changed the program to the positive. The way the researchers talked about what they were looking for provided me with language about the community of learners that gave me a way to conceptualize what ordinarily goes on in the program. That was very helpful. For example, we were in the midst of developing a curriculum for [a program at a] jail and the research team got me thinking about how the workplace gives you a good social environment in which to work. The meetings for the researchers were helpful in understanding how these two situations (jail and workplace) were different.

Also, the research team met with the students to do interviews. That had a beneficial effect in general. The students felt good because it made them feel that their participation in the research was important. The researchers were nice people and were looking to find out what people really thought. They were talented interviewers and could get beyond linguistic issues to get at that.

The students don't usually reflect on how the program enhances their development, and [participation in the study] put it into their consciousness periodically; that was a good thing.

The big payoff to me, besides being interviewed and therefore thinking about these things, was helping to bring to my consciousness to me a lot of what has been going on for 10 years in my teaching experience. I hadn't really given a lot of thought to developmental learning with adults before the research. As a teacher, you learn to manage these different people so that everyone is participating, but I didn't think of it in the same language as the study. I think differently now about how the students get their needs met.

FOB: *Were there any drawbacks to participating in the study?*

MP: No; even when they [the researchers] were there in class, it was not a problem at all. In fact, it was a positive. They were nice and helpful people. I never had the feeling we were being studied by lab-coated scientists.

FOB: *Participating in the study gave you a new way to think about your work and your learners. Do you do anything differently now, as a result of learning about adult development and participating in the study?*

MP: Actually, many of the changes that would be suggested by this study were already in effect because in the mid-1990s, we had changed our program to emphasize more group work. We wanted to get people speaking more and participating actively. This research did have a lot of effect on the jail curriculum and the design of that program. The whole issue of the community of learners...in the jail, we couldn't have one cohort go through the program. The goal was to have people come and go, so it became important for us to accelerate the socializing learning so the people could be more independent learners.

FOB: *Your program was chosen as a research site in part because you provide the kind of support for learners that enables developmental change to take place. How do you do that? What does the support look like?*

MP: A diploma consultant is available for all types of support, arranging for tutoring, for example. In addition, in the math class, for example, we had an assistant instructor who could stay after [class] to help students. A group of four or five often stayed together after class. We try to give people the constant message that there's no reason to give up and we're flexible about how we do it. We always encourage people to work together; people often think it's "cheating" to get help at home, but we encourage it. With the science course that I teach, arranging additional times outside of class so I can work with a smaller group, with computers available or at the library, really helps people. Then people get more out of the class, too, because they're not so anxious. Where we've had a computer lab available, the best thing is to have a designated time where the instructor is available and a group of students can come in and get help producing their papers.

At the beginning of the courses, we do a lot of icebreaker and getting to know you activities, such as human bingo. In human bingo, each person needs to answer a list of questions that all start with "Find someone who ________ " to complete their bingo card. It's a really nice activity, especially when you have students from all over the world; people have to get up and talk to each other. It's a mixer that helps break down a lot of resistance to moving in the classroom, and talking to others.

I also apply a method for brainstorming or collecting thoughts to everyday knowledge, so the content is not an obstacle. One example is to "design a house." We do a good number of those things. With many groups, the procedure of applying the method to a personal example and then to a more academic example is a good trick. Some people actually understand that the focus is just on the method and the content doesn't really matter.

The main way to support people is through group work, with projects that are somewhat open ended but also have strict expectations and requirements. The groups write papers together. We provide leading questions for the papers, and really good guidance, but then if someone speaks up in class and says "I want to use my own questions," that's okay too. This just happened, actually. The woman who voiced this concern might be perceived as antagonistic, but she was really a more autonomous learner. Then one of the students who liked the questions said, "Use the questions, it makes it much easier." There was the instrumental learner. It gave me, the teacher, the opportunity to say that people have different approaches and that there's no right or wrong one. A few students will emerge as a bit of challenge to authority, and it's a great thing for everyone else to see that they can define for themselves how they're going to educate themselves.

We also encourage peer support: students help each other improve their papers. At the beginning there's a lot of resistance —"I'm not a teacher" — but eventually they get better at it. It lets people exercise their roles and learning styles, and helps the cohorts to form.

An important payoff of our program is keeping the people together: the cohort model does pay off, but it takes a while. There is a steep slope of development and learning after a long initial period. Part of it is the ritualization of the process. Once people have gone through it [paper writing] a number of times, they're really able to apply the whole process to a new situation, then their writing gets much better. You end up being amazed as a teacher that people can get from the material to writing about it quickly at the end.

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A Mingling of Minds:

Collaboration and Modeling as Transformational Teaching Techniques

by Carol Eades

Before speaking, Jim glances out the window at a few snowflakes falling to the slightly frozen November ground. Martha gazes from one side of the blackboard to the other, examining the chalky white set of notes that represents two hours of collaboration. After all seven students in my GED class have generated ideas and shared information, a few offer some closing thoughts.

"My grandmother came from Germany. I never gave much thought to how her life might have been. In fact, I never even knew her. I just heard stories about her when I was growing up. She could have had to move around like that," Jim said, with a new feeling of awareness.

"Yeah. She could have. I work with some people who moved here from India," responded Deborah. "I never thought about that they grew up hundreds and hundreds of miles from here. That must be hard. I wouldn't like that."

"I work on the floor with a guy from China. Nobody can understand him much. I need to try harder to be friendly even if I don't always know what it is he's saying. I'd like to know what it's like in China since I'll probably never get to go," Martha adds.

A sense of camaraderie pervades our group. Earlier we had read about Ellis Island and about the multicultural nature of our nation. We had brainstormed about why people leave their homelands and emigrate, what hardships they may face in getting to their new destinations, and what awaits them upon arrival. Soon my class of American-born, English-speaking students will write an essay on the challenges confronting a family whose members speak little or no English when they move to the United States. This lesson crossed the disciplines in reading, vocabulary, inferential skill building, geography, history, brainstorming, mapping, and other elements of process writing. This class took place at a large university where all the students were employed. Working in this environment brought them into frequent contact with a diverse, international population. From the comments they made, I sense that more has taken place than just preparation for essay writing. Perhaps this collaborative process has led to transformation.

Informational vs. Transformational Teaching

As I reflect on this conversation, I cannot help but remember my own education, as a child and young adult. It was quite a few years ago, in a school system where the teachers customarily assumed almost total responsibility for filling students' minds with information. Those teachers mainly recited facts, gave out practice exercises, and tested us. Only rarely was time devoted to discussion, group projects, or student interaction during class. Paulo Freire refers to such a teaching style as the banking concept of education, implying that the teacher is merely making information deposits into the minds of students (Shor & Freire, 1987). I refer to it as informational teaching. Purely informational learning may be thought of as acquiring or producing descriptive knowledge ("know what") that is new to the learner as well as procedural knowledge ("know how"), which indicates how to do something (Holsapple, 1995). In addition, it may include reasoning knowledge ("know why"), which is concerned with understanding what conclusion is valid when a given situation exists. "Know what," "know how," and "know why" are simple ways of thinking about descriptive, procedural, and reasoning knowledge respectively. Research confirms that informational learning approaches often do not affect students' present beliefs and interpretations or provide new ways of using information (Taylor et al., 2000).

Informational teaching focuses on the transfer of information to a learner. By itself, it is not particularly conducive to motivating learners, nor to helping them accomplish the kinds of changes in their lives that I believe are the purpose of adult learning. To me, adult education should be a means for enhancing and honing social cooperation, collaborative techniques, and individual and group responsibility skills that adult students need.

Transformational learning changes the learner. As such, it is crucial for accomplishing these objectives. Transformational learning enhances informational learning by interconnecting with it. It leads "...to deep and pervasive shifts in the learner's perspective and understanding" (Portnow et al., 1998). Transformational learning involves an alteration in how a person filters information, interprets information, and relates it to previously received information, ultimately changing the way in which the person interacts in the world. In other words, a person's view of the world has been altered so that future assimilation of impressions is different, as are the consequent knowledge-based behaviors.

Teaching for Transformation

How do you teach for transformation? I have found that instructional activities involving collaboration and modeling are especially useful. Collaboration involves having students work together as a community of learners to share knowledge and to create new knowledge. During collaboration, I frequently pose a question, dilemma, or situation and have students collaborate in search of a solution or answer. I used this method in the earlier classroom vignette described above. I presented a short tale about an immigrant that served as a discussion prompt. It led to the class defining immigration and related terms, tracing immigration routes on a map, discussing the history and significance of immigration, and sharing personal stories.

Another example of the transformational teaching I do involves math. I frequently give math word problems: students discuss the nature of the problem, determine what is being asked in the problem, and decide the best method to use to solve it. Then they may work the problem individually, compare answers, and help each other as needed. We also often compare word problems to real-life situations they encounter. For instance, a math problem involving percentages can easily be transformed into problems about prices of sale items at stores or the return on bank interest rates.

I have always found my students to be very receptive to transformational teaching. An almost irresistible sense of personal connectedness to the subject matter occurs and even the more reticent students become engaged and speak up. Collaboration can also help adult students learn how to conduct themselves, negotiate their own positions effectively, productively assist others' attempts to negotiate their positions, and evaluate others' viewpoints. Communication skills are enhanced as students work to avoid vague language; mutual responsibility is developed as students work together in collaborative activities (Tipper & Malone 1995). Critical inquiry and analytic thinking take place as students seek to make sense of positions and arguments. A sense of community is achieved as students endeavor in extensive collaborative work to establish open communication, seek to help each other, learn, and trust each other with their thoughts and feelings. In this way, development of more complex, flexible thinking and multiple perspectives leads to a transformational understanding of the adult student's own life and of the world (Taylor et al., 2000).

An Adult Educator's Role in Collaboration

To establish a collaborative climate, it's important to provide:

- an opportunity for collaboration
- a model for collaborative activity
- a community where everyone is valued
- equal opportunity for every adult student
- student ownership of views
- time for ongoing response
- minimal input that helps students see new possibilities
- minimal input that helps students see new problems
- an open gate to new awareness learning by asking open-ended questions
- a closed gate to negative criticism that goes beyond beneficial learning through diplomatic validation of differences and conflict resolution
- guidance in appreciation for significance, meaning, and applicability of new learning
- an opportunity for collaboration with students from other adult education classes or invited guests
- information for other adult education teachers on adult collaborative endeavors

Modeling

After engaging in collaborative work, I generally follow with a teaching-by-modeling session. Before class ended on the day of the immigration lesson, I explained that the students would be writing an essay on immigration. I provided them with details about the topic and the nature of the writing. At the next class meeting, I modeled an outline of an essay similar to what they might write, beginning by putting the writing topic on the blackboard. The modeled subject must be adequately different from the topic the students will soon write about not to influence the content of their work, yet similar enough to provide a sound model. I chose the topic, "What Immigrants Leave Behind in their Homeland," because students would be writing instead on challenges confronting an immigrant family after moving to America. The general topic of immigration remained intact, but the

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view was different in the model essay.

Next, I had students spend a few minutes drafting a short list of what immigrants might leave behind. Students voluntarily came to the board and briefly wrote some of their ideas: family, friends, home, familiar environment, job, and money or treasured possessions. Then we discussed and practiced how we might put some of these ideas into sentences. Students wrote some representative sentences on the board. We discussed how these sentences could best be worked into paragraphs and outlined the shape an essay might take using the ideas we had generated. As a last step, we practiced writing one good strong paragraph on the board. The students then indicated that they felt prepared to begin writing on their own. Modeling not only serves as a living demonstration and example but can also ease anxieties that some students may have when initially attempting an academic task.

Figure 1.
A Lesson Using Collaboration and Modeling

Present a brief vignette about a father, mother, and three children who are forced to leave their war-torn homeland and flee to America. Ask students, "What will each of these immigrants lives be like during the first year here?"

Phase 1: Collaboration

- Preview vocabulary used in lesson
- Preview historical context of immigration
- Read about Ellis Island
- Discussion of reading
- Map immigration routes in an atlas
- Look at related items of interest on the Internet
- General discussion: why people emigrate; what awaits them in a new land
- Share personal anecdotes

Phase 2: Modeling

- Introduction to topic and writing assignment
- Model writing similar to forthcoming independent writing:
- Prewrite on what immigrants leave behind in their homeland
- Brainstorm from prewriting
- Turn ideas into sentences
- Outline an essay
- Draft a paragraph

Phase 3: Independent Essay Writing

- Prewrite
- Map
- Outline
- Write the draft
- Finalize the essay

Putting it Together

Educators can do much to provide a setting conducive to transformational learning by establishing a collaborative climate and providing learners with the opportunity to do so. For some instructors, this will mean suppressing old teaching habits: that all, or most, of the instruction is solely teacher-based. It may not be easy initially to yield some control and permit true collaboration to flourish. Providing an initial model for a collaborative activity is useful, particularly in classes in which it has not yet been used.

Instructors can imaginatively implement collaboration and model teaching techniques in many different ways. A diagram of collaboration and modeling for my lesson on immigration appears in Figure 1. Giving students a similar diagram can help them visualize the direction of the collaboration and modeling session. Students can ascertain at any given time the phase of learning taking place, and note at a glance where the instruction process is leading. An instruction diagram can provide evidence of a planned process and may very well serve to stave off those "Where is this going?" looks from students.

Conclusion

Collaboration provides an environment for transformational learning and increases the opportunity for immediate as well as future meaning, benefit, and impact. It is a natural precursor to modeling. In turn, modeling helps students progress toward independent performance and usually yields outcomes that are closer to desired educational expectations.

Collaboration and modeling are integrated teaching techniques that can enable students to help each other. When I use collaborative methods, I typically spend less time teaching students individually,

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allowing more time for all of my students. Adult students are not the only benefactors in this transformational learning process. Instructors have just as much to gain from engaging in transformational teaching. I have come to new awareness and deepened my own ways of seeing, thinking, and knowing as a result of stepping beyond the limiting boundaries of informational teaching. I have lost any tendency to make dogmatic prior assumptions about what my students may or may not know, while gaining a greater ability to communicate with them. I am more willing to let my students think for themselves and teach each other. Rather than having all the answers myself, my students and I find answers together. That makes me a better teacher and my students better learners.

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Four Adult Development Theories and Their Implications for Practice

by Lisa M. Baumgartner

What is adult development? What relevance do adult development theories and models have to the practice of adult basic education? Our philosophy of adult development informs our teaching. For example, if we believe that people mature by passively absorbing knowledge and reacting to their environments, our instruction differs from that of teachers who assume knowledge is constructed and that development depends on active participation with the environment.

In this article, I discuss several approaches to adult development and their related implications for instruction. Clark and Caffarella (1999) note, "Theories [serve] as a … lens through which we view the life course; that lens illuminates certain elements and tells a particular story about adult life" (p. 3). The four lenses through which adult development will be seen are: behavioral / mechanistic, cognitive / psychological, contextual / sociocultural, and integrative.

The Behavioral / Mechanistic Approach

According to the mechanistic approach, people are machines whose response to external forces results in development (Miller, 1993). This approach asserts that past behavior predicts future behavior and that people's machine-like minds do not construct knowledge but instead absorb existing knowledge (Miller, 1993). Development can therefore be measured quantitatively (Wrightsman, 1994).

Behaviorism exemplifies the mechanistic approach. It is a science interested in predicting and controlling human behavior (Watson, 1930). People learn behaviors by responding to stimuli and by receiving positive or negative reinforcement or punishment. Positive reinforcement increases the likelihood that the immediately preceding behavior will be repeated (Shaffer, 1994). For example, if a girl receives praise (an example of positive reinforcement) for helping her sister, she is likely to repeat the action. In contrast, negative reinforcement occurs when a desired action results in the cessation of an unpleasant stimulus. When a woman buckles her seatbelt to turn off the seatbelt alarm, she receives negative reinforcement (Shaffer, 1994). Punishment is a third kind of reinforcement. Instead of preceding the response as in the case of negative reinforcement, it follows the response and decreases the chance of the behavior recurring (Taber, Glaser et al., 1965). Scolding is an example of punishment.

Watson (1930), the father of behaviorism, believed that people were "an assembled organic machine ready to run" (p. 269) and that their personalities were a collection of complex habits. For example, he said that a deeply religious Christian develops a religious habit system of praying, attending church, and reading the Bible. Habits change, he believed, and develop most during the teen years and are set by age 30. Watson noted, "A ... gossiping, neighbor spying, disaster enjoying [person] of 30 will be, unless a miracle happens, the same at 40 and still the same at 60" (p. 278).

Instructors who favor the behavioral / mechanistic perspective provide students with plenty of opportunity for drills and practice. Using praise, grades, or some small prizes for their efforts positively reinforces learners. Students learn the appropriate response through reinforcement.

Programmed learning is one method of instruction used by teachers who champion the behavioral/mechanistic approach to development. This instructional technique, which was especially popular in the 1960s and 1970s (Green, 1963; Skinner, 1968; Taber et al., 1965), remains popular in the computer age (Kelly & Crosbie, 1997; Munson & Crosbie, 1998). Programmed learning involves assessing a student's prior knowledge about a topic, then basing individual programs of instruction on the student's level of expertise, and leading a student through a program of instruction via a book, slides, or a computer program. The material is divided into manageable portions called frames (Taber et al., 1965). After each frame, a question is asked and the student responds and receives immediate feedback. For example, learners in a research methods course may be presented with the explanation of a particular experimental research design. Next, they are asked a question about the information in the frame. After a correct response, the computer program may respond "Great job!" An incorrect response may yield, "Nice try, but try again." This reinforcement results in retention of the information.

The teacher who embraces this paradigm sees development as correct behavioral responses. People's personalities are a series of habits and the teacher's job is to get the student to develop good habits. Learning is additive in nature. Each set of facts builds on previous knowledge and this addition of knowledge can be accomplished with various types of reinforcement.

The Psychological / Cognitive Approach

The psychological / cognitive perspective focuses on an individual's "internal developmental processes" in interaction with the environment (Clark & Caffarella, 1999, p. 5). Clark and Caffarella differentiate between sequential models of development and models based on life events or transitions (p. 5). Sequential models, also called stage or phase models, assume that development is unidirectional in nature, that present development is build on past development, and that there is an endpoint (Miller, 1993). In this view, humans are active participants in their development, actively constructing knowledge rather than simply absorbing it. For example, a chronically ill woman changes medication and becomes increasingly lethargic.

She learns more about the new drug's side effects from friends, health professionals, and the Internet. She notices that when she eats certain foods in combination with the drug, it increases her fatigue. Her knowledge and personal experience help her realize she must change her diet to alleviate the lethargy.

Gould's (1978) model is an example of a stage / phase model. In his theory of transformation, he discusses four major false assumptions that people must overcome in order to move successfully from childhood to adult consciousness and become more fully functioning adults. He maintains that identity formation occurs between the ages of 16 and 22, when people are challenging the false assumption "I will always belong to my parents and believe in their world" (p. 6). The false assumption to be overcome between 22 and 28 is: "Doing things my parents' way with willpower and perseverance will bring results. But if I become too frustrated, confused or tired or am simply unable to cope, they will step in and show me the right way" (p. 71). From the ages of 28 to 34, people confront the false assumption: "Life is simple and controllable. There are no significant co-existing contradictory forces within me," and from 35 to 45, people grapple with: "There is no evil or death in the world. The sinister has been destroyed" (p. 6).

The second psychological / cognitive approach examines life events and transitions. Pearlin's (1982) model notes that anticipated life course role changes, such as getting married and having children, cause less psychological distress than unscheduled changes such as car accidents or the loss of employment. Pearlin maintains that social class, a person's coping skills, the social support networks available to a person, and the type of stress all have an impact on the individual route that a person's life course follows (Bee & Bjorkland, 2000).

The psychological / cognitive approach to development asserts that people reach more complex, integrated levels of development through active participation with their environment. Furthermore, individuals construct knowledge as opposed to responding to existing knowledge. In essence, adult development is a continuous journey toward increasingly complex levels of development. Hence, teachers taking this perspective favor ideas found in the transformational learning literature, such as critical reflection and discussion (Daloz, 1999; Mezirow, 1991).

Mezirow (1990) asserts that through reflection, individuals often arrive at an "a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable and integrated perspective" (p. 14). To encourage critical reflection, instructors may have people engage in role plays. Role reversal activities help learners to explore and express views other than their own, which could encourage them to broaden their perspectives (Cranton, 1994). Another technique involves a method of journal writing, in which learners use one side of the page for observation and descriptions and the other side for thoughts, feelings, related experiences, or images provoked by the description (Cranton, 1994, p. 179).

Mezirow (1991) maintains that discussion with others is integral to adult learning and development. Instructors who champion the psychological / cognitive view provide discussion guidelines (Cranton, 1994) that ensure an atmosphere of trust, safety, and respect in which learners felt comfortable expressing their ideas. Instructors also allow for quiet time in the discussion groups.

> ***"Teachers who champion the psychological / cognitive framework believe that knowledge is constructed and that adults are active participants in their development."***

Lastly, teachers recognize that learners' receptiveness to information may be based on their life stage or time of transition. People often return to the classroom during a time of transition (Daloz, 1986; 1999). Instructors holding the psychological / cognitive view watch for what Havinghurst (1972) has termed "teachable moments," in which people are ready to learn and apply a concept because of their life situation.

Teachers who champion the psychological / cognitive framework believe that knowledge is constructed and that adults are active participants in their development. Instructors encourage critical reflection and discussion through a variety of activities. They realize that learners often return to school during a time of transition and look for "teachable moments" in which learners are receptive to new ideas.

Contextual / Sociocultural

The contextual / sociocultural perspective on development works from the point of view that adult development cannot be understood apart from the sociohistorical context in which it occurs (Miller, 1993). Vygotsky (1978), a well-known proponent of the contextual approach, believed that people are not separated from the contexts in which they live, but are part of them. Vygotsky (1978) called this the child-in-activity-in-context. This developmental stance also asserts that culture influences what people think about, what skills they obtain, when they can participate in certain activities, and who is allowed to do which activities (Miller, 1993). Miller (1993) writes, "Different cultures emphasize different kinds of tools (for example verbal or nonverbal), skills (reading, mathematics, or spatial memory), and social interaction (formal schooling or informal apprenticeships) because of different cultural needs and values" (p. 390). This, in turn, influences whom people become.

Sociocultural elements such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation influence adult development (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Cross, 1995; Kroger, 1997; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). These factors position people in relation to each other and in relation to a society that rewards those who fit the US "mythical norm," which Audre Lorde (1984/1995) defines as "*white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure*" (p. 285) (italics in the original). US society devalues those outside this mythical norm.

It is the intersection of these factors rather than a single factor that affects adult development and

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learning (Baumgartner & Merriam, 2000; Etter-Lewis & Foster, 1996; Johnson-Bailey, 2001). For example, Johnson-Bailey (2001) examined the common experiences shaping the persistence in higher education of African-American women who enrolled at a non-traditional age. Through these women's stories, she poignantly demonstrates how discrimination based on race, class, and gender affects their educational journeys. Speaking about the influence of racism and sexism in their lives, Johnson-Bailey notes, "Racism and sexism impact the educational experiences of Black women in many ways. As Blacks, they are thought to be intellectually and morally inferior. As women, they are held to task for the alleged inadequacy of their gender's intellect" (p. 91). The contextual / sociocultural approach views individuals as inextricable from the society in which they live; they develop in ways intrinsic to themselves but molded by the discriminatory forces of society within which they function.

Instructors utilizing this framework may use Vygotsky's (1978) idea of guided learning. The teacher and learner are active participants in the learning process. Learning involves observation, collaboration, and "scaffolding" (Shaffer, 1994, p. 78). Scaffolding requires that the teacher adjust the instructional level based on the learner's response. The learner is an apprentice who develops culturally relevant skills through thought and action (Vygotsky, 1978).

Teachers who adopt a contextual / sociocultural approach to adult development also focus on how social inequities based on various attributes including race, class, and gender affect adult development and learning. Like their colleagues who work within the psychological / cognitive paradigm, the instructors who believe in the sociocultural context are interested in having their students gain increasingly integrated and higher levels of understanding through critical reflection and discussion. However, they may take an approach that focuses on social justice, encouraging students to question critically why social inequities exist and how these inequalities remain part of the educational experience. For example, they may ask students to reflect on how school policies, procedures, and curriculum continue to privilege some while discriminating against others (Apple, 1996; Apple & King, 1983).

Educators who ascribe to the contextual / sociocultural view of adult development also recognize the importance of increasing students' cultural awareness. Sleeter and Grant (1988) write, "The ideology of multicultural education is one of social change — not simply integrating those who have been left out of society but changing that very fabric of society" (p. 139). Furthermore, these educators strive to introduce the idea of cultural pluralism, defined as "maintenance of diversity, respect for differences, and the right to participate actively in all aspects of society without having to give up one's unique identity" (p. 140).

> ***"Teachers who choose this paradigm realize how race, class, gender, and sexual orientation influence adult development."***

These instructors infuse materials from different cultures into their curricula, perhaps gathering stories to demonstrate a particular concept through a variety of cultural lenses. For example, a teacher of General Educational Development (GED) students may provide reading materials that examine the institution of marriage through different cultural lenses. She might help her students analyze how various aspects of a person's identity affect marriage.

Teachers who choose this paradigm realize how race, class, gender, and sexual orientation influence adult development. They encourage students to question critically how societal inequities are reproduced in the classroom. Instructors who see adult development through this lens also work to increase people's cultural awareness.

Integrated Approach

The integrated approach to adult development takes a holistic view of adult development. This perspective is focused on how the intersections of mind, body, and sociocultural influences affect development (Clark & Caffarella, 1999). Spirituality is also sometimes included in the integrated approach (Dirkx, 1997; Tisdell, 1999).

Perun and Bielby's (1980) proposed integrated model of development suggests that the life course is composed of changes on several levels across time. Changes in each area follow their own timetables. Different types of changes include physical changes, changes in the family life cycle such as being married and having children, changes in work roles, and in emotional tasks (Perun & Bielby, 1980, p. 102). Stress results when the timetables are asynchronous (Perun & Bielby, 1980).

While others do not present a model, they draw attention to aspects of adult development that are not widely discussed, including spirituality. For Tisdell (1999), spirituality is connection to history, to others, and to moral responsibility (p. 89). Moreover, Tisdell notes the inextricable tie between culture and spirituality. All are interconnected and, maintains Tisdell, all are important for adult learning. Recognizing spirituality as an aspect of the adult learner's experience, realizing its importance in meaning-making, and understanding "spirituality as the grounding place for the work of many emancipatory adult educators" are important concepts for adult educators to grasp (p. 94).

Dirkx (1997) discusses "nurturing the soul" in adult learning (p.79). Instead of relying exclusively on logic, he invites educators to explore "ways of knowing grounded in a more intuitive and emotional sense of our experiences" (p. 80). In this type of transformative learning, students move beyond the rational to the extrarational. Images and symbols are important in this type of learning. Learning through the soul "has to do with authenticity, connection between heart and mind, mind and emotion, the dark as well as the light" (p. 83).

Teachers who espouse the integrated approach to adult development believe in the interconnection between mind, body, spirit, and sociocultural factors. They are interested in promoting students' growth intellectually, physically, emotionally, aesthetically, and spiritually (Miller, 1999). Encouraging students to connect to course content in a variety of ways requires myriad techniques. Instead of relying solely on class discussion and written work, teachers may encourage students to construct a learner's portfolio in which course content is addressed in a variety of ways including, for example, art music, poetry and fiction, or dance. Other techniques may include visualization and meditation.

Instructors who see adult development as an integrated process may be more sensitive to the idea of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993). This theory notes that there are seven kinds of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. These teachers incorporate activities that address different types of intelligences into their teaching (see *Focus on Basics* Volume 3, Issue A, on how teachers use the theory of multiple intelligences in the adult basic education classroom).

Promoting spiritual development in learners' lives is of interest to those who adopt an integrated approach to development (Tisdell, 1999; Palmer, 1999). Spirituality is often equated with connection to others and to something larger than oneself (Palmer, 1999; Suhor, 1999). Connecting subjective feeling with objective fact by journaling, by promoting discussion that "generates a sense of unified consciousness" (Suhor, 1998/1999, p. 14), or by creating sensory experiences such as viewing a beautiful painting or engaging in a walk outdoors is a way to achieve this connection and begin to discuss larger life questions.

> ***"Those believing the integrative approach recognize the intersection between mind, body, spirit, and sociocultural factors."***

Those who adopt the integrative framework of adult development may also be acutely aware of the teacher–student interaction. They may simultaneously observe themselves and their students in interaction with each other. They may encourage themselves and their students to engage in an activity and then journal the physical feelings, emotional issues, and analyze the situation (Brown, 1999).

Those believing in the integrative approach recognize the intersection between mind, body, spirit, and sociocultural factors. They recognize the importance of connecting students to course content in a variety of ways to promote growth on several levels. Writing stories, discussion, drawing, other artwork, and engaging in visualization and meditation may be techniques used to encourage this development.

In Conclusion

In conclusion, each of the four lenses on adult development makes different assumptions. Recognizing these different outlooks on adult development broadens our perspective on adult development and its relation to practice. This awareness can lead to appropriate instruction for our students, which, in turn, will promote their development, whatever you believe it to be.

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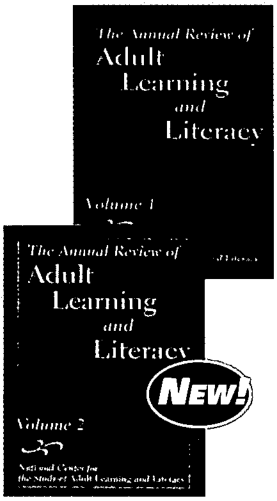
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Letting Learners Lead:

Theories of Adult Learning and TV411

by Debby D'Amico and Mary Ann Capehart

Do adult learners benefit from educational television? Can educational television support learner leadership and help teachers position themselves as facilitators? What do viewers actually learn? What can practitioners learn from research on the impact of educational television? These and other questions guide researchers from the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the University of Michigan, as they study what viewers learn from TV411. Created by the Adult Literacy Media Alliance (ALMA), TV411 is a national television series that aims both to reach learners not enrolled in adult basic education (ABE) classes and to enhance the education of learners enrolled in such programs.

Findings from the Pilot Study

ISR has completed a pilot study of TV411 use by facilitated groups (Johnston et al., 1999). Facilitated groups differ from typical adult literacy classes in this way: in a class, a teacher takes primary responsibility for designing and delivering instruction that meets particular curriculum goals, even if he or she uses video, print, or other materials in the lesson. In the groups in this study, in contrast, a number of features ensure that instruction is either materials- or learner-centered rather than teacher-centered.

The pilot refined the parameters of the overall research project and developed measures of learning impact. The results indicate that working with TV411 changed most participants' sense of themselves as learners. Three measures support this finding. The first is that study participants, who were not enrolled in any other adult education program at the time, changed their future plans for education significantly over the 10-week course of the study. Two-thirds reported that they now wanted to complete a certificate of General Educational Development (GED) and others hoped to go to college or enter job training. The second measure is that participants' confidence about their ability to carry out specific literacy activities covered in the materials (such as using a thesaurus, or writing a poem, song, or essay) increased markedly. The third was that participants also reported an increased likelihood that they would engage in the specific reading, writing, and math practices presented in TV411 materials (such as reading a newspaper or editing their own writing), as measured by a pre- and poststudy oral survey. The increase was strongest among literacy behaviors that were infrequent before the TV411 exposure, but also held for behaviors in which participants had engaged before the experience.

The 18 learners took the same two tests — one of math concepts and the other of writing mechanics — before and after the 10 week facilitated group study. Scores on the posttests were, on average, 16 percent higher than on the pretests. Both the changes in self-concept and these learning gains occurred after only 10 weeks, or about 30 hours, of group study, which is much less time than is usually spent in conventional instruction before students are expected to show gains. Taken together, the results of the pre-and post-study tests and of the short weekly quizzes show that adult learners can improve their skills and knowledge by engaging with TV411 in a facilitated group setting, and that at least some of these learning gains are sustained.

Mary Ann Capehart (front row, left) and her students participated in the study of TV411 discussed in this article. *Photos by J. Johnston*

Potential Impact on Practitioner–Learner Dynamics

While many adult educators espouse learner-centered instruction and aspire to share decision-making power in the classroom with learners, two recent studies show that few classrooms really operate according to these theoretical principles (Beder, 2000; Purcell-Gates et al., 2000). According to Purcell-Gates, adult

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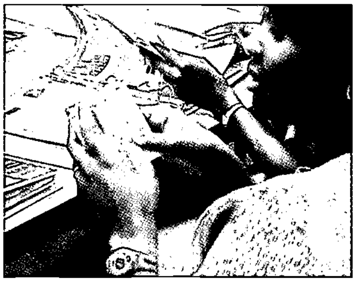
literacy classes dramatically fail to reflect these prevailing beliefs about best practice for adults. Whether or not the facilitated group design of the study conducted by ISR represents a true collaborative setting, the extent to which learners took charge of the class genuinely surprised both the researchers and the instructors. The observations detailed below (derived from a second study, the results of which have not yet been published) suggest that using TV411 in a facilitated group setting fosters learner leadership in the classroom, allowing ABE practitioners to realize their goals for learner-directed instruction.

A Practitioner's Perspective

Coauthor Mary Ann Capehart participated in the second study of facilitated groups. None of her eight students had been in an adult education class for at least six months prior to the study. They were all without a high school diploma or GED certificate, and were all native English speakers or competent nonnative English speakers reading at grade levels five to eight as measured by the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE). They were paid a stipend of $180 to participate. The group met twice a week for two hours each meeting, for 10 weeks; the pilot group met only once per week. During the 10 weeks, they watched nine videos and used nine workbooks. The meetings were scripted, to ensure that they conformed to the facilitated group model, which, in turn, ensured comparable data for the study.

The theories of adult learning on which TV411 is based advocate active, learner-centered education. The materials seek to create a community of learners who direct their learning and increase their literacy practices: the facilitated group takes this a step further by creating a supportive community in which to do this. The group model required was initially threatening and uncomfortable for both learners and for Capehart, but, over time, the amount participants could learn from each other and by themselves was a revelation to all. The lead researcher, who has many years of experience with educational and media research, now feels that TV411, when used in a facilitated group, is a catalyst for changing the way teachers teach and learners learn (Johnston & Petty, 2001, personal communication).

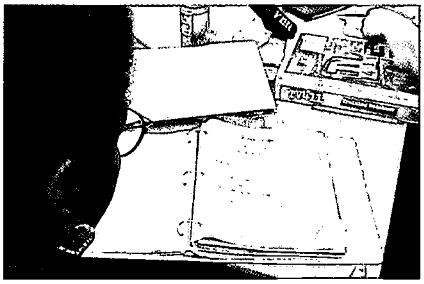
During the first meeting of each week, the group viewed a TV411 half-hour episode in its entirety and took before and after quizzes on the content. Following the viewing, to identify a topic of interest for further study, learners discussed the content, asking questions of each other and of Capehart when the need arose. Sometimes, questions resulted in spontaneous mini-lessons, such as how to identify a prefix or calculate a percentage. At times, the group subdivided into smaller groups that examined their prior experiences with applying the skills they saw modeled in the video. Learners also evaluated the video from the perspective of what they found useful and why. For example, one learner said: “I really love learning new words because it makes me feel good about myself, and it helps me communicate on the job.”



At first, Capehart suggested when to break into small groups; by the third week, however, the learners were directing this themselves. During the second meeting of the week, the group worked on the accompanying workbook to the video; again, they chose from among the activities and extended these in any way they chose. Learners kept portfolios of work done in and outside of the group.

Capehart has always aimed to make the classroom inclusive by creating an environment in which each person is known, respected, and valued. This was easier to do with the facilitated group because the materials for the class were assembled already, making it possible to solicit people's honest opinions and preferences, and to get them involved on an aesthetic level, and because she modeled the desired behaviors for the group. Showing the video at the beginning of the first class of the week draws everyone in, providing a shared experience. The modeling in the show, especially the true stories of adult learners, seems to build confidence, and may help participants ease into topics about which they may feel anxious. The people in the video episodes and workbooks are diverse in many ways — geographically, ethnically, in age, in notoriety, in level of career accomplishment — which may help to create an inclusive climate for learning.

During the first meeting of Capehart's group, they worked on goal setting with the TV411 *User's Guide*, which was developed to enable learners to assess their learning needs and set their own learning priorities. For example, the reading assessment lists skills demonstrated by effective readers, and asks the learners how much they need to practice to do each activity well (a lot, some, a little, not at all). These lists were designed to empower the participants to evaluate what they needed to learn, and encourage them to become responsible for deciding when, where, and what to practice. The process also made everyone feel that they could already do some things, thus engendering a level of confidence. Learners became the ones who set the course.



TV411 materials center the learning experience in real-life contexts, chosen for their meaning to adult learners. The familiar television genres used in the segments of TV411, as well as the use of celebrities, sports stars, and well-known authors, constantly connect literacy practices to the larger literate community. The students were excited to learn that Toshi Reagon, a songwriter featured in a segment on writing, for example, was appearing in a local concert.

Having the TV411 materials and general format for classes determined by the research protocol was surprisingly reassuring, for both Capehart and the learners. Too often, Capehart reports, she has not had enough books for all her students or the materials were poor-quality photocopies. The physical appeal of the TV411 materials made an impression. Also, everyone in the group knew the content, how many videos there were, how many the group would be watching, what material would be covered, and when. Each meeting had a routine that became familiar, so everyone knew what to expect. Learners could anticipate and direct what would happen within this overarching structure, and not depend on the whim of a teacher. They could count on a certain type of activity and decide what they wanted to emphasize.

Because of this, as time went on learners directed the group activity more and more. They would say, "We want to read this aloud together," for example. Because the subjects of the TV411 segments lead out into the world, learners, especially those who spent most of their time at home, felt less isolated. Some of the learners made it a point to see movies based on books featured in the book club segments of TV411, while others got the books themselves.

Personal Transformations

At the end of the group, a number of learners went to a drop-in GED site to be tested. One enrolled in a GED class. Another, who had been forced to leave school at 11, experienced the kind of transformation described by Mezirow (2000) and Kegan (2000). By putting her own feelings on paper, sharing them with the group, and accepting their feedback, she was moved to alter her sense of self and dramatically change her life. At the beginning of class, she confessed to being terrified of "making a fool of myself in writing." During the course of the group, she read an article that said negative things about the work of nurse aides, which was her job at the time. She disagreed with the article, and wrote a paper about her experiences on the job, got furious, and in that crisis of anger made the decision to go back to school. She had four or five kids, so it was not an easy decision. She said that she began to feel that her personal issues connected to larger issues, and to topics discussed in the media. Because of her experience with the group, she saw that she did not have to rely only on her own resources: she could ask for and receive help from others.

During the group meetings, students decided that they learned best by sharing their work and encouraging each other to work on weak areas. Capehart recalled a tense moment when the learners decided, based on a time management exercise in TV411 video and print, to share their daily planners. The activities of those who were working and those who were not contrasted markedly. But the learners got past that. Capehart also realized that the group had formed a community when she noticed the Latina women and Chinese women beginning to speak across the ethnic divide.

Perhaps the Milestones segments help people to talk without self-consciousness about the level of expertise they were attaining and how they were experiencing the process of learning. To see others like themselves telling their stories in engaging ways in a beautiful visual format is very different from a teacher telling them they can do it. It recasts their experience in the light of what they have seen others experience, putting it on an important public level. The workbook exercises are structured so that learners can experience success in the short term and boost their

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What is TV411?

TV411 is a series of 30-minute television shows broadcast on enough PBS and cable stations to reach half the households in the United States. Modeled after popular television genres, the show's major themes are parenting, money, and health. Each half-hour episode is in a magazine format, with five or six major segments that cover a range of reading, writing, and math activities situated within themes and settings of concern to adult learners. While the varied genre and topic format works for broadcast by ensuring enough different segment styles and themes to appeal to a wide audience, teachers, tutors, and facilitators often choose a segment or a series of segments from different shows to conform to their specific class themes and projects. To date, 20 half-hour episodes of TV411 have been produced, each available in video with an accompanying magazine-style workbook.

TV411 is a "how to" show: it models how to learn. The approach to learning is active and strategic; the content demonstrates and explains literacy practices in context, such as two co-workers figuring out payroll deductions. The print material provides structured opportunity to practice the skills demonstrated in the show; for example, the components of a paycheck are examined in the workbook section related to the paycheck video segment. The show is aimed at pre-GED and intermediate- to advanced-English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) adult learners, although some practitioners have adapted its use for beginning readers and lower-level ESOL students.

The contents of Episode One give the flavor of TV411. This show opens with **Question Man**, a comic figure who recurs throughout the series and models asking questions in unlikely places. In Episode One, he asks a toll booth clerk for help in boosting his vocabulary and receives a short lesson in using a thesaurus while angry commuters roll their eyes behind him. Next, in **Word Up**, poet and teacher Steve Coleman delivers a rap-like poem about synonyms and antonyms. **Pop Quiz**, a multiple-choice question that focuses on general information, such as average life expectancy, follows. Pop quiz creates a comfortable, fun way to practice multiple choice questions. Following is a **Milestone** segment, a short documentary that tells the story of an adult learner. In Episode One, Dallas Farmer, now the owner of an auto repair shop, recounts his learning journey in his own words. Not surprisingly, Milestones are the most popular segments among adult learners. **Personal Portfolio** is next: a four-minute segment on compiling a personal dossier of accomplishments. Its message is that even individuals without work histories can describe their accomplishments to an employer. The setting is a real job search class in a New York City settlement house. Then comes **Laverne**, played by actress Liz Torres. Laverne is a clerk in the Big Store, a K-Mart-like place where she helps co-workers and customers with such challenges as determining unit pricing, reading food labels, writing a message on a blank card, estimating the cost of a painting job, and filling out a credit application. In the first show, she helps a co-worker calculate the amount of taxes taken out of her check by illustrating with lunch: a quartered pizza. The final segment features singer Michael Franti in an MTV-like **Words Behind the Music** segment. In these segments, famous singers describe their writing processes. Franti talks about the fear of writing, writing blocks, and writing tricks and techniques he uses to make his writing come alive. The show closes with **Buzzword**, a definition of a word used in the show that takes less than a minute and is part of every episode.

TV411 In Print provides structured opportunities to practice the reading, writing, and math skills featured in the show. Each issue contains a deconstruction of a commonly used document or type of prose; for example, readers might encounter the parts of a newspaper article, a job application, a resume, or a business letter. "Words to Know" features vocabulary strategies. The "How to" pages explain how to tackle common learning challenges, such as taking a test, editing your work, reading critically, or keeping a journal. In "Learn About," readers explore such topics as learning styles, reading to children, making a budget, and putting together a family album. "Good Reading / Good Writing" contains a piece of writing related to the show and a writing exercise for readers. The "Brush Up" section contains mini-lessons on such topics as punctuation, spelling, reference books, or reading hard words. In "People," the final feature, readers can learn about the Milestones subjects, the singers in "Words Behind the Music," or the authors in the show's book club. The back page provides a checklist of the activities in the issue with which learners can keep track of what they've done for their portfolios. It also features a cartoon and various kinds of quick quizzes, as well as ALMA contact information.

TV411's web site, expected to debut by 2002, will be highly interactive. Visitors will be able to read profiles of adult learners and the show's celebrities, write poetry, improve spelling, calculate their own paychecks, etc. Learning games, a way to keep a portfolio of work, chat rooms, and topical guest speakers will also be features.

Although using the web and print materials along with watching the show provides the deepest TV411 experience, any part of these components can be understood and used by learners on its own. Because the show is iterative and recursive, learners can enter the materials at any episode and not feel they have missed something. ❖

confidence about what they can do now and what they might try. They can work as much or as little as they are able, and they are still responding to the context.

Challenges

One challenge for programs that use video is regular access to a TV and VCR for all instructors who want to work in this way. Another is storage space for the set of videos and print. Watching video materials needs to become a routine part of class, otherwise it sets up the expectation of something that is special and apart from what is usually done, and not part of the learning experience. As adult learners and practitioners work more with technology, including both video and computers, we can hope to learn more about what kinds of literacy practices are best learned with what tools, under what circumstances, and with what kinds of learners. The short duration of the facilitated group in the study also raises the question of how long this level of interest and group rapport can sustain itself. Another challenge for facilitators is to address learner goals for achieving credentials. When a passing GED score is the desired end, learners need to understand how materials such as TV411 get them closer to that goal while not explicitly addressing it.

Conclusion and Implications

The quantitative and qualitative findings from the first ISR study provide a number of challenging possibilities for ABE practitioners. Using the TV411 materials in a supportive group environment has the potential to impact adult learners in a positive way and lead them to take greater ownership of their own learning. Perhaps more interesting is the synergy that broadcast and video make possible among adult education programs, informal learning settings, and individual adult learners.

We want learners to lead, but they want teachers to give direction in their realm of expertise: the growth and use of literacy in the real world. Capehart's experience suggests that a set of materials that place adult learners in real-life settings, feature adults who acquired or improved literacy late in life as learning masters, and entertain and engage adults both intellectually and emotionally can, when combined with a supportive group structure, facilitate a learning environment in which the learners will lead.

Specifying which decisions are the province of learners yielded a way to allow learners to take center stage and could be adopted for this reason. Using materials that vary the voice of knowledge giver or learning leader fosters comfort with a different kind of learning environment, and can help position instructors differently in relation to learners.

Capehart suggests that a set of enabling beliefs on the part of the practitioner, coupled with a type of modeling that occurs in the TV411 materials, are instrumental in supporting learner leadership. These enabling beliefs include: 1) confidence in the efficacy of the materials and medium used (in this case, TV411 video and print); 2) belief in the ability of adults with a low level of literacy to evaluate their own learning and competency; 3) faith in practice as a primary means for improvement in literacy and numeracy; and 4) belief in the fundamental importance of modeling as a way of facilitating learning behaviors.

Regarding the latter, specific kinds of modeling facilitate learner leadership in the classroom: 1) modeling learning based on a clearly defined and finite task; 2) modeling the kind of questioning that effectively spurs the search for more information, examples, or explanations; and 3) modeling how to revisit materials to find answers and solutions to questions. Demonstrating these learning behaviors helps learners to experience, not just hear, how important it is to articulate what they don't know; to understand that it is acceptable and normal to not understand things the first time; and to get comfortable with the idea that no one, not even the "teacher," has all the answers. These beliefs and understandings are fundamental to establishing both facilitators and learners as lifelong seekers, and the classroom as a community of learners.

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The Theoretical Basis of TV411

Both the design of TV411 materials and the pedagogy of the facilitated group reflect several beliefs about adult learning. Adults learn best when they are actively involved in learning, engaged in making meaning, or constructing new knowledge, based on their prior knowledge and experience. This ***constructivist approach*** is based on students' active participation in problem solving and critical thinking regarding a learning activity that they find relevant and engaging. They construct knowledge by testing ideas and approaches based on their prior knowledge and experience, applying these to a new situation, and integrating the knowledge gained with pre-existing concepts. The teacher is a facilitator or coach in the constructivist learning process (Denver School of Education web site). TV411 segments feature adult learners, authors, songwriters, sports stars, and celebrities who model the process of constructing knowledge as they solve problems or make meaning through books, songs, and other written media For example, in one math segment, the Dallas Cowboys draw on the viewer's knowledge of football to build an understanding of percentages.

Research shows that metacognition, or the ability to reflect on, adapt, and manage one's own learning, is associated with successful learners (Paris & Pareki, 1993). Without thinking about how they learn, adults cannot direct their own learning, or participate in the active way that constructivist approaches advocate. Metacognition also involves affective motivational beliefs, self-referenced ideas about will as well as skill (Paris & Pareki, 1993). Adults in TV411's target audience — who already have at least partially learned reading, writing, and math skills — need to develop a ***metacognitive awareness*** about their own learning so that they can direct it in the ways that matter to them and work for them. In a Milestones segment, adult learner Sheila Green talks about how she managed her own learning to qualify for a travel agent training course she wanted to take. She demonstrates how she set aside a time and place at home to study, putting her five small children to bed earlier than usual so that she could concentrate. She shows how she used context clues to read hard words, took notes on what she read to improve her comprehension, and began reading articles of interest to her in the newspaper every day on her way to work to become a more fluent reader.

TV411 materials address the ***affective dimension of learning,*** in ways that support both motivation for learning and metacognitive awareness. The series includes stories of adult learners who share their learning strategies and learning journeys. The voices of adult learners who have acquired literacy and numeracy as adults serve three critical functions for viewers: **1)** they inspire others to feel that they too can succeed at learning as adults, **2)** they position adult learners as authorities on their own learning, and **3)** they demonstrate learning strategies and pathways that others can try. In Capehart's group, the candid and sensitive expression of emotion by adult learners in the Milestones segments encouraged some participants to express deep feelings about their own education and their lives. They began to see that literacy was not only about helping them to use language better, but also about freeing themselves by using language to release emotions that stood in the way of learning.

Finally, TV411 looks to ***social theories of learning*** to place literacy and numeracy acquisition in a wider framework. Adults learn most of what they know outside the classroom. Only five to eight percent of the adults estimated to need literacy instruction ever enter a program (Pugsley et al., quoted in Quigley, 1997: 193). Therefore, it is critical to understand what happens in the other places where they do learn.

The theory of communities of practice, which emerges from the work of Wenger (1998) and Wenger and Lave (1991) on apprenticeships in diverse cultural settings, is a way of applying constructivist theory to how adults learn to become part of social groups. Communities of practice are social settings in which adults construct identities and move from the role of novice to master as they learn the practices of the group. Examples include members of a trade, such as midwives or tailors; members of formal or informal associations, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or new mothers who meet at the playground and compare child rearing notes and strategies; or church, community, or ethnic groups. Fingeret and Drennon look at the process of how adults become members of the literate community, and begin to increase and deepen the literacy practices in which they engage (1997). Reder and Green (1985) looked at how literacy and numeracy might be learned outside the classroom, in the context of informal networks. Because TV411 hopes to reach those who are not in classes, in addition to supporting classroom learning, this research helps us think about how that might happen in the homes and communities of adult learners. In TV411, folks learn in stores, at ball games, at home with their families, and in other everyday settings. ❖

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TV411 and the Transformation of Self

by L. Earle Reybold

D'Amico and Capehart, in their article on TV411, emphasize a significant link between collaborative pedagogy and changes in participants' sense of self as a learner. Program characteristics of TV411 — a learner-centered format and self-directed, authentic instruction — noticeably reduce learner anxiety and encourage participant ownership of the learning process. Building on an established relationship between education and human development, I will explore how pedagogy translates to changes in learners' sense of self, particularly their sense of self as a learner.

Adult learning and development of self are connected experiences (Clark, 1993; Tennant & Pogson, 1995). Learning promotes development, while development encourages further learning. This is particularly true when educational experiences endorse learner autonomy through self-directed learning; learners have the opportunity to change their attitudes about education and knowledge, leading to a changed sense of self as a learner (Tennant & Pogson, 1995).

Development of identity as a learner is integral to adult literacy education, especially in a program such as TV411 that moves literacy instruction beyond essential academic and vocational skills. A humanist approach to adult literacy provides "an opportunity to nurture and build self-esteem among learners" (Quigley, 1997, p. 110). With the primary goal of TV411 focused on self-directed learning, the program anticipates the participants' transformation of self as learner, assuming participants eventually will take ownership of their learning process. Examples of the program's humanist thrust include student-authored portfolios of learning experiences, facilitated group work that encourages communication across differences, and an authentic curriculum oriented to participants' life contexts. This pedagogy creates an educational environment conducive to development of the self as learner.

This concept of transformation implies radical change, a developmental enterprise that "shapes people" (Clark, 1993, p. 47). Mezirow's theory of adult learning, which he calls perspective transformation, is "intimately connected to the developmental process" (p. 47) because learning has the potential to transform one's sense of self when it challenges an individual's meaning system. This meaning system is the lens through which individuals mediate and interpret their experiences, or make meaning. According to Clark (1993), "if learning is the restructuring of meaning as adults engage life experience, then learning can be conceptualized as the vehicle of adult development" (p. 53).

The very goal of transformational learning is to develop "a crucial sense of agency over ourselves and our lives" (Mezirow, 1981, p. 20). But Mezirow's theory suggests this agency, or personal autonomy, extends beyond the educational arena into the everyday life of the learner. This "freedom of adults to act," says Clark (1993), "is directed toward their own growth and development" (p. 50). The development of personal autonomy through transformational learning encourages continued self development.

Kegan (1979) defines self as the "zone of mediation where meaning is made" (p. 6). According to Kegan, this zone of mediation "is the person" (p. 6). Perspective transformation is about changes in an individual's consciousness, changes in how a person makes meaning of the world around him or her. In other words, transformational learning has the capacity to advance the self-as-knower "toward more inclusive, differentiated, open, and integrated meaning perspectives" (Cranton, 1994, p. 28).

Transformational learning, of course, is an ideal goal of adult education. But personal empowerment through self development is only one aspect of the TV411 program. The program strives to balance the need for both technical and personal development through adult literacy education that honors the development of human potential.

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Common Ground

Theories of Adult Basic Education and the Practice of Career and Technical Education

by Lynne M. Bedard

> ***"I take it that the fundamental unity of the newer philosophy is found in the idea that there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education."***
>
> ***(Dewey, 1938, pp. 19, 20)***

The career and technical center where I teach is located in an urban environment and serves a diverse population of approximately 500 students. Programs in the school cover a wide range of areas, including auto technology, collision repair, graphic design, health occupations, construction technology, computer science, child studies/human services, travel and tourism, finance, and a Cisco networking academy. Because of the nature of hands-on learning, the school follows a four block schedule; each block is approximately 90 minutes long. Students in the first year spend one block in their career and technical program, while advanced students may be assigned to two blocks so they can participate in internship experiences.

In my position as a career and technical educator, I have witnessed the power of experiential learning. Both adult basic education teachers and career and technical instructors recognize and respect the value and richness of experience. I have discovered that experiential learning makes learning more relevant because it enables students to apply what they are learning. Often, students have arrived in my classroom unsure of their direction. Sometimes they have already become bored with and disconnected from school and learning. Some students have even been told that they are not bright enough to consider college or any other postsecondary educational opportunities. At the other end of the spectrum, a few misinformed guidance counselors have occasionally discouraged college-bound students from enrolling in a course at the career and technical center because these students are considered to be too smart. This tactic perpetuates the false notion that courses promoting experiential and applied learning should be limited to those individuals who will go right into the work force without attending college or seeking further training. Image problems still plague career and technical schools, and the curriculum is sometimes perceived to be less rigorous and challenging than that found in comprehensive high schools. This is a false assumption.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning provides the sturdy foundation upon which the programs in the career and technical center where I work are built. I am one of two instructors who coordinate the three-year child studies/ human services program. This program is scaffolded to build on each new experience, just as adult basic education builds on experience. In the first year of the program, students study theory related to early childhood education and they learn to work with preschool-age children in our on-site Early

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Childhood Center. During the second year of the program, students study the growth and development of school age children, and they complete internships in elementary classrooms within the community. Students then go on to focus on special education, and they intern in a variety of settings including medically fragile, mild/moderate, severe/profound, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classrooms. Upon successful completion of the program, students become eligible to receive state approval as teacher assistants because the program has met state standards for teacher assistant certification. Through the development of an articulation program with a local community college, students may also earn three college credits.

Within the framework of the child studies/human services program, the internship experience is a critical piece in a student's professional and personal growth. This internship opportunity is directly linked to the psychological/cognitive approach to adult learning. Clark and Cafarella (1999) describe the psychological/cognitive approach as being one that focuses on a person's 'internal development processes' in interaction with the environment (p. 5). Humans are viewed as active participants in their own development who construct knowledge rather than responding to existing knowledge (1999). As educational endeavors, both adult and career and technical education promote the active participation of individuals in their own learning. In both cases, learning through experience and building on experience are valued and respected forms of pedagogy. Experiential learning can be employed as an effective instructional tool. Kolb (1984) defines experiential learning as being the process of learning from experience that shapes and actualizes developmental potentialities (p. 133). For many of the so-called non-traditional students enrolled in schools today — minorities, the poor, and mature adults — experiential learning has become the favored method of instruction in colleges and universities (1984). Experience-based education can include a diverse range of programs, from role playing activities in the classroom to venturing outside the walls of the school in order to pursue real world opportunities. Shadowing, where a student spends time observing in a particular work environment, internships, field placements, work–study assignments, cooperative education agreements, and apprenticeships (1984, p.3) offer students a chance to explore the real world of work. These innovative and engaging opportunities can make learning more meaningful while strengthening the critical connections between education, work, and personal development, and ultimately affirming the concept that learning is a lifelong process (1984, p. 4). Murphy (2001) believes that using instructional methods that focus learners' attention on concrete application of theory in the practicum setting also enables them to enhance their reasoning skills. The psychological/cognitive approach to adult development contends that people reach more complex, integrated levels of development through their active involvement with their environment (Baumgartner, 2001). Peering through the lens of a practitioner, I have found this to be true, and what's more important, my students have too.

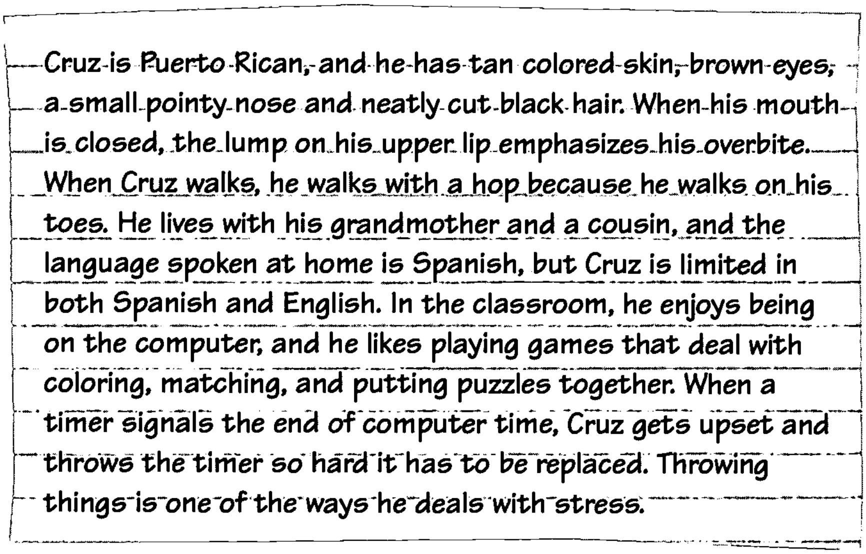
"Her true voice emerged slowly from each filled page in her reflective journal."

"I think that this internship experience has had a huge impact on my choice of a career. Without my internship experience, I don't think that I would have made it through high school." These are the words in a journal entry written by Allyson, a second year student. Allyson enrolled in the career and technical center as a tenth grader and she is now a senior in the program. Her educational journey through the maze of middle school and high school has been fraught with barriers and she struggles daily to find her way. Allyson's home life is difficult and she suffers from depression that requires medication. She has also been diagnosed with a chronic kidney ailment, so attending school has been a challenge for her. In her first year in the class, a combative attitude sometimes colored her behavior, and her future in the program was in doubt. Allyson entered the second year on academic probation and she was not assigned to an elementary school internship until November (other students had been placed in early October). Although I was hesitant to place Allyson in an elementary classroom, I finally assigned her to a teacher whose caring nature became an essential ingredient in Allyson's progress. The classroom teacher and I closely monitored Allyson's performance, and within a few weeks both her attitude and her attendance improved. The classroom in which she was placed was constantly challenging and many of the students had behavior issues that complicated their ability to learn. Once she became immersed in her field experience, Allyson began to look forward to coming to school and she began to focus more on her school assignments. She has blossomed because she has found a place where she feels she belongs. Allyson's story is not unique in career and technical education, and students enrolled in adult education also have similar stories of obstacles they have encountered during their pursuit of learning.

At the heart of Allyson's success is the internship experience, and her increased motivation is evidence of her achievement. When evaluated on a rubric that measures 16 teacher assistant competencies, Allyson exceeded the standard in 10 areas, and she achieved the standard in the remaining six areas. According to her cooperating teacher, Allyson has made excellent strides in her classroom behavior management skills and, as the year progressed, she became more effective in her ability to communicate with both children and adults. Her enthusiasm has been described as 'wonderful and sincere' and Allyson never once displayed a negative attitude and was always positive and open to suggestions. She also followed through on feedback that she received. In the classroom she showed a sense of humor and she reacted to the children in a sensitive and caring manner. Inspired by her internship experience, Allyson wants to learn more and her goal is to keep improving her skills, but still lingering in her mind are the memories of a teacher who once told her that she would always be a failure. It is my belief that instructors who work in adult basic education as well as those in career and technical education must sometimes mend the damage done by prior negative learning experiences in order to enable the learner to move forward.

Reflection

A significant component of the internship experience in my program is reflection. Students are required to reflect daily and write these thoughts in a journal, which is submitted to me weekly. This pushes students to think critically about their internship experiences, which helps them to attain a more integrated perspective. Emily, a student who graduated recently, is an extremely quiet and shy individual who exemplifies the power of reflection. Her true voice emerged slowly from each filled page in her reflective journal. Emily always sprinkled precise details throughout her reflections of each day's activities at her internship in a special needs classroom at a local elementary school. Described as mild/moderate, this classroom includes children with pervasive developmental disorder (PDD). Emily analyzed occurrences in the classroom while commenting about changes that she observed in the children as the year progressed. Her insight became so highly developed that her cooperating teacher commented that Emily's insight into children and their learning challenges is the best she has seen in 22 years of supervising both high school and college interns. The entry in the box is an example of the thick, rich description found in Emily's journal.



Cruz is Puerto Rican, and he has tan colored skin, brown eyes, a small pointy nose and neatly cut black hair. When his mouth is closed, the lump on his upper lip emphasizes his overbite. When Cruz walks, he walks with a hop because he walks on his toes. He lives with his grandmother and a cousin, and the language spoken at home is Spanish, but Cruz is limited in both Spanish and English. In the classroom, he enjoys being on the computer, and he likes playing games that deal with coloring, matching, and putting puzzles together. When a timer signals the end of computer time, Cruz gets upset and throws the timer so hard it has to be replaced. Throwing things is one of the ways he deals with stress.

Emily was offered full scholarships (one totaled $25,000 per year) to two schools, and she chose to attend a local university to pursue a course of study in early childhood and special education. Before she attended the career and technical center, Emily led a rather sheltered life and rarely went out after school. Because her internship required her to venture into a new environment, Emily emerged from her cocoon and she became more aware of her community. As she spread her wings she began to feel more comfortable working with children and adults. To my surprise, Emily even decided to live on campus this year!

Dialogue

Dialogue is another technique that I find effective in linking the classroom with the real world. It provides students with the opportunity to share their experiences, which enables them to feel that they are part of a learning community. Students enjoy talking about children in their classrooms, and sometimes they ask each other for suggestions about a lesson they are planning or for tips on how to handle a behavior problem. Through dialogue, students also feel more secure talking about cultural and societal issues. Because of the diversity of both my students and the children that they work with at their internships, a message of the importance of cultural awareness and respect is threaded throughout my curriculum. I often assign students articles to read that focus on diversity to cultivate critical thinking that in turn will generate meaningful discussion.

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Vygotsky (1978) supported the contextual approach to development: he believed that people are not separated from the contexts in which they live, but instead they are part of them. When students are empowered by their school experiences, they develop the ability, motivation, and confidence to succeed academically and they go on to participate effectively in instruction because they have developed a confident cultural identity (Cummins, 1983).

Dialogue is also an effective technique when utilizing a contextual/sociocultural approach in the classroom. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) believe that to enter into dialogue and then uncover and acknowledge the voice of each student is necessary for understanding that whatever each of us has to offer is grounded in political, social, historical, sexual, and economic context that is unique yet related to the culture of others (p. 171). Too often, the teacher's voice is one of universal authority and universal truth. Joining learner expression and language with teacher expression and language enables the perspectives of all learners to be shared and included in the process of learning (1995). Culturally responsive classrooms promote dialogue and reciprocity, and foster trust, respect, caring, and a sense of community (Bedard, 1999).

Dialogue with others is integral to adult learning and development (Mezirow, 1991). Shor and Freire (1987) describe dialogue as "the moment where human meet to reflect on their reality as they make it and remake it" (pp. 98-99). Through dialogue, which is the process of communicating, challenging, and affirming meaning, the world is transformed. Both adult and career and technical educators often witness this transformative process in their students' lives.

Teachers such as myself support the concepts of reflection and dialogue to maximize the potential of experiential learning while promoting more integrated development of students. Mezirow (1990) purports that through reflection, individuals often arrive at "a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated perspective" (p. 14). In a recent study of student nurses, Murphy (2001) found that those students with the highest scores in clinical reasoning reported a high frequency of the use of focused reflection and articulation, engaged in abstract learning, and were more self-regulated in their learning than those in the study who scored low on clinical reasoning.

Conclusions

After 21 years as a career and technical educator, I realize that a variety of links do exist between theories woven tightly through the fabric of adult basic education and career and technical education. Both adult and career and technical educators are committed to preparing a diverse group of people to navigate successfully through the uncharted waters of a rapidly changing economy and society. From my perspective as a practitioner, I have come to believe strongly that the essence of both adult basic education and career and technical education is grounded in the adult development theories that focus on the concepts of experiential learning, reflection, dialogue, and culturally responsive teaching. Both endeavors deserve more recognition for the success that each has attained in educating their diverse populations while connecting learning to the real world. Common ground does exist between the two. This article has only begun to scratch the surface.

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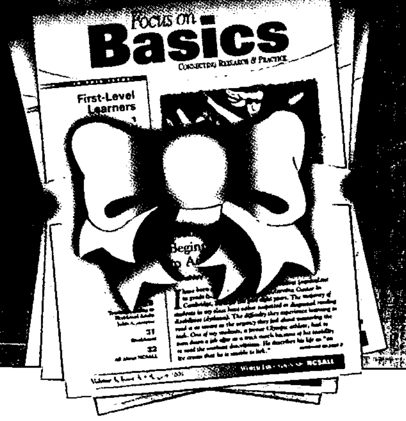

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A Maturing Partnership

by Rima E. Rudd

How did the literacy and health fields come to work together? Now that this partnership, tentative as it is, has begun, what direction should it take? As a public health researcher, I have worked to bring these two worlds together, believing passionately that the relationship will be beneficial for both fields, and, most importantly, for the clients of the health and literacy systems. In this article I will trace early innovations in this movement, through some current activities, and provide some suggestions for next steps.

Demographic information such as measures of age, race, income, and education are traditionally collected in all health surveys so that researchers can examine differences among various population groups. Two of these items, income and education, are considered measures of socioeconomic status. We have strong evidence that socioeconomic status and health are linked. Of course, adult educators who work with low-income learners will not be surprised to learn that those who are poor or have lower educational achievement

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WORLD EDUCATION

Welcome!

Peanut butter and jelly, Mom and apple pie, literacy and health...they're pairs that fit together naturally. In this issue of *Focus on Basics*, we explore some of the many ways in which literacy and health partnerships are enacted. They tend to fall into two categories: approaches that seek to empower students to navigate more easily the often overwhelming US healthcare system, and approaches that seek to educate literacy students about and alleviate health problems.

NCSALL researcher Rima Rudd sketches out the history of the growing interaction between the two fields. In addition, Rudd describes the diffusion of innovation theory, which helps to explain how and why this interaction came about. This theory also sheds light on why students are so effective in catalyzing their peers to act on health-related issues.

Students acting together in activities related to health are described by Beth Russett, on page 30, in an account of her year as a nurse practitioner providing health education in a Laubach program in Maine. Also concerned about students' health needs, ESOL teacher Kate Singleton turned familiar issues into evocative classroom materials. As students built their conversation skills, they learned how to access resources available in Virginia, such as low-cost health care and translation services within the health care system. Her story starts on page 26.

Violence is not always recognized as a health issue, but teachers across the country are increasingly recognizing its role in impeding learning. The Women, Violence, and Adult Education project described in the article by Elizabeth Morrish, page 15, enabled participating programs to explore ways to address this educational barrier, not necessarily by dealing with it directly but by focusing on wellness itself. On page 11, Leslie Ridgway and Dale Griffith provide an inside view of how this worked at their program in the York Correctional Institute in Connecticut.

A successful marriage between literacy and health — and all the related benefits that result — cannot come about solely through the acts of individuals and programs. State-level policy must play a role as well. Marcia Hohn interviewed five state policy-makers to learn how they are supporting efforts to bring health and literacy together in their respective states. She shares six strategies in the article that starts on page 20.

To share your experiences with integrating literacy and health, or to ask questions of this edition's authors, join the *Focus on Basics* electronic discussion list. See page 14 for information on how to subscribe. We look forward to expanding and enriching this conversation with your participation.

Sincerely,

Barbara Garner

Barbara Garner
Editor

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A Maturing Partnership

continued from page 1

have more health problems than do those with higher income or higher educational achievement.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services prepares an annual report to the President and Congress on national trends in health statistics, highlighting a different area each year. The 1998 report focused specifically on socioeconomic status and health (Pamuk et al., 1998). This report offered evidence from accumulated studies that health, morbidity — the rate of incidence of a disease — and mortality are related to socioeconomic factors. For example, life expectancy is related to family income. So, too, are death rates from cancer and heart disease, incidences of diabetes and hypertension, and use of health services. Furthermore, death rates for chronic disease, communicable diseases, and injuries are inversely related to education: those with lower education achievement are more likely to die of a chronic disease than are those with higher education achievement. In addition, those with less than a high school education have higher rates of suicide, homicide, cigarette smoking, and heavy alcohol use than do those with higher education. The lower your income or educational achievement, the poorer your health.

Thus, links between critical health outcomes and income/education are well established. However, until recently, health researchers had not examined any particular components of education such as literacy skills. This is because education itself was not the major consideration; education was only considered a marker of social status. Another barrier to examining any specific role that education might play was that specific skills such as literacy were not consistently defined or measured. A number of events have led some researchers to explore the possibility that limited literacy skills might influence a person's health behaviors and health outcomes.

Key Events

Dozens of articles in the 1980s and scores of articles in the early 1990s offered evidence that written documents in the health field were very demanding and were often assessed at reading levels beyond high school (Rudd et al., 1999a). While this comes as no surprise to anyone who tries to read the inserts in over-the-counter medicines, what is common knowledge had never been systematically documented.

> "...links between critical health outcomes and income/education are well established."

In addition, a number of health analysts writing in the 1980s had noted connections between illiteracy and health (for example, Grueninger, 1986; Kappel, 1988). A literature review published in the *Annual Review of Public Health* highlighted growing evidence in international studies that a mother's literacy was linked to her child's health (Grosse & Auffrey, 1989). In 1991, the US Department of Health and Human Services published *Literacy and Health in the United States* (Aspen Systems Corp., 1991), which highlighted the importance of paying attention to literacy issues. It offered an annotated bibliography of journal articles and books that assessed health materials as well as studies that showed a relationship between literacy skills and health-related knowledge and behaviors. For example, some differences between people with high educational achievement and those who reported that they could not read were noted (Perrin, 1989; Weiss et al., 1991). A number of studies conducted in Ontario, Canada, drew attention as well (Breen, 1993).

The main focus of most of the literacy and health inquiries, however, were studies of the reading level of written health education materials. Among those researching this subject was Terry Davis, a medical school faculty member and researcher (Davis et al., 1990). Davis and colleagues wanted an easy-to-use tool to assess and document the reading level of patients so that they could study some health-related differences between people with limited and with strong literacy skills. They developed and tested a health-related literacy assessment tool called the Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine, or REALM (Davis et al., 1991). This tool enabled them to examine differences between people with high and low scores for literacy and health behavior differences, such as engaging in screening tests for early disease detection. Later, for example, Davis and colleagues found that women with limited literacy skills did not understand the purpose of a mammogram and did not access screening (Davis et al., 1996). The REALM tests a person's ability to read through a list of medical words, moving from short and easy words to difficult and multisyllabic words. It correlates well with reading tests and offers a good marker of literacy level. This tool helped a small group of researchers around the country to make health-related comparisons between those with and without strong literacy skills.

Further interest in this type of research was fueled by the first national assessment of functional literacy skills. The 1993 publication of the first wave of analysis of the National Adult Literacy Survey and the findings that half of the US adult population had limited literacy skills provided critical information (Kirsch et al., 1993). The National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) focused on functional literacy, defined in the National Literacy Act of 1991 as "an individual's ability to read, write and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential."

The NALS measured people's ability to use the written word for everyday tasks. Thus, people's functional literacy skills were examined in terms of their ability to find and apply information from commonly available materials such as newspapers (prose), forms (documents), and common math processes such as computation for addition or percentages (numeracy). The NALS established a uniform measure of functional literacy and offered a portrait of literacy among adults in the United States. Fully 47 to 51 percent of adults scored in the lower range: unable to use the written word to accomplish many everyday tasks such as finding a fact or two in a newspaper article, finding information on a Social Security form, or calculating the tip on a bill.

> ***"... teachers and directors were cautious about the appropriateness of asking adult education teachers to teach health content. This is not, after all, their area of expertise."***

This information was a wake-up call to some researchers in the health field. We must remember that it takes a while for information to spread and, especially, to cross over disciplinary lines. Of course, the 1993 NALS findings are still 'news' to many people in health and even in education (see the side bar on page 8 for a discussion of the diffusion process). But, as a result of these published findings, some health researchers began to think about people's ability to function in health care settings and carry through with tasks many doctors and nurses take for granted: the ability to read announcements and learn about screening, to read directions on medicine labels, to follow recommended action for self care.

Among those at the forefront were Ruth Parker and Mark Williams, medical doctors practicing in a public hospital in Atlanta. They were interested in measuring and documenting people's functional literacy skills related to medical tasks. In 1995, Parker and Williams worked with colleagues in education and measured people's ability to read appointment slips, medicine labels, and informed consent documents. They then used these tasks to develop a functional test of health literacy for adults in both English and Spanish (TOFHLA) modeled on the NALS. Studies undertaken by a team of researchers working with patients in a public hospital indicated that 41 percent of patients did not understand basic instructions, 26 percent did not understand appointment slips, and 60 percent did not understand informed consent forms (Parker et al., 1995; Williams et al., 1995). Findings from these studies are being used to convince doctors that literacy is something to which attention should be paid.

With the development of the REALM (1991) and the TOFHLA (1995), people assessing the readability of written health materials could now more precisely examine the match between the materials and the reading ability of members of the intended audience. Furthermore, researchers now had tools for a quick assessment of literacy skills so that they could include measures of literacy in health studies. As a result, we've learned that people with low literacy skills come into care with more advanced stages of prostate cancer (Bennett et al., 1998); that they have less knowledge of disease, medication, and protocols for asthma, hypertension, and diabetes (Williams et al., 1996, 1998); and that they are more likely to be hospitalized than are patients with adequate literacy (Baker et al., 1998). These studies set the foundation for rigorous research into ways that limited literacy skills may affect health.

On the Literacy Side

Health topics have long been included in curricula for students in adult basic education (ABE) classes and in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. Making appointments and identifying body parts in English were seen as necessary survival skills, particularly, for example, in refugee resettlement classes in the 1980s. Topics such as nutrition and hygiene were popular with many teachers, who reported that health issues interested their students and could be used as the subject of reading materials for developing reading and writing skills (Rudd et al., 1999a).

In the early 1990s, links were being forged between health educators and adult educators. For several years, the National Cancer Institute supported regular working group meetings of health and education researchers. Local initiatives such as those developed by Sue Stableford at a medical school in Maine, Kathy Coyne at a cancer center in Colorado, and Lauren McGrail at a nonprofit organization in Massachusetts worked across disciplinary lines and linked health researchers and practitioners with adult educators. They could now work together on developing appropriate health materials and on bringing

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health curricula to adult education programs. Over time, some model program funds from the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Health Promotion, and, in some cases, state Departments of Public Health, supported the development of adult education curricula in specific topic areas such as breast and cervical cancer or smoking prevention. The idea of integrating health topics into adult learning centers was based on the assumption that health curricula would enhance the goals of the health field while also supporting the goals of adult education. Health practitioners working with the adult education systems gained access to and communicated with adults who are not reached through the more traditional health outreach efforts and communication channels. Thus, adult education learning centers provided the health field with an ideal site for reaching poor, minority, and medically underserved populations.

Bringing health topics to adult education programs was similarly viewed as beneficial to the adult education system. Teachers focused on health-related lessons would be building skills for full participation in society. In fact, NCSALL studies indicated that state directors and teachers considered that a health-related content would likely engage adult students and thereby increase learner interest, motivation, and persistence (Rudd et al., 1999a, b). Several curricula, such as the *Health Promotion for Adult Literacy Students* (1997), *Rosalie's Neighborhood*, *What the HEALTH?*, and *HEAL: Breast and Cervical Cancer* offered substantive full curricula for teachers who wished to offer in-depth health lessons incorporating basic skill development. However, the NCSALL survey revealed that teachers' and directors' were cautious about the appropriateness of asking adult education teachers to teach health content. This is not, after all, their area of expertise.

Literacy for Health Action

Teachers' and directors' discomfort with responsibility for certain health information led a number of us working in this area to move away from a focus on health content towards a closer examination of literacy skills needed for health-related action. After all, adult educators have the expertise to help learners build basic skills related to reading, writing, vocabulary, verbal presentation, oral comprehension, as well as math. These skills are critical for adults who need to fill out insurance and medical forms, describe or monitor symptoms, manage a chronic disease, listen to recommendations, and make health-related purchases and decisions. Furthermore, many of us were interested in expanding our work beyond the medical care setting and a focus on disease to a more public health focus with attention to maintaining health at home and in the community.

> *"Professionals in public health and health care do not have the skills or mechanisms to improve the literacy skills of their community population or of their patients. They can, however, work to improve their own communication skills ..."*

New opportunities for productive partnerships may come about because of a growing emphasis on health literacy. The term has been defined in several ways. The US Department of Health and Human (HHS) Services' publication *Healthy People 2010* defined health literacy in terms of functional literacy related to health tasks: "the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions" (US DHHS, 2001). This definition, although focused on health care, is general enough to include health-related activities outside of medical care settings such as maintaining our well being, caring for ourselves and others, and protecting our health at home, in the community, and on the job. Tasks can include reading a patient education brochure, deciding whether to buy a brand of food based on nutritional labeling, figuring out how to use a particular product, or choosing a health insurance plan.

A partnership between the US Department of Health and Human Services and the developers for the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAALS) planned for 2002 led to the inclusion of health-related tasks in this second wave of adult literacy assessment. Therefore, the 2002 NAALS will include three different clusters of key types of health and health care information and services that the general population is likely to face, identified as clinical, prevention, and navigation. The clinical area will include activities such as filling out patient information forms or determining how to take a medicine. The prevention area will include tasks such as identifying needed changes in eating or exercise habits. Finally, the

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navigation area will include tasks related to understanding rights in health care or finding information in health insurance plans.

In addition, health literacy is included in the goals and objectives for the health of the nation. *Healthy People 2010* is the planning document that sets health objectives for the nation and is used in national and state plans and to shape requests for proposals for federal funds. It offers 467 objectives in 28 focus areas, making this decade's report, according to the Surgeon General's report, an encyclopedic compilation of health improvement opportunities (US DHHS, 2001). This document now includes literacy-related objectives for the first time. Objective 11.2 is *to improve the health literacy of persons with inadequate or marginal literacy skills*. The listing of a specific literacy-related objective is listed under health communication and is also referenced under oral health. This attention is viewed as a milestone.

> ***"Health workers at all levels would benefit from interactions with adult educators who could help them better understand the communication needs and learning styles of people with limited literacy skills."***

Professionals in public health and health care do not have the skills or mechanisms to improve the literacy skills of their community population or of their patients. They can, however, work to improve their own communication skills, the procedures followed for communicating with and interacting with people, and the forms and materials they write. Health workers at all levels would benefit from interactions with adult educators who could help them better understand the communication needs and learning styles of people with limited literacy skills. In addition, those in the health field are increasingly aware that a population with good literacy skills may make better use of health information and health services than those with limited skills. The potential benefits from partnerships between those in the health fields and those in adult education are becoming clearer.

New Collaborations

The health literacy objective in *HP 2010* may offer new and different opportunities for collaboration between practitioners in health and in education. Many of the early partnerships, as noted above, were focused on bringing health-related topics and curricula to basic education or language programs. The emphasis was on bringing new information to adult learners. Because the health literacy objective in *HP 2010* focuses on skills, new partnerships may more easily emphasize health-related tasks and related literacy skills rather than specific health topic areas such as cancer or diabetes.

Adults take health-related action in multiple settings; they determine priorities and consult and solve problems with family, friends, neighbors, and fellow workers about health-related issues and actions. In today's society, adults may need to find information on the Internet, differentiate fact from myth, or establish the source of information. Thus, skill-building opportunities related to forms, directions, and information packets are important but do not suffice.

For example, adults who have accessed care and successfully developed the needed skills to follow the complicated regimen to manage asthma may still face difficulties with asthma triggers beyond their control. Living in a multifamily dwelling with exposure to cigarette smoke, dust, mold, mildew or roaches; living in a neighborhood with heavy traffic or idling buses; and working with a variety of chemicals all have asthma-related consequences. Becoming aware of new findings, gathering information, participating in tenants' associations, and involvement in community or labor action groups require skills related to research, discussion, analysis, decision making, and action. Thus, as we explore this area and define needed skills, we must be sure to move beyond the realm of medical care and include action taken at home, at work, in the community, and in the policy arena.

Many of these broader communication skills are already being taught in adult education programs. Adult educators focus on language and vocabulary acquisition, reading, writing, numeracy, oral comprehension, dialogue, and discussion. Their expertise can support and enhance health literacy goals. Health-related curricula incorporating attention to these skills can enrich adult learners' experiences and will support health literacy goals. With a focus on health literacy skills, the *HP 2010* objectives will encourage health practitioners to work with adult educators on the delineation of needed skills to support health literacy rather than on a transfer of health information.

Another task is at hand as well. Many of the health-related literacy tasks under discussion involve the use of existing medical documents such as appointment slips, consent forms, and prescriptions. An underlying assumption is that the materials and directions are clear and appropriately written. Yet, we know from the results of more than 200 studies that the reading level of most health materials is well beyond the reading ability of the average reader and that the format or presentation of information is similarly inappropriate (Rudd, 1999a).

The links between literacy skills and oral comprehension have not been explored in health studies and the vocabulary of medicine and health may well provide barriers in spoken exchange.

Twofold Strategies

As a consequence of these findings, strategies must be twofold: increase adults' health-related literacy skills and increase health professionals' communication skills. Adult educators can contribute to these efforts. Their skills and experience can help health professionals to understand better the factors that contribute to reading and oral comprehension. Educators can also help health professionals to improve written materials and, perhaps, verbal presentation of information as well. The Canadian Public Health Association, for example, has mandated that all materials geared for the general public use so-called plain language and avoid the jargon, scientific vocabulary, and complex sentences that make materials difficult to read. Accreditation committees are increasingly encouraging hospitals and health centers to examine and redesign their documents and procedures for informed consent. Expert advice from adult education professionals will clearly be needed and welcomed.

> **"A new partnership between health and adult education researchers and practitioners can also contribute to improved teaching and learning in both fields."**

A new partnership between health and adult education researchers and practitioners can also contribute to improved teaching and learning in both fields. Studies of participatory programs, participatory pedagogy, and efficacy-building in classrooms, community programs, and doctors' offices indicate that learning is enhanced and change is supported through experiential learning opportunities. Roter and colleagues (2001), for example, provide evidence for the value of adopting lessons from participatory pedagogy in doctor/patient encounters. Minkler (1989) and Green and Kreuter (1999) have long supported such approaches for health promotion on the group and community levels. However, participatory programs and experiential learning are still not the norm in either heath or adult education settings. Perhaps partnerships among practitioners in both fields will lead to rich explorations of approaches that support adult learning.

Health literacy is a new concept that is getting a good deal of attention. We can support healthful action by considering the skills needed for active engagement and by envisioning the adult, healthy or ill, as an active partner and decision maker. Educators, researchers, and practitioners can work together to explore strategies for improving communication, increasing needed skills, and fostering efficacy.

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Diffusion of Innovation

Health teams are often put together by literacy programs that run literacy and health projects; for a report on one such team, see the article on page 30. These teams of self-selected participants explore health issues and then teach their friends and neighbors what they have learned. The underlying literacy assumption in this model is that using literacy skills for purposes outside the classroom enhances motivation and learning. The underlying theoretical assumption is that change is promoted through ideas or information introduced by people with whom you can identify. This assumption is supported by a model called *diffusion of innovation*. This model is very useful in helping us answer two critical questions: How do ideas spread among a group of people over time? How can we speed up this process?

> *"How do ideas spread among a group of people over time?"*

The diffusion of innovation model offers a lens through which we can better understand the growing interest in literacy within the health field. It might also help us shape a strategy to speed up the diffusion process: to build further interest as well as to design health literacy programs. This model is well over a hundred years old and comes out of agricultural extension, anthropology, and sociology. It has been most recently defined by Everett Rogers (1995), a communications expert and academic, who began his studies with an examination of how new agricultural techniques spread in a farming community.

The diffusion of innovation model describes the way an idea or product enters a social system and is "adopted' by groups of people within that system. For example, findings from the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) were published in 1993 and disseminated within the education field and among policy-makers focused on education. These findings began to spread slowly into other fields. A small but growing group of health researchers and practitioners recognized the importance of these finding and began to conduct research studies linking health to literacy skills. Others among them created educational presentations and training programs for their colleagues. Health literacy is now included in the goals and objectives for the nation in *Healthy People 2010*. In addition, functional literacy tasks related to health will be included in the National Assessment of Adult Literacy Survey (NAALS) scheduled for 2002. At the same time, however, the findings from 1993 and the work that followed are still news to many researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers in medicine and public health. The dissemination efforts must continue.

How would we describe this diffusion process thus far? What helped it along? The diffusion of innovation model reminds us that the diffusion and change process is often gradual and depends on a number of key factors: the characteristics of the innovation itself, the social system within which the

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innovation is introduced, the available channels of communication, and the change agents who help spread the idea.

The Innovation

An innovation is defined as something new to the people to whom it is being introduced. In our discussion, the innovation is the awareness of possible links between literacy and health. This innovation is complex because it requires knowledge about the NALS survey and NALS findings as well as the implications for health action. Because the NALS findings were perceived as an education issue, the characteristics of this innovation hindered rather than helped its diffusion among people in the health fields.

The Social System

The diffusion model informs us that the spread of information or ideas is influenced by the social system. The health field is a complex system comprised of many different professional groups. Each group identifies with its own discipline: public health, medicine, nursing, and so on. And, of course, there are subspecialties within each group.

In addition, the social systems in health and medicine are hierarchical. For example, medicine tends to have more political clout than does public health. The letters following a researcher's name have layers of subtle influence. And, finally, more attention is drawn to research findings in medicine than in other health fields such as nursing, considered a lower-status field.

Channels of Communication

New information related to health is diffused through professional peer-reviewed journals and face-to-face at meetings. However, each discipline has its own journals. Nutritionists, epidemiologists, health educators, medical doctors, hospital administrators, and public health program specialists may all read different journals. Contemporary professionals struggle to keep up with publications in their own field, let alone any others. As a result, professionals do not necessarily read research published in other fields. In addition, public health epidemiologists, for example, tend not to go to the same professional conferences as public health educators or public health nurses. Generally, doctors and nurses do not attend the same meetings and do not take part in the same professional education courses. On the surface, the limited channels of communications — journals, professional meetings — makes it appear that the communication process could be easy, but the multiple layers of professional groups within the health field slow down the diffusion process.

Change Agents and Channels of Communication

The diffusion model informs us that information and ideas are best transferred by people like those to whom the new ideas are being introduced. Health educators and nurses, perhaps because they were most closely linked to the education field and are often responsible for patient education, became aware of the NALS early. Many of the first studies related to literacy and health were published in nursing and health education journals and were often focused on examinations of the many pamphlets, informational booklets, and directions used with patients. Most of the studies published in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s were concerned with assessments of materials.

More than 200 studies found these materials to be inappropriately written, often at reading grade levels above high school. Professionals from other health fields did not necessarily know about this body of evidence.

In the early to mid-1990s, a few researchers at medical centers and schools began think about patients' ability to comprehend medical instructions. Study findings, written or coauthored by medical doctors and published in medical journals, were more likely to be read by other doctors. Therefore, the attention of doctors and researchers increased with the publication of about a dozen studies examining the association between low literacy and medication-taking, disease management, and hospitalization. A White Paper on health and

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literacy published in 1999 in the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association* increased awareness among doctors and medical researchers of the potential health consequences of limited literacy.

Reinvention

Rogers also notes that reinvention is part of the diffusion process. As awareness of health and literacy links were disseminated, researchers and practitioners in public health began to expand the definition of health literacy. The idea that health literacy should be defined and measured by what takes place within the doctor's office or within an institutional setting is slowly being replaced by a broader vision that incorporates health promotion and health protection activities that take place where people live and work. Some of these will be included in the 2002 national assessment of adult literacy noted earlier. It will include functional literacy tasks such as finding information in a health article, an insurance plan, or a food label. This broader notion of functional health literacy calls for an additional set of skills related to fact-finding, decision-making, participation, and advocacy. Many of these skills are rooted in a sense of efficacy both for individuals and for people working in groups. This brings us full circle back to the health team activities noted earlier.

Future Efforts

The health team activities and several other examples of innovative practices in adult education can be enhanced or developed through insight from the diffusion of innovation model. The diffusion model supports good curriculum planning. It encourages us to think about what topics and skills are most needed by and fit into the interests of the students, how new ideas and skills are best introduced, what kinds of activities best support learning and adoption, and what activities would best support the further diffusion of ideas and skills beyond the classroom.

Research tells us that the strongest channel of communication is face to face. Of course, the education system is based on this powerful communication channel. Within the adult education classroom, teachers are in the best position to introduce new ideas. They serve well as change agents because of the close contact they have with their students and because they are often well trusted by their students. The educator introducing new ideas and skills to adult learners is a diffusion process. How might this setting support a much wider diffusion effort?

> "...program design must involve partnerships involving professionals from both fields."

If adult learners are viewed as possible change agents in their own communities, then lessons can be shaped to help them develop the needed skills to become change agents. Their work in class can increase their reading skills, vocabulary, inquiry skills, ability to read and understand charts, ability to fill out forms, and, of course, their knowledge base. This class work combined with practice opportunities and assignments that take them outside the classroom can enhance their ability to engage with and perhaps teach others. Materials used in class can, if shared with these adult learners, provide them with the tools needed to reach out to others in their family, at work, and in the community. Organized teamwork and opportunities to help others enhance a sense of efficacy and support change as well as the diffusion process.

How else might this model shape future efforts? Increased health literacy must involve educators as well as health professionals. We know that adult educators are more likely to adopt materials developed by experts in their field. Health professionals are likewise more apt to attend to and approve of processes and materials developed by health professionals. Thus, program design must involve partnerships involving professionals from both fields. Furthermore, if educators and health professionals conduct studies and publish together, these results are more likely to draw the attention of researchers in both fields.

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Resources

Many health education textbooks offer discussions of different social and behavioral theories. A small handbook for practitioners offers a good start:

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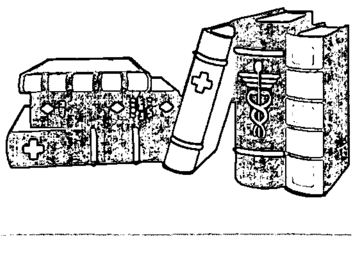

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Struggles: Writing as Healing

A writing program in a prison addresses the violence in participants' lives

by Leslie Ridgway & Dale Griffith

York Correctional Institution (YCI), Connecticut's maximum-security (and only) female prison, is located in the shoreline community of Niantic. The majority of the approximately 1,300 residents are African-American or Hispanic who come largely from the state's cities. Most are incarcerated for crimes related to drug use. Their length of stay varies from one day to life.

Inside the walls of YCI is York School, where a 32-member staff offers adult education services in basic literacy, adult basic education (ABE), general educational development (GED), vocational training, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), special education, and college courses (available through local community colleges). In addition to the teachers, the school staff includes a librarian, four pupil service counselors, three administrators, two administrative assistants, two correctional officers, and two part-time transitional counselors.

The school, which operates year-round, serves about 400 students daily, ranging in age from 15 to 60, with classes running from 8 am to 11 am and 12:15 pm to 3 pm. College classes and other special programs are conducted in the evenings. Anyone who wants to attend school is eligible; the only requirement is to be discipline-free for 90 days. The school's mission states that York School "will provide a positive learning environment for all students that promotes lifelong learning through academic, vocational, life skills, and college programming." To a large degree, the school fulfills its mission.

The Problem

In the past, Niantic's prison has served as a model for other women's institutions across the country interested in treatment leading to rehabilitation. Since the mid-1990s, however, the political tide has turned. In Connecticut, tougher views on the treatment of convicts have resulted in longer sentences and fewer treatment programs. Custody has become the primary concern, and new staff trainees follow a rigid military model, creating an "us versus them" mentality. Most women are not incarcerated for violent crimes, and, while the prison has always had its share of disruptive inmates, most residents are compliant. Still, under the new system, all YCI inmates receive harsh treatment and few privileges, even when their behavior is exemplary.

Within this climate, the inmates of YCI suffer more humiliation than under the old system. This often awakens old traumas. For example, inmates were once called by their given rather than their last names; now, they are referred to solely by last name. This may seem like a small change, but it symbolizes the increased distance of the present order. In a prison, the staff's authority cannot be questioned, so residents often bury feelings. Some inmates explode either by harming others or themselves. Mental health services, overcrowded and understaffed, provide little help; women dislike being sent there.

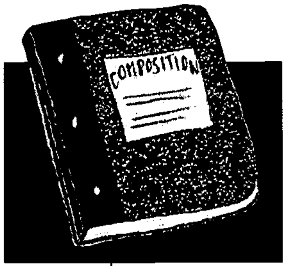
Learning had become difficult. Many women had reached the limit of their coping skills. At the school, educational staff worried about the women's mental and physical health and discussed ways to help them cope. A safe port in the emotional storm was needed.

Intervention Strategies: the Process

After a double suicide in the spring of 1999, educators joined forces with custody, medical, and mental health staff to form the Women's Health and Healing Committee. The committee brought in health-care providers and educators, who shared the latest in medical research and treatment options. Throughout the academic year, staff also recruited volunteers (writers, musicians, and artists) to conduct workshops with school students. Staff hoped to provide creative space wherein the students' grief might be expressed safely. As the health and arts programs ended their one-year commitment, it became obvious that the women needed continuing vehicles for expression.

We (Leslie Ridgway, school social worker; and Dale Griffith, teacher) both participated in activities that spring and summer that inspired us to join forces and form a healing-through-writing group for inmates. Physical, sexual, verbal, and psychological violence had impaired the inmates' academic progress prior to incarceration. In particular, many of the incarcerated women had literacy issues. Reading comprehension and writing skills were areas of real concern. Since trauma contributes to learning problems, would writing about trauma improve literacy (Horsman, 2000), we wondered? Might writing about trauma also heal deep emotional wounds and contribute to rehabilitation?

Writing deeply about painful personal experiences can heal the writers (DeSalvo, 1999). In addition, writing without fear of the red pen or criticism improves writers' basic skills and elevates self-esteem (Schneider, 1993). Yet fear of condemnation keeps many inexperienced writers from taking risks (DeSalvo, 1999; Schneider, 1993; Horsman, 2000). What might happen if students were encouraged to write freely and to talk about their feelings with each other?



Student Writing

I remember a time when...

I remember a time when I finally fought back to protect myself while my mother was beating me. I was 20 years old and the mother of two, but still the victim of my mother's unhappiness.

As children we're taught to respect and obey our parents. Usually I covered with my hands up protecting my face and head. A reaction that I'm sure is a defense mechanism of survival. I didn't harm my mother, but my physically defensive behavior of pushing her away from me shocked her back into reality. The beatings finally stopped and I was left with the question as to why I hadn't reacted to her actions years earlier. Then again, respect for your parents and the physical abuse from them are a hard combination to explain to a child.

If I could I would...

If I could I would shatter the cycle of abuse, so not one more child, woman or man needs to live in fear. Physical abuse breaks bones, but emotional abuse breaks your soul.

I hoped you wouldn't hurt me....

I hoped you wouldn't hurt me, but I know that I was wrong. I could see the signs in the beginning but I shrugged them off. I thought it would get better, now I know it wasn't right to think that I could change you. The hope that I had was that I could do you some good. Now I see what I didn't see. I wouldn't help myself. I hoped you wouldn't hurt me but I knew that I was wrong but now I see it differently, it wasn't me it was you. Now I hope you find peace the way I have. The hurting is gone. I had hoped you didn't hurt me but through that hurt I've learned I don't have to change anyone else. The change lies within me, and I am in the hands of God.

In the healing-through-writing group, students would use writing as a way to understand how violence (or other trauma) had affected their ability to learn. We drew upon Pat Schneider's book, *The Writer as an Artist: A New Approach to Writing Alone and with Others* (1994), for suggestions on how to run the group. According to Schneider, each member of the group must write, but only those who want to share their writing do so. All work is treated as fictional (disguising nonfiction as fiction if desired), freeing women to write personal stories yet retain privacy. No one's work is criticized. Responses are limited to what worked well and what might be deepened. Confidentiality is of utmost importance.

For the experimental group, 15 African-American and white participants of all academic levels were selected, based on their interest and teacher recommendation (in subsequent groups, English-speaking Hispanic-Americans were included). Writing ability was not a factor in selection. One student suggested calling the group *Struggles*, and the name stuck. The workshop was originally slotted for an eight-week session, with Leslie and Dale acting as facilitators. Leslie would monitor the clinical process of the group and deal with crisis intervention. Dale would lead the group's writing exercises and record the group's progress.

In Jenny Horsman's groundbreaking book, *Too Scared To Learn* (2000), she indicates that learning difficulties are closely related to trauma. She also emphasizes the

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importance of creating a safe physical space where internal healing and learning can take place. With this in mind, coupled with suggestions Leslie brought back from the training provided by the Women, Violence, and Adult Education Institute, we decorated the classroom with lace tablecloths, pillows and quilts, and fresh flowers. All decorations had to be approved by custody officials. Later, we added a stuffed animal. Following Horsman's model, we arranged chairs in a circle, with one special chair placed outside the circle, in case a woman chose not to actively participate. We never had more than one participant at a time who "needed" the chair.

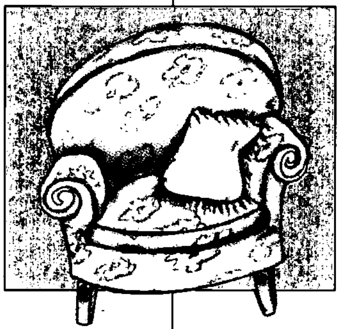
"... students would use writing as a way to understand how violence (or other trauma) had affected their ability to learn."

Our first meeting began with a cohesiveness-building exercise, including having the women establish their own guidelines, which were posted at subsequent meetings. Some of them were: no monopolizing, confidentiality, respect, one speaker at a time, and using "I" statements. We issued inexpensive "blue books" for their writing. At the third meeting, when membership had crystallized, cardboard composition books, a treasure in the prison, were distributed. The women decorated and personalized their *Struggles*' journals using fabric, lace and ribbon, and colored paper we provided.

We wrote along with the women and shared our writing. The format developed on a weekly basis, according to trial and error. Dale recorded weekly difficulties, exercises, and triumphs in a journal. In the beginning, we encouraged the women to write directly about violence. As a prompt, we suggested: *Violence means*... The women resisted, writing vague passages with little detail. However, when poems such as Maya Angelou's "Caged Bird" were offered, the women responded readily, identifying with authors' feelings. We decided to use a more indirect approach, using a variety of published work for prompts. The result was positive, as this quote indicates: "The poems were very meaningful — they prompted us to explore our feelings in depth; some of them stay in your mind for a long time."

The women decided to end each session by issuing a wish or a blessing to the person next to her. Mary might turn to Sarah and say, "I wish you peace and serenity for the next week" or "You are a child of God." Group members told us that the closing ritual was a powerful tool for building group cohesiveness. We encouraged the women to change seats weekly to build new relationships. We distributed note cards before the end of each week's session on which members could make private comments or request a session with Leslie. Before each woman left, she received a dab of scented hand lotion. The women looked forward to the lotion and said it made them feel special.

The women gradually shared more of themselves as trust grew. One woman wrote, "Writing about violence has given me the chance to talk about my family's darkest secrets. It allowed me to get over my fears. As a child growing up I was not allowed to tell anyone that I was being abused mentally and physically. I didn't like opening up to others. I now am able to open up a little because I was able to share my family's darkest secrets. This group has helped me a lot." As the workshop's end neared, the women voted to extend the group for eight more weeks, with the participants taking greater charge. We assumed less active roles, but continued to provide support.



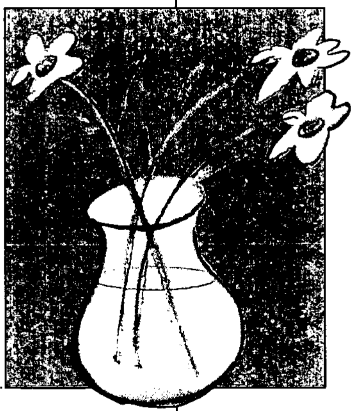
Word of the workshop spread throughout the school, and requests for another session poured in. Group members from the original workshop were invited to become facilitators for a second session of *Struggles*. Four women, not all of whom had displayed leadership qualities during the course of the workshop, volunteered. Two new workshops were formed to run simultaneously. Using our notes and journal records, we created a curriculum guide and trained the new leaders, holding weekly meetings to provide support for the peer facilitators. Leslie continued to provide crisis intervention.

Difficulties

In a maximum-security prison, difficulties are inevitable. In *Struggles*, most of the difficulties were outside the group's control. Physical safety and security are always the prison's top priority, so if an emergency (such as a medical problem, a fight, or a miscount) occurred, the school would close. In addition, vacations, holidays, and staff obligations occasionally interfered with the group's schedule. Finding the physical space to meet also presented problems for our second session. Regular classroom space was juggled to accommodate the group, and, at times, privacy was interrupted. Student members were amazingly flexible.

Student group leaders had little planning time, so lack of communication caused some trouble. For example, as a group leader, Judy planned each session carefully, while Mary, her partner, preferred improvising. Yolanda had difficulty with reading aloud, so she needed extra support to feel comfortable in her leadership role.

Trust is an important issue in any group. For the women at YCI, trust may be the issue. While confidentially was a firm rule, and generally honored, one member shared another woman's business outside the group, but, rather than ignore the issue, the group managed to resolve the problem through group discussion — without staff intervention.



Successes

One year later, *Struggles* continues to evolve. In the second session, student facilitators selected their own opening and closing exercises, added poems, prose, and prompts — in short, each group built its own identity, establishing a culture specific to its participants. We became advisors, sitting outside the circle, taking attendance, handling any disciplinary problem, and distributing materials.

An advanced *Struggles* group (for those who completed the first workshop and wished to continue) is now in session. According to the students' evaluations and feedback, the group has been a great success. Poor attendance and high drop out rates are chronic problems at York, yet *Struggles*' workshops have claimed near perfect attendance and program completion. Teachers have observed increased confidence and expertise in oral reading, writing, and general literacy from students who have completed *Struggles*. Beyond academics, *Struggles* graduates demonstrate an improved attitude toward school, better coping skills, and elevated self-esteem.

The women from the *Struggles*' group testify to its success: "Seeing our violent experiences in writing is more personal and real — especially when we read them aloud. When I hear myself aloud, I'm relating my experience to someone else, and the emotional feelings, which have often been repressed, hit me." *Struggles* is establishing itself as a regular part of the school's literacy curriculum and adding further evidence to the growing body of research about the healing properties of creative expression.

"Writing helps me to bring out what was inside."

"I think it's a lot easier to express yourself in writing because you don't seem to stumble over the words as much. The pen just flows..."

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About the Authors

Leslie Ridgway, a clinical social worker, has worked at York Correctional Institution in Connecticut for about four years. Ms. Ridgway was a public school social worker in Massachusetts and Connecticut. In her 16 years as a clinician, she has also worked in community mental health and private practice.

Dale Griffith, a state school teacher, has taught at York Correctional Institution, Connecticut, for more than seven years; she has also taught English courses at Middlesex Community College, Middletown, CT. ❖

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Focus on Basics electronic discussion list is a forum for discussion about the articles published in *Focus on Basics*. It is a place to converse with colleagues about the themes examined in the publication; to get questions answered and to pose them; to critique issues raised in the publication; and to share relevant experiences and resources.

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Reflections on the Women, Violence, and Adult Education Project

by Elizabeth Morrish

Quantitative research has established conclusively that domestic violence is a factor in approximately six percent of all US households, and that 20 percent to 30 percent of women receiving welfare are current victims of domestic violence (Raphael, 2000). Fifty-five percent to 65 percent of women receiving welfare have experienced violence sometime in their lives (GAO, 1998). According to statistics reported in the Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report "Violence against Women," violence occurs more frequently in families with low incomes. Average annual rate of violent victimizations per 1,000 females was 57 for families with incomes below $10,000 and 31 for families with incomes between $30,000 and $50,000. Level of education was also found to correlate with the rate of violence. For victims with less than a high school diploma the average annual rate of violent victimizations per 1,000 females was 48, compared to 28 for female victims who were high school graduates (Bachman & Saltzman, 1995).

Concerned with violence as a barrier to learning in adult basic education, World Education sought funding through the US Department of Education Women's Educational Equity Act that would enable six programs to enhance educational services for women who have or are experiencing violence by exploring changes in practice and policy. Drawing on the work of researcher Jenny Horsman, who participated in the project, we named as violence many forms of oppression and trauma, including domestic violence, violence by institutions of the state, childhood abuse, workplace violence, and rape. Two years later, we articulate these assumptions about violence:

- violence is pervasive and takes many forms;
- different forms of violence are intertwined;
- violence is supported by institutions;
- violence affects all of us; and
- by participating in institutions that perpetrate violence, we all perpetuate the violence our society supports.

We wanted a project that would support adult education practitioners because we saw that teachers know how widespread violence is and yet hesitate to weave their understanding into their practice. The project gave participants the legitimacy and the support needed to explore the complexities of these issues. One teacher described her inability to connect the implications of violence to her teaching before participating in the project:

> I already knew about violence. And I already knew that oppression is a form of violence. I am politically conscious. But before the project, I never put my politics together with my teaching.... The project made me more sensitive in my teaching position. Before, when someone had an attitude or went to sleep in class it would aggravate me. Now it's a red flag for me. Before it was, "Look, if you're not coming here to learn, don't come." Now, I say, "Are you OK?"
>
> Now I have a different mindset. I've seen that there's a connection between counseling and teaching. I wasn't aware of this before.... I will forever be more conscious of the issue as it affects women in the classroom.

Project participants gathered for a photograph during one of a series of workshops. Back, left to right: Tammy Stockman, Katy Chaffee, Janet Smith, Janice Armstrong, Kimberly McCaughey, Nancy Fritz, Gloria Caprio, Margie Parsons, Michele Rajotte. Middle, left to right: Caye Caplan, Char Caver, Bernice Morris, Maria Salgado, Elizabeth Morrish. Bottom, left to right: Anna Yangco, Ruthie Ackerman, Jenny Horsman.

The initial Women, Violence, and Adult Education project event was an introductory institute held in April, 2000. Adult education practitioners gathered from across New England to explore issues of violence and oppression. Programs then applied to become part of the three-year project that would explore ways to address the implications of violence on learning. Six programs were chosen; teachers from these programs participated in a series of four two-day training workshops to share ideas, discuss research, and create a supportive community of educators. Wherever possible, at least two teachers participated from each program. This group of teachers has developed strategies and materials that now, in the final phase of the project, are being compiled in a *Sourcebook* that will be published in the fall, 2002. (Look for information about it in future issues of *Focus on Basics.*)

"*Poverty itself is an act of violence.*"

In selecting participants, World Education was looking for geographic diversity, a variety of program structures, and a variety of student populations. We chose the York School, described in the article that starts on page 11; Vermont Adult Learning, a welfare-to-work program in a small town; Even Start Learning, Innovation, Nurturing, Knowledge, Success (LINKS), a program in rural Maine that works with families in their homes; Project Hope, located in a shelter for homeless women in Boston; the Community Education Project, based in a community organization in a small town in Massachusetts; and the Genesis Center in Rhode Island, which provides classes in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). What happened in each of these programs is profound. Working on the project shifted people's thinking: it changed teachers' practices and influenced students to make new decisions about education and work. While all programs will be featured in the *Sourcebook*, in this article, space restricts me to highlighting the work from three programs. I will outline the activities of the programs and share the views of teachers and students. The examples are taken from personal observation, project reports, and interviews.

Vermont Adult Learning

The White River Junction "Getting Ready to Work" is a regional program funded to serve welfare clients, primarily women who are single parents with work mandates. Teacher Katy Chaffee wrote, "Their lives are compromised by very little income. As a result of recent changes in welfare legislation there are enormous pressures and stresses on our participants." She talked more about this when interviewed about why the program joined the project:

We're in this whole structure of violence at the same time we are trying to acknowledge it in other women's lives. It is sitting here even in how we are being asked to work. I don't want to go there — it hurts. I was living it. I saw the life raft out there, I went "Yeah! Grab it!" And so [one of the teachers] participated in the institute and she talked about there being one violence... . So then you have to look at how you participate in that [violence], too.

The program, housed in a storefront on Main Street, draws people from a wide geographical area. They offer classes and individual help. Both participating teachers saw institutional violence as a reason to join the project. Teacher Tammy Stockman explained:

I have been aware for years that violence in every possible form is a huge part of the women's lives. Poverty itself is an act of violence. Often the women had to leave early to go to court. Our site was right around the corner from the court house, and the women were in and out of there all the time, dealing with custody and child support issues, addiction issues, abuse issues. The violence is systemic, not just episodic. The system is set up to hurt and to continue to hurt poor women.

When asked what she was hoping to gain from joining the project, Tammy replied:

Lately, it seems like the violence has been getting worse, and we needed more support than we were getting. One woman came to class with a loaded pistol because of an abusive partner. There was no place for us to get trained in how to deal with things like this because the people above us didn't want to hear about it. They'd say, "Don't tell us that there are so many women affected. We don't believe you." What can you say to something like that?

Participating in this project enabled us to openly discuss violence as a reality and to ideally come back with a language to describe it and statistics to say, "You're wrong. This is a huge problem." I am hoping that once this project is over, we will be well informed and have strength in numbers. The people above us won't be able to sweep it under the rug so easily.

Inspired by the model of self care provided by the introductory institute, the participating teachers in Vermont decided to begin their project with a staff retreat and invited a therapist to join as a mentor-advisor. Katy said:

We needed no further evidence or proof that our participants had multiple experiences of trauma and violence. Did they also have ideas and experiences of wellness: what it is, what moments of wellness feel like, what it would be like to live well; what words that describe it?

The staff emerged from their retreat determined to focus on wellness and to see if this would change the outcomes in their welfare to work program. They were being pushed to become more focused on getting students out of the education program and into work. Nevertheless, they started a well-being support group that

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met once a week as a regular part of the program. They hired outside consultants — "experts" — to teach and joined the courses as participants.

They piloted three consecutive courses consisting of eight to 10 two-and-a-half hour sessions each. The first was on mindfulness, the second on creative writing, and the third on collage, facilitated in turn by a therapist, a high school student, and an artist. A turning point occurred in the mindfulness course when they decided to lock the door. Tammy wrote:

How had we been so blind to the signals of stress that our participants had been giving? We realized at this time that [what] we had come to see as trust and comfort was actually at a rather shallow level and that much of our participants' behavior was a direct result of their fear. When the door was locked and the phones turned off and the fear of being interrupted was eliminated, when the collective act of self-care was given top priority and the rest of the world was sent a clear message that this was our time and space, that was when we felt a sense of well being. And that was when trust was built.

Students' reactions included:

I appreciated the safety of this group, that I could try things. In other groups I have felt that I am not as good as everybody else in the room. Here I am not worried about not being able to do what other people can do.

This laid the groundwork for the writing and collage groups. Again the teachers hired consultants and participated as part of the group. Again they unplugged the phones and locked the door. The collage artist they hired was convinced of the power of healing arts in her own life and others. She says:

The creating of one's own artwork is inherently healing and revealing. It allows access to the deeper parts of the self, and as a consequence, draws on and shares in the humanity of all of us.

Following is Katy's report about the collage process. Her reflections and her interviews with students show what a difference this made in the lives of the students and their ability to imagine themselves changing.

There is a cultural expectation that welfare-to-work training should provide goal-oriented, rational, job related programming. This well-being support group provided a weekly personal space for valuing each other, and ourselves for asking questions, and for exploring who we are and what we are meant to do in this world. The format facilitated clarity about career directions for some or an appreciation of personal strengths.

A student commented:

We also imagined a place of well being, and another time, a challenge in our life and then changed places with someone of our choosing.

The students agreed it was valuable to include collage in the welfare to work program. One in particular articulated what developing a collage meant to her:

...It taught me to be in a classroom situation again. I did get a job. It gave me the confidence that I can focus... . I know that the collage I did about change is very important to me. Because I'm very angry at the world that we live in and the conditions that there are. It [the collage] gave me a place to put it just the way it is now. ...It got it out of me. Because I couldn't put it into words — all these things — but I could put it all on the collage. It worked.

"How had we been so blind to the signals of stress that our participants had been giving?"

Katy and Tammy were pleased with the outcomes.

Participation grew and attendance improved. In our program, which is not mandatory, participants often vote with their feet. Participants' enthusiasm developed quickly. Although initially scheduled for four to six weeks, participants wanted to continue longer. We extended the class to 10 weeks.

Participants gained self-confidence and pride in their work. Collage required a unique process of listening to your inner self through right brain work. One of our satisfied artists commented, "There is nothing quite like discovering that inside of you is an interesting person – worth getting to know."

The exploration of interior personal space informed participants' ideas about work, relationships, and values. Career ideas and job direction were never part of the agenda of the collage group. However, greater personal clarity about future directions was an outcome.

Even Start LINKS, Maine

This rural family literacy program sends tutors to work with women in their homes, where it can be hard to focus on literacy skills. Life intervenes, often in the form of violence. A jealous boyfriend lingered at the door with a gun when the tutor was there. Child sexual abuse was hidden by the community, including the local doctors; even the literacy coordinator had felt powerless to address it. The teachers and the students needed support. Participation in this project enabled them to hire a social worker to meet with the staff every month for discussion, counseling, and clinical advice. The coordinator, Janice Armstrong, says the inclusion of a therapist at the introductory institute inspired her to hire the counselor. Otherwise, she says, "it absolutely would not have occurred to me." She described the role of the social worker:

...She gave us an opportunity to

process our roles with the families, helped me process my role as supervisor of the teachers, and [gave the] teachers an opportunity to save up problems and situations that they were uncomfortable with and needed feedback on. They prioritized the problems and we processed them one by one. She gave very objective feedback... one family had a death in the family. She had very specific suggestions like contacting the death and dying support group at the hospital for support and counseling. She knew specifics and could give the teachers that information. Not only that, she was willing to go on home visits. She did visit this family [and] we were able to get all the children into counseling, and arrange for counseling at school.

There were just so many ways she helped the program. The teachers were sometimes very stressed. She had such a calming way. That is very, very necessary for staff in the type of program we work in. To be able to feel that calm, know that there is hope, [that] everyone will be able to carry on in some way.

As part of the project, one of the teachers was trained by a staff person from a collaborating family service agency to facilitate a support group. Once students were able to address issues in this group, and staff could do the same in their monthly meetings, literacy work could be the focus during tutoring sessions. Janice wrote:

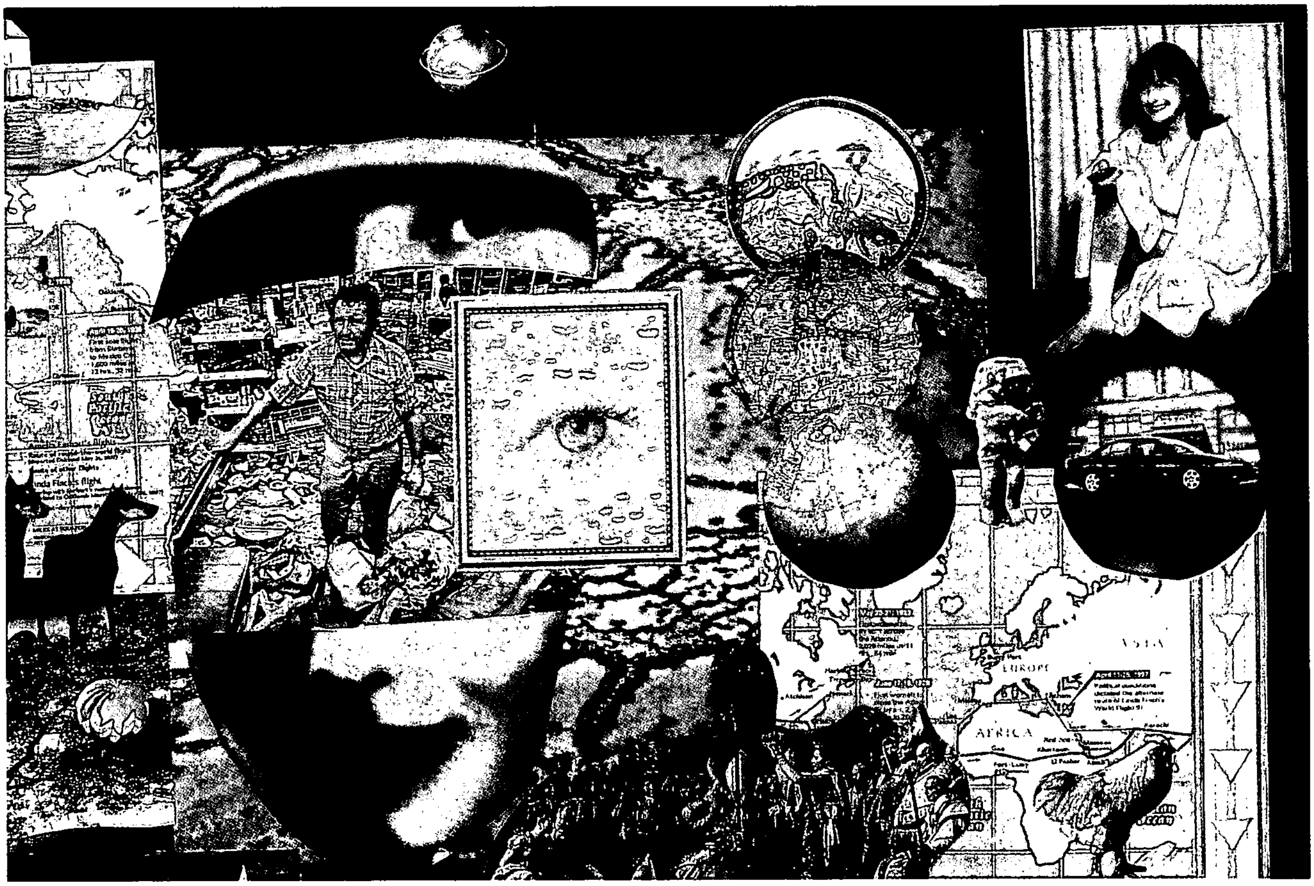
> ... having a women's support group for learners has opened up time for literacy instruction during home visits because the women have less of a need to talk about their problems to the teachers.

"We changed 'self-improvement activities' to 'self-empowerment activities'."

After participating in the project, Janice realized that the teachers and the students had to feel supported for changes to happen. She says this about the student group:

> We tried so many different ways to bring these women together and it just didn't work but this clicked. They got together and planned an end of the year trip to Bangor for all their nine families. [It clicked] because of this women's empowerment group. They were meeting together every Wednesday for an hour and then afterwards would stick around and they started talking about what they could do together.

The project resulted in better attendance than usual, and, for the



"There Will be Change" by Aimee Ferland

first time, student ownership and participation in the program planning process. Janice now feels that a counselor is an essential part of her program that she will work to find funding to continue.

Project Hope, Massachusetts

Project Hope is a homeless shelter that recognizes the role of supports in addressing homelessness. They run adult basic education classes in addition to other programming for women. The ABE teachers knew violence was a part of the women's lives at home, on the streets, and in the institutions governing their lives. What convinced them to join the project was the murder of one of the students.

> "The staff of the programs changed their practices to allow time for activities and elements that are usually considered luxuries in adult education."

In February, 2000, one of my [Anna Yangco] students was killed by her son. As a writing teacher, I get to look at people's innermost thoughts. I thought I knew this woman. But she used religion to mask her problem. She would say "it is in the hands of God." Still, I felt I should have known. In the fall she used to write a lot, but after Christmas break she would hardly write at all. I would ask her "Why aren't you writing anymore?" And she would say "Oh, I don't know. I just can't do it anymore." And then she died, I was so upset. I kept thinking. "What could I have done?" I started wondering what I could do to prevent this from happening again. Then, in March, my boss got a flier about the Women and Violence project and told me I should get involved in it. It was perfect timing. So I went to the first institute and I have been involved ever since.

One of the participating teachers was also coordinator of the Paul and Phyllis Firemen Scholarship, which gave women full scholarships for further education after passing their GED. It seemed that because of the generosity of the scholarship, many of the usual barriers to education would be addressed. For the women at Project Hope, this was not so. Something else held them back. Taking on the work around violence enabled the participating teachers to see if creating the conditions for learning was that something. Anna describes how they began:

When we got back from the first institute, we were thinking, "How do we create positive conditions for learning?" My partner teacher looked around and said, "Why don't we change the room?" So she held a "visioning day" in her class. She asked her students to draw pictures of what they would like the room to look like. She asked, "If you could have anything you wanted in this room, what would it be? No restrictions!" So the students drew these incredible pictures, and we worked on the room all summer based on what they told us they wanted. We painted the walls, added plants, put a little fountain in, got halogen lights instead of the fluorescent ones, bought new, more comfortable chairs. We hung a stained glass panel in the window... . By the end of the summer, the room looked totally different. And when the year began, we noticed a complete change in people's attitudes. They were much more relaxed, much calmer.

Teacher Char Carver describes what was different about the work they were doing as part of the project:

We changed "self-improvement" activities to "self-empowerment activities" — so we took them to the library [for] a poetry and writing session. Two women got up and read their poems and they had never written before, so it was wonderful! We went out for dinner with the women and they all got dressed up for the occasion. We used music and writing as healing getting them to think outside of the box... . We had an activity period where every week they had to do an act of self-care.

We put money in the budget into childcare, which we didn't have before...the frivolous thing is difficult. We need to put our resources into the women, if we value their endeavor. It's critical that we don't repeat the oppression of poverty. We need to learn how to budget in a different way. How do you explain to other people what you're doing when you buy flowers? But when the women talked about the flowers, they talked about hope.

Anna says this about what she and the students learned from the project:

I've seen lots of changes. By the end of the year, the women can say, "I'm important." They tell me that they don't worry so much about what everyone else thinks. They think more positively about themselves. Last year, five people went on to college. There are always changes, and it's hard to isolate it to just this project. But I have seen their willingness to take risks increase. At the end of the year, we had a yoga class. This was a big risk. We moved the tables back so that everyone was sort of exposed. We were on the floor doing stretches. If this had been at the beginning of the year, I'm sure no one would have come. But at the end of the year, everyone went. And they came back for all four sessions.

Conclusion

This project has taught us that addressing violence does not mean inviting everyone to disclose. It does not mean that we need to address violence directly in curriculum and materials. It means creating the conditions for learning that name and recognize the presence of violence in our lives.

The staff of the programs changed their practices to allow time for activities and elements that are usually considered luxuries in adult education. These included creating safe and beautiful space, doing art, and giving teachers and students time to talk and find ways to reflect. The shift in thinking and programming could not have happened without modeling and encouraging three levels of support: care of self, support from within the program, and support from community counseling and referral resources. The teachers report changes in their students: better attendance, improved writing skills, the willingness to take risks which led to the ability to make changes in their career and educational choices. As Katy Chaffee said, "greater personal clarity about future directions was an outcome." Surely that is what much teaching in adult basic education is all about.

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About the Author

Elizabeth Morrish, World Education, Boston, brings 20 years of teaching experience and interest in trauma and learning from work with Cambodian women refugees and young parents to her position as director of the Women, Violence, and Adult Education Project.❖

Literacy, Health, and Health Literacy: State Policy Considerations

by Marcia Drew Hohn

Both the literacy and health care worlds are increasingly coming to see the connection between low literacy and poor health as an issue of social and economic justice, and the two fields are starting to address the problem together. Across the nation, a slow but growing movement is leading to initiatives and programs that use an integrated literacy and health approach. Focus on Basics *asked me to review the policies and supports being put into place by state adult basic education (ABE) policy-makers that will enable the ABE field to address this national concern. In this article, I provide an overview of five strategies worth considering when contemplating how to engage with literacy and health issues. The strategies were drawn from a series of interviews with Bob Bickerton, Director of Adult and Community Learning Services in Massachusetts; Cheryl Keenan, Director of Adult Basic and Literacy Education in Pennsylvania; Kim Lee, Director of Assessment, Evaluation, and GED at the Georgia Department of Education; Matthew Scelza, Programs and Advocacy Director at California Literacy; and Yvonne Thayer, Director of Adult Education and Literacy in Virginia, all of whom are responsible for initiating literacy and health activities in their respective states. They were chosen for the diversity of their approaches. I also draw from my work in Massachusetts over the last decade as a researcher, practitioner, and advocate in integrating literacy and health education. By no means was I able to interview all the states, programs, and individuals who have been, and currently are, doing meaningful work in the literacy and health arena. The recounting of selected experiences does, however, provide a broad array of ideas for policy and process.*

Leveraging Interagency Cooperation

Cheryl Keenan, director of Adult Basic and Literacy Education in Pennsylvania, explains that 1996 legislation in her state created an Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), an advisory body charged with improving the delivery and outcomes of basic skill services across four key state agencies. In its first full report, the ICC connected adult literacy to several major policy priorities in Pennsylvania, including economic and workforce development, welfare reform, and school improvement. Legislated membership of the ICC was then expanded to include the

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Secretary of the Department of Aging and Pennsylvania's Physician General as a representative of the Department of Public Health. In formulating a plan to expand the scope of interagency collaboration to these two new interagency partners, issues related to health literacy were added to the ICC's agenda.

In July, 2001, the ICC sponsored a special symposium on health literacy. Because of Pennsylvania's large number of older citizens, an emphasis was placed on health literacy issues and aging. In addition to ICC members, special guests with interests and expertise in health and health literacy participated. The symposium raised awareness around literacy and health, and stimulated important dialogue among professionals about how to meet the health needs of certain populations, including those who have diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds, low literacy, or who are more than 65 years old. Embedding health literacy in the work of the ICC, a well-established and visible organization, helped to bring greater attention to the issue. A proceedings paper is providing a foundation for crafting recommendations for action. The implications of low health literacy and the need for expanded interagency partnership will be a centerpiece of the second ICC report, scheduled for publication in 2002.

California Literacy's Matthew Scelza recounts how members of his agency looked at social issues of importance to ABE and were drawn to the research and writing about low literacy and poor health. California Literacy, a private, non-profit organization, develops organizational capacity and leadership among community-based organizations delivering ABE services. Scelza was particularly startled by the finding that 40 percent of Americans cannot understand medication instructions (Williams et al., 1995). "California," he says, "does not have a coordinated effort to address literacy and health issues although there are many exemplary small programs and individual efforts."

> *"... when literacy joins other public agencies to address a common social issue ... a greater appreciation for the key role of adult literacy emerges."*

In an effort to provide coordination and build critical mass around addressing these issues, California Literacy organized a two day event that brought together people from Health and Human Services, California medical providers and insurance groups, the state Department of Education, nursing associations, and other stakeholders in November, 2001. The purpose of the meeting was to build awareness, develop ideas and broaden involvement, and build an action agenda for working together across agencies.

Bob Bickerton, director of Adult and Community Learning Services in Massachusetts, points out that when literacy joins other public agencies to address a common social issue, in, for example, such endeavors as the Massachusetts Family Literacy Consortium, a greater appreciation for the key role of adult literacy emerges. This gives birth to a new group of literacy advocates, frequently raising unexpected voices for support of ABE overall. Bickerton also points out that many ABE advocates in the United States are currently struggling to be defined not solely by workforce development. While employability is important, it is not the only goal for ABE students. Connecting with health has the potential to position ABE more broadly and to leverage investment in literacy for broader purposes.

Enhancing Current Services and Leveraging Resources

Yvonne Thayer, director of Adult Education and Literacy in Virginia, remembers how her state became aware of the connections between low literacy and poor health at the national Adult Literacy Summit held in Washington, DC, in 2000. Recognizing the importance of taking action, but lacking a dedicated stream of funding, Virginia integrated the concept of health into English language services with an emphasis on technology. Bonus points in a funding process were given to projects that included a health literacy component. The state is initiating two levels of activity: enhancing current services and curriculum development. Results from the first year were encouraging. The importance of health literacy was recognized and teacher-student teams developed projects that were shared electronically across the state. For

In this article, the term ABE (adult basic education) is used interchangeably with adult literacy and is understood to include English for speakers of other languages, General Educational Development (GED) programs, the broad array of basic education from beginning literacy through pre-GED, and specialty programs such as Family Literacy and Correctional Education.

* * *

Health Literacy is understood to mean the ability to obtain, interpret, and understand basic health information as well as the ability to apply skills to health situations at home, at work, and in the community (Rudd, 2000).

example, one team created web-based virtual tours of local hospitals, supported by the state technology component that provided equipment, technical assistance, staff development, and software support.

State plans include providing video conferencing that will enable students to talk to each other about the health projects, general health concerns, and other topics of importance to them. The health literacy curriculum development projects are also showing the potential to energize and catalyze the revision of curricula.

At this time, Yvonne Thayer says they are "testing the waters" to see what will work and then evaluate policy and process for the long term. The state is not letting the dearth of specific funds for health literacy deter them. Dr. Thayer points out that states and state directors need to reflect on what is important to the populations served. When states do not have enough funds, she says, look to leveraging already existing funds, making one initiative interactive with another. States also need to think about issues in the broader public domain and connect with the great social issues of the day. ABE engagement in these issues creates public awareness about what ABE is all about and provides information that others can understand. Echoing Bickerton, she reminds us that it builds support for ABE over the long term.

Promoting Contextualized Education

Massachusetts' Bob Bickerton notes that many state directors believe in the need to have curriculum and instruction embedded and contextualized in learners' lives. They support the views of Malcolm Knowles (1989), known for his clear and coherent voice on honoring adults' "need to know" and using immediate questions as fundamental starting points. Mezirow (1990), Brookfield (1986), and Quigley (1997) also all suggest that adult learning must address immediate needs and concerns. Auerbach (1992) and Fingeret (1990) both promote an approach in which literacy education is understood in the context of adults' lives, rather than separated from it. For Fingeret, the context of adults' lives — their issues, problems, aspirations, skills, cultures, languages — creates the basis for literacy work as well as the tools to engage in it. State directors, however, have a difficult time creating an environment that ensures that this actually happens this in the field. As Bickerton notes, "Health can be a wonderful way to begin a different process. Health is a vitally important topic to the ABE learner and their families and communities. It is a common denominator in multilevel classrooms, illuminates the value of group learning, and can be jet fuel for programs to begin discussions about the how contextualized curriculum and instruction is approached, and how curriculum can be reshaped." More on how this works in practice is covered in the following section.

Building Student Leadership and Enhancing Literacy Education

Building student leadership has been both the foundation and the outcome of the literacy and health work done in Massachusetts over the last decade. The work has emphasized the development of Student Health Teams. These teams are comprised of groups of students who work with facilitators, teachers, community health organizations, and health practitioners. Using teamwork and creative methodologies such as drama, art, and music, these teams employ a peer teaching and learning together approach to engage in a variety of activities. Student Health Team activities may include:

- researching health information,
- teaching other students about health,
- making and distributing brochures,
- developing and conducting surveys,
- participating in or running health fairs,
- arranging for medical screening services at the program site,
- documenting and taking action around community health issues.

The philosophical basis is allied to that of contextualized education and the teachings of Paulo Friere. Friere argued that traditional adult literacy approaches promote literacy as a set of monolithic skills existing independently of how or where they are used and as an individual deficit to be corrected, perpetuating the marginalization and disempowerment of learners (Auerbach, 1992). This leads to the "banking" model of education, in which learners are seen as empty vessels awaiting deposits of knowledge by the teacher, who makes all the decisions and controls the process. According to Freire (1985), the banking model supports the development of individuals who accept the passive role imposed on them and learn, along with a fragmented view of reality, to adapt to the world as it is and not to act upon and change it (Rudd & Comings, 1994).

In Massachusetts, student leadership of the health projects through Student Health Teams has helped programs to move away from the banking model and towards education for transformation. As one member of a student health team put it:

"I saw my opinion was important and it felt good. In Hispanic families, the parents or the husband make all the decisions. I thought, 'oh my God, I have the right to speak and give opinions.' We [the health team] said that HIV/AIDS and drug and alcohol use were the biggest community health problems...and we found that brochures to teach about these problems were too hard. No one understood the words and everything was too crowded, too complicated...so we started with making simpler brochures. Everyone on the team, my family, and friends like them and it made me so proud."

Students across the state echo feelings of pride in their work, and in being involved with health issues important to everyone in the program, including staff, and in projects that made real changes and have visible results. The personal growth that comes from being involved and being supported has been highly motivating.

"... health education needs to be more than simply reaching people with a particular health message or a particular piece of health information."

The experience of talking in front of many other groups and being heard is also motivating. As one student said, "When I realized that what I had to say was more important than how I said it, I could speak English." Reading, writing, math, and technology skills are pressed into service and enhanced through the literacy and health work. Student teams learn to use the Internet to search for health information, read maps, construct surveys, make presentations, learn how to ask questions, and develop knowledge about the economic and political environment surrounding health issues. One teacher noted, "There is nothing like a small group experience, like the student health team, that arises around purpose and a focus where all the cognitive stuff happens peripherally. When you are not focusing on learning goals, learning sneaks up on you."

Massachusetts' adult basic education learners have been articulate about what they see as the problems with health education for limited-literacy individuals and groups and have developed an array of projects, interventions, and materials to assist in addressing the problems (MA Department of Education, 2000). In the process, they have developed new knowledge, skills, awareness, and vision for social action that promote new images of themselves as people who can help make things change. Learners involved in these activities reported that they did not feel like immigrants or foreigners in their own living place. For the first time, they felt included in and part of the United States (System for Adult Basic Education Support, 2001).

Reaching New Student Groups

Kim Lee, director of Assessment, Evaluation, and GED within Georgia's State Department of Technical and Adult Education, notes that Georgia is experimenting with a new approach to literacy and health. A year ago, they read the symposium proceedings report from the National Health Council (2000) about literacy and health that made them take a closer look what was being done, and not done, in Georgia. A working group of ABE and health education professionals was formed to explore what could be done. The group wanted the work to assist health care providers who identified literacy as an issue and help ABE teachers incorporate health into their classrooms. They decided to break the ABE work into two pieces, both of which will emphasize referrals and collaborations between ABE programs and health care facilities

The first activity was training for ABE teachers on how to modify and incorporate health content into existing ABE programs. The Georgia State Department of Education sponsored a summer curriculum academy for fulltime teachers to review and begin the process of integrating health content literacy into curriculum. To identify top health concerns for integration, panels of physicians, public health specialists, and dentists were brought together with the teachers to speak together about relevant health areas, identify resources, and answer questions in response to the specifically identified health concerns. Through these processes, four broad health areas emerged: diabetes, heart diseases including hypertension, oral health, and HIV/AIDS. A full-time health literacy coordinator with a nursing background has been hired at the state Department of Education to review the results of the academy and work with teachers to use this information as part of curriculum revision and incorporation of health information

The other aspect of the initiative was to create "health literacy" classes to be taught by literacy and health education teachers together in a variety sites such as hospitals, churches, and public health agencies. Such programs may attract groups of learners who often do not seek regular ABE services.

The healthy literacy classes were included because Kim Lee and others in the Literacy and Health Working Group had explored the literature on how limited-literacy adults often feel stigmatized (Beder, 1991; Davis et al., 1996). Many individuals in need of services will not go to a regular ABE program but might attend "health literacy" classes that have a dual agenda — learning about health topics important to you while simultaneously developing literacy skills — and perhaps transition to regular ABE in the future. Health education can thereby become a vehicle for literacy, an approach that the Massachusetts experience supports.

Kim Lee says that Georgia is venturing into uncharted territory; they are not sure where the road will lead them. However, staff in the state think that the junction of literacy and health is a crucial area for ABE to address that has a natural fit with ABE services overall, and family literacy in particular, and they are committed to its pursuit.

Lifelong Learning Tools

The past decade has provided insights into how best to approach integrated literacy and health education. The following are my perspectives as a researcher, practitioner, and advocate in literacy and health about what has been learned from the Massachusetts' experience, from the work of other states' ABE systems, and through dialogue and collaboration with the professionals in public health and health care. I have learned that health education needs to be more than simply reaching people with a particular health message or a particular piece of health information. The current emphasis on addressing the health education needs of limited-literacy groups through simply rewriting existing materials at an easier language level is exceedingly limited. Information is only one piece of a process that needs to include community context, participation, and support. Adult basic education learners in Massachusetts have, in fact, been very articulate about what they need. Simpler materials are only the tip of the iceberg, they say. A psychologically safe environment in which to learn about health, the opportunity to ask questions and to consider the relevance of the information to everyday life, and the opportunity to talk about different cultural perceptions about health and medical treatment are all vitally important. They also say that many recent immigrants may have little or no experience with concepts of prevention and early detection, rendering many public messages ineffective. Information about and a forum in which to discuss how the American health care system, including public health insurance programs, operate is needed.

A recent series of focus groups with patients at Montreal (Canada) General Hospital found similar views on health education in relation to particular medical conditions. These focus groups articulated a need for small, comfortable settings for patients and their families in which they can learn about their medical conditions and their treatment. They should be designed by patients and families working with medical personnel, using multifaceted approaches to patient information and activities, with an emphasis on participatory group activities (Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2001).

> "Creating a climate that supports literacy and health programming is also needed."

Working towards the integration of literacy and health education has made me confident that ABE programs offer the luxury of time and an appropriate environment, in which adult literacy learners and staff can work together with community health educators to design and implement health teaching and learning programs. The programs can address the health and the language and literacy learning needs of ABE students and can catalyze them in a process of mutual enhancement. ABE can provide tools for lifelong learning about health that can be applied in myriad settings, both within health education and in the broader world.

Conclusions

Enormous opportunities for synergy with the health care field exist. Both ABE (including our learners) and health care need to develop system goals and map strategies together to accomplish these goals. Both sides need to rethink and reshape how we can work together to enhance the health status and literacy level of our country's most vulnerable populations.

In this article, I have presented a number of different approaches that state literacy systems have used to begin their work. These approaches are based on the unique circumstances, needs, and concerns of particular states and, in most cases, are still in the very beginning stages. The ABE system overall needs to think through what policy supports need to be in place to provide a firm foundation on which to rest literacy and health work. Attention also needs to be paid to how states can involve ground level practitioners in developing and shaping the work.

One obvious support needed is financial. Teacher training on integrating health content, revising curriculum, and grappling with work that may throw difficult personal health issues into sharp relief have costs associated with them. Student health teams also need to be supported in their work. Staff need supported time in which to work with their local health care agencies on information sharing, on cross-referrals, and to explore collaborative actions.

Creating a climate that supports literacy and health programming is also needed. Such a climate begins with a long-term commitment to the importance of literacy and health work, and to building the ABE field's capacity to work effectively in a new arena. It also includes time and space to consider crucial questions that arise as the work increases. These questions include such concerns as

- When literacy and health are joined, what comes first, literacy or health?
- Which approaches work best under what circumstances, for example, an empowerment approach that emphasizes student leadership? A disease-specific approach that concentrates health learning in one health topic separated from regular instructions or an integrated

curriculum approach?

- In what ways do the practice of literacy teachers and programs change by being involved in health work?
- What evidence can be produced that documents changes in health knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes — and, ultimately, behavior — through linking literacy and health education?
- What influence does an interagency approach have on the partners involved? These and other crucial questions will need to be addressed through research, thoughtful dialogue, and careful analysis of experience.

None of this will come without financial support, capacity-building, research, and the willingness to rethink and reshape practices in both the literacy and health worlds. However, the reasons to do this work are clear and compelling. Our country's most vulnerable, low-literacy groups, concentrated in minority populations and numbering 90 million people, have poor health (Davis et al., 1996; Kirsch et al., 1993; US DHHS, Public Health Service, 1991). They die sooner than the average population and have a higher incidence of chronic disease (US Bureau of the Census, 1993; Weiss et al., 1992). Many are also our ABE students. Collaborating with the health care world to address their health literacy needs to be one of ABE's priorities in the coming years.

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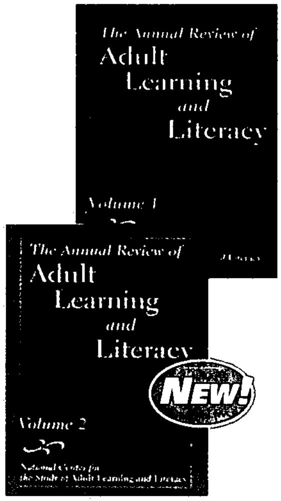
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ESOL Teachers: Helpers in Health Care

Singleton developed methods to help students navigate the health care system

by Kate Singleton

Luz, a 36-year-old mother of seven from El Salvador, was in my adult English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) class in Arlington, VA. After three 3-month terms, she was beginning to sight-read when she started experiencing severe abdominal pains. Her attendance dwindled. At school, her pain distracted her. One day she reported that she had been to the emergency room; her children had been told that their uninsured mother needed an operation very soon. As the operation date approached, Luz said she was very nervous.

Never having studied in her native country, Luz knew nothing of internal organs. She did not know what her diagnosis of uterine fibroid meant. I tried to calm her, saying the surgery was done all the time with no problems. But in her case there were problems; a surgeon slipped and accidentally cut into her bladder. The surgery and recovery suddenly became longer, more traumatic, and more costly to Luz and her family. As she recuperated at home she received piles of medical bills in the mail. Her literate children understood little on the bills, but the whole family understood the large numbers of dollars printed at the bottom. Luz, who had been making long-sought gains in her struggle for literacy, dropped out of school.

Jose, a Bolivian man in his early 30s, stayed after class one night so I could help him understand a hospital bill. He had been having bad headaches for some time. Thinking it was his only option for care, he had gone to the emergency room to get treatment. There he was told the headaches would clear up if he got glasses. He was charged $300 for this diagnosis.

Maria, a Salvadorean woman in her early 40s, came into class pale and panicking. She had gone to the emergency room over the weekend and had had an operation. When asked about the procedure she said hysterically, "Me don't know. They cut me. What they take me don't know!" She had had a hospital interpreter, but she, like Luz, did not have the basic anatomical knowledge to understand what was explained. Unlike Luz, she had no family in the area to intercede for her. I called a social worker, who helped Maria find out that she had had a gallstone removed, and that she needed to follow a specific diet and receive follow-up care. The social worker also helped her negotiate a payment plan for her hospital bills.

I taught these three students and many other beginners like them during my nine years in Arlington County. They are hard working and hungry for education. Most often uninsured, they do not seek preventive care. A health problem arises, or a lingering one worsens, and they are in crisis, immersed in a health care system they do not know how to navigate. They have weak support systems in this country, little English to speak, and no idea how to access helpful services. With poor health and the urgent need to pay large medical bills, their attendance in school suffers and they often drop out to work harder and raise money when they should probably be working less.

Curriculum vs. Life

Based on these experiences, I felt a gap between what I have been teaching (my program's health curriculum) and the health-related situations my students actually encounter. I do not dislike the curriculum: I have taught most of my beginner classes for the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP), and know how hard the teachers have worked to make the curriculum practical, needs-based, and learner-centered. The content is simple, it presents basic, important vocabulary on body parts and describing symptoms to the doctor. The simplicity of the language structures and the basic life skills are level-appropriate and necessary for beginner students, designed to be pertinent but not overwhelming. In my experience, however, it is precisely the uninsured beginners who find themselves overwhelmed in the most catastrophic, complicated health situations. Beginning-level students need and want to be able to describe basic symptoms (more often than not it was their first or second choice in class needs assessments) but they also need to understand the comparative financial and health costs of opting for emergency care over preventive care. They can similarly benefit from understanding how to advocate for themselves when or if they suddenly find themselves having to navigate the complexities of the US health care system.

Certainly many people, fluent English speakers among them, are overwhelmed when seeking health care in the United States. Language and cultural barriers present additional difficulty. It seems that the less language and cultural skill one has, the less the likelihood of having health insurance, access to preventive care, and an understanding of the US health care system. Research indicates that uninsured people who do not get care tend to have more chronic, difficult to treat conditions (Ayanian et al., 2000). Beginning-level ESOL students need the complex health-related material and concepts that often are only taught in higher level classes. These observations led me to explore the following question: What else can ESOL teachers do to prepare our beginning-level students for encounters with the US health care system, especially those who are uninsured?

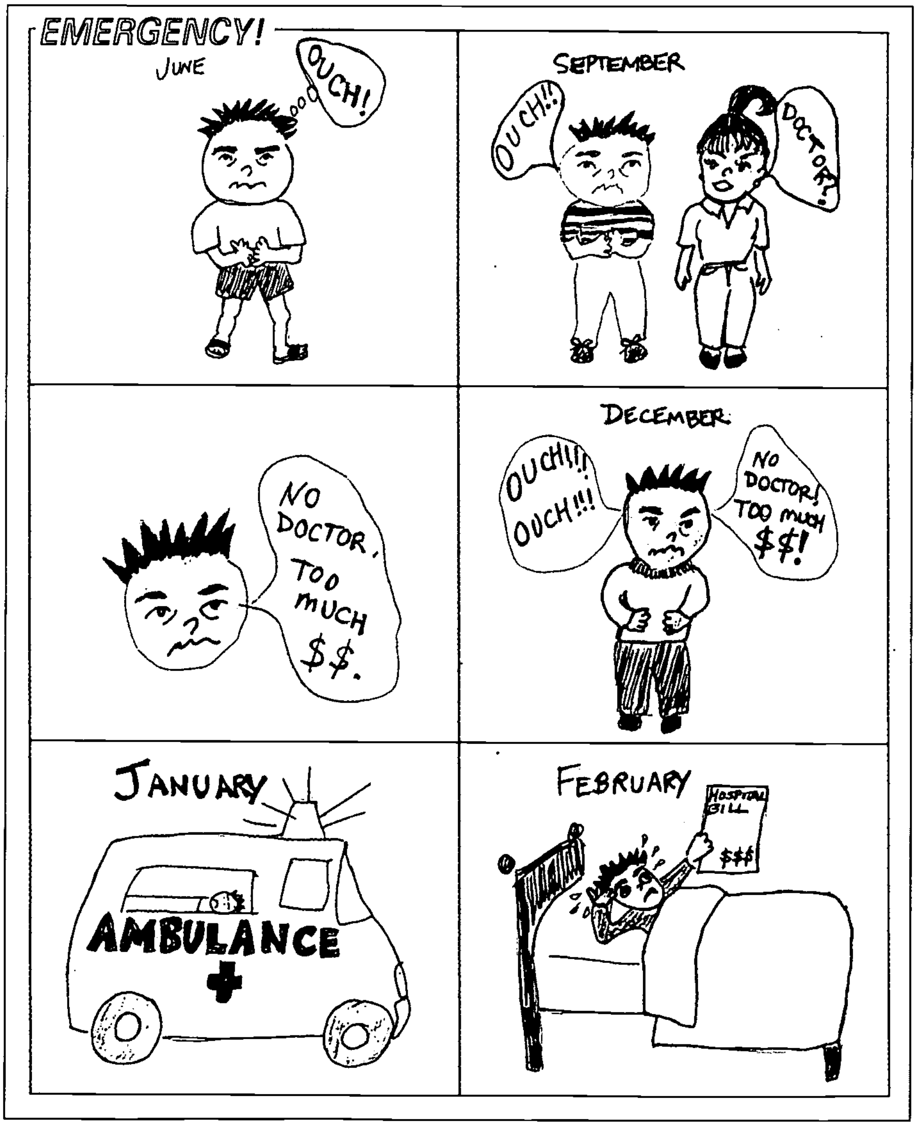
Exploration

I started by exploring the question informally, talking with other teachers in my program and finding that many had made the same observations. Many students who had been here for years, I learned, some with high levels of English competency, were unaware of the availability of low-cost clinics for the uninsured. I educated myself more about community services available to immigrants in the community and read about physical and mental health problems common among low-income immigrants (see the Blackboard on page 35 for recommended resources). I began reading about health beliefs and practices in other cultures, and how those beliefs blend or clash with mainstream US practices.

I also began a Masters degree in social work. My work in ESOL had made me curious about what immigrants go through when they settle in a new country, and social work has allowed me to explore that in more depth. The coursework has helped me understand how truly difficult it is for care providers with the best intentions to suppress their own cultural beliefs when working with clients or patients from other cultures. If we can introduce ESOL students to just a little of the mainstream US medical culture, then they might have more understanding of what is expected of them as patients. With this awareness, they might be able to be more active in their treatment and better advocate for their own needs.

When I started reading on the subject of health literacy as viewed by literacy professionals within the medical field, I detected a general disregard for contributions of adult educators to the discussion and a preoccupation with semantic issues. While the issues deserve some place in discussion, I saw little analysis of the effects of culture on comprehension, or the effect of the context in which a person was being given information. As a literacy instructor, I know that when people are feeling stress, their comprehension decreases. Imagine the stress an immigrant like Maria feels, with scant English and low literacy, having just had emergency surgery, sedatives still blurring the senses, as follow-up care instructions are presented to her.

One person who helped recharge my optimism was Maria Meuse, RN, a community health nurse in Bailey's



The materials that evolved included picture stories about preventive care, asking for clarification from the doctor, handling stress, and domestic violence.

Suggestions for low-income students who do not have health insurance

- Find out if there is a low-cost clinic in your area.
- If you must see a regular doctor, say you are uninsured and ask if you can pay a lower rate.
- If you have a big bill, ask for a payment plan so you can pay a little every month.
- Don't wait until the problem is an emergency. If you go to the doctor early, you will probably pay much less.
- See if your children qualify for free health insurance. Ask at their school or at the health department.

Tips for handling sensitive subjects

Many teachers might be uncomfortable taking on health topics in class that have the potential to bring up very personal experiences for students. They might feel that they don't have enough specific knowledge of US health care practices (or the time to acquire it) to be able to handle students' questions. These concerns and others are addressed in a useful chart by J. LaMachia and E. Morrish entitled "Teachers Concerns about Incorporating Health into Adult Education" in the Spring 2001 edition of Field Notes, available on-line at *http://www. sabes.org/ f04conc.htm.*

Handling language problems at the doctor

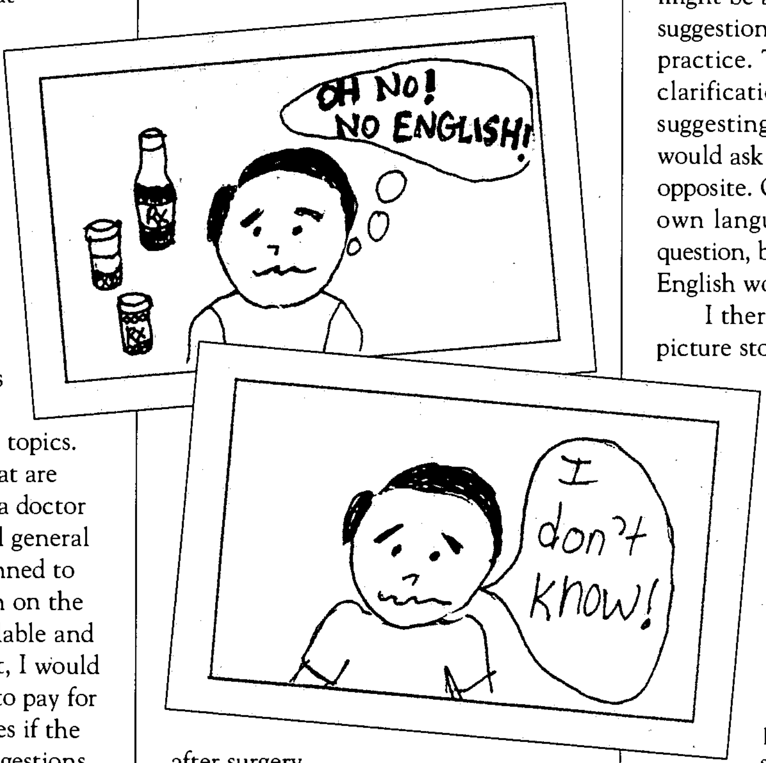
- Bring a friend with you who speaks more English than you do. Sometimes it is not comfortable for children to translate their parents' health problems.
- Write down some questions to take with you. This will help you remember to get all the important information.
- Ask someone who speaks English to call the doctor's office before your appointment to say that you will need an interpreter. The doctor may know someone who can interpret for you.
- If you can pay, see if there is a doctor near you who speaks your language.
- Always ask questions! You are the customer and your health is important. In the United States, it is OK to ask the doctor questions until you understand.

Cultural expectations of the US medical system

- Preventive care is seen as the patient's responsibility. US medical culture emphasizes self-care.
- Patients have the responsibility to ask questions in a fast-paced doctor's office or clinic.
- Patients must be clear with their health care provider about any medications they take, even herbs or traditional medicines from another country, to avoid dangerous interactions.
- Patients are expected to find out which side effects of medications are dangerous and which are benign before leaving the doctor's office, clinic, or pharmacy.
- Sometimes payment plans or financial assistance are available in hospitals for uninsured patients, but the patient must ask about them specifically.
- By law (the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964), patients whose first language is not English should be provided with an interpreter. If one is locally unavailable, 24-hour telephonic interpretation services exist for doctors to use (at the doctor's expense). This is not popular among doctors, but it does exist for emergencies.

Health Center, a county-run, low-cost clinic in Falls Church, VA. She recognized the cultural variation among the clinic's immigrant patients, and the stresses that illness and seeing a US health care provider create for them. In the box on page 28 is a listing of several cultural expectations of the US medical system that are problematic for many immigrants, as described by Maria.

With Maria's clarification, I decided to design materials that would help teachers convey to students concepts such as preventive care and the need to ask questions of the doctor. The materials needed to enable but not require both students and teachers to discuss difficult, potentially personal topics. I would identify questions that are culturally appropriate to ask a doctor about medicines, surgery, and general treatment. In addition, I planned to collect and share information on the low-cost health services available and how to access them. And last, I would develop suggestions on how to pay for emergency medical procedures if the patient is uninsured. The suggestions would not eliminate the financial burden, but they could give the student more control.



Testing Materials

The materials that evolved included picture stories about preventive care, asking for clarification from the doctor, handling stress, and domestic violence. I also wrote problem-solving stories, for readers at a high beginner level or above, about anxiety and depression. I compiled lists of simple questions to ask the doctor, and a brief list of options for payment after an emergency.

I piloted the picture stories in the Arlington County Community Outreach Program classes held in apartment buildings and community centers around the county: drop-in, multilevel classes that tend toward beginner level but have some higher-level students as well. I started each session with a picture story about a man who ignores pain symptoms until he has to be taken to the emergency room for emergency surgery. In the last frame he is still in bed a month after surgery, looking in terror at a big bill. (See page 27.) We analyzed the situation, then wrote a story about it, with the students dictating and me writing. We discussed alternatives the man might have pursued at the beginning to avoid the catastrophic outcome, and talked about preventive practices, low-cost clinics, requesting payment plans, and what happens if you do not pay the medical bills.

In every group, people had a lot to say or ask. After the first pilot lesson, a young man came up to me and said, "This is my story!" Excited to learn about the clinic, he had thought the emergency room was his only option for treating gastritis, and now was paying the bills. Another man said he had had emergency surgery and had ignored a collection agency's attempts to reach him. That admission led to discussion about the importance of credit records in the United States and what effect nonpayment of bills can have.

In the first pilot class, after developing the story I talked about asking the doctor questions. I thought that the more advanced students might be able to brainstorm some suggestions that other students could practice. The activity needed more clarification: some students were suggesting questions the doctor would ask a patient rather than the opposite. Others had an idea in their own language of an appropriate question, but could not find the right English words.

I therefore created a second picture story, in which a man tells the doctor that he understands everything, but in fact understands nothing. When he gets home, he is thoroughly confused as to how to treat his problem. At another center, I did the same story writing with the first picture story, then presented the second picture story as a conversation topic. As the students looked at the story for the first time, I heard laughter and admissions of "This is me!" Discussion brought out many questions from students: "The doctor knows more. Why should I ask questions?" "The doctor speaks too fast. What can I do?" "All my friends are at work. Who can interpret for me?" The topic is hard, but we did generate some worthwhile suggestions and comparisons between health care here and in the students' native cultures.

I consider the pilot lessons to have been generally successful. Most students, although a little puzzled by the approach to health in the United States, have been inquisitive and enthusiastic. Students occasionally complained that clinics have income restrictions and may charge a small amount to higher-income patients, but the complaints were easily handled by asking the class to compare the cost of the emergency room with the inconvenience of the clinic qualification requirements. The questions for the doctor are the hardest part with every group, and much more difficult for the very beginners. I usually try to dissuade translation among students during class, but in these lessons I sometimes encouraged it because I thought that the information was so important. I urged participants to share the information with their families and read the list of questions at home with someone who could explain it in their language.

I was able to share what I had learned from my research and pilot lessons at the Virginia Institute for Lifelong Learning ESOL Conference in Arlington in July, 2001. Comments from participants indicated that the session was "much needed" and that "curiosity has been sparked." I hope that ESOL instructors will continue to explore ways to empower the neediest students for inevitable encounters with the complexity of the US health care system.

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Ayanian, J., Weissman, J., Schneider, E., Ginsburg, J., & Zaslavsky, A. (2000). "Unmet health needs of uninsured adults in the United States." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 284, 2061-2078.

About the Author

Kate Singleton is an ESOL teacher and curriculum writer for the Fairfax County Adult and Community Education program in Virginia. She has been teaching adult ESOL for 14 years, during which her special interests have been literacy instruction, working with students perceived to have learning disabilities, and health education. She is also pursuing a Masters in Clinical Social Work at Virginia Commonwealth University, for which she works as a case manager of HIV-positive clients at Whitman Walker Clinic of Northern Virginia. ❖

The Elizabeth West Project: A Health Professional Joins a Literacy Program in Downeast Maine

by Beth Russett

The Elizabeth West Health Literacy Project was named for Elizabeth West, a student at the Sumner Adult Learning Center, who died shortly after the program began. Her friend and teacher, Marty Duncan, wrote the poem in the adjacent box.

*

The staff of the Sumner Adult Learning Center had concerns that health-related issues were interfering with students' learning. The Center's coordinator, Ann Sargent Slayton, noted that, "health problems contribute to frequent cancellations, decreased energy levels, interrupted learning plans and an overall disruption of education goals. Family health concerns prevent women from being able to focus on their own learning needs." With the help of a grant from Laubach Literacy Action: Women in Literacy, the Center set out to address some of these roadblocks.

The Adult Learning Center is housed in a community center in rural, downeast Maine. Open enrollment services include basic literacy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), family literacy, preparation for the tests of General Educational Development (GED) or an adult diploma, and employability and computer training provided on site, at area schools, in homes, and at various community sites. Of the 93 participants who enrolled in the center last year, 73 were women. Close to half of the women who come to the center are unemployed. Those who are employed work in seasonal positions in the fishing, seafood processing, and tourist industries, or in other service jobs.

I had been volunteering at the center with ESOL students for close to a year. I am trained as a family nurse practitioner with a focus on women's health. My previous clinical experience was at a migrant/rural health center where literacy issues (inability to read or write, and language barriers) interfered with

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people's ability to access health services. The Laubach grant enabled the Center to hire me to work three days a month for a school year, during which time we planned to use health issues as a means of improving learning and literacy skills to improve health. While the staff at the center realized that men's health issues are also important, the program focused on women, as required by the grant.

We had decided that it would be most effective for health education to be offered in a number of settings geared toward different styles of learning and participation. In the course of the 10 months, I surveyed students' health needs, met individually with women for health education appointments, organized a health committee called the Health Action Team, and offered three separate health workshops. I also promoted collaboration between Sumner Adult Education and local health care providers. What follows is a description of the Elizabeth West Health Literacy Project, its impact, and its limitations.

To Elizabeth West (1943-1999)

I keep thinking you're going to
come around the corner
from the hallway and walk
- no strut, almost swagger -
through the door and look around,
then say something about
how you're late, though you're not.
You'll sit across the table
from me and in a few
minutes something will make us
laugh; nobody would think
grocery ads could be funny.
"Ham shank" means something I can't
explain to anyone else.

You'll tell me which grandchild
you've come from or will go to
whose bus, whose game, whose birthday.
At least six times you'll yell
at yourself in a whisper
("Lib, now pay attention")
roll your eyes at the letter
on the printed page and say,
"Oh boy, that one again!"
and today you'll get it right,
though last week it stumped you.
We'll talk about your checkbook,
make some more stationery,
email your brother down South
then we'll add some more words
to this week's grocery list,
practice the word searches,
and I promise I'll find you
another Hurston tape;
you like the stories so much.

We have so much to do.
It can't be three already.

Health Survey

The first step in the project was to identify the students' specific health concerns as well as to measure their general interest in health information. The staff developed a simple, three-question survey. The teachers asked 36 women who were currently enrolled at the center:

- Do health problems sometimes make it difficult for you to come to school? What kinds of problems?
- Do you need information and/or resources to better take care of your health? What kind would be helpful?
- Would knowing more about your health/your body help you? How?

We learned that the women were concerned with mental and emotional stress, colds, and digestive problems. They were interested in information on issues such as childhood illness, depression, pregnancy, nutrition, and exercise. One woman said, "Women are not informed enough about ways to help them feel better and they are socialized to take care of everyone else besides themselves." The needs and concerns expressed in the survey confirmed the initial concern and laid the foundation for the project.

Health Education Appointments

Every female student at the center was told about the availability of health education appointments. Any interested student could fill out a brief form — by herself or with the aid of her teacher — stating her health concern and the best time and place to meet. While teachers had previously included general health information in their classes, many found that students had specific and serious health issues that required a more trained interaction. The ability to refer students to me, an onsite health educator, was noted by staff as one of the most significant benefits of the health literacy project.

During the project, I had the opportunity to meet with 11 women one-on-one to discuss their specific concerns. The nature of each interaction was as varied as the participants. I conducted two of the meetings in Spanish and the rest in English. Each interaction confirmed the powerful link between health and literacy, as well as the broad definition of both. I worked with women to find creative and realistic solutions to health concerns that were interfering with their learning.

Health Action Team

One of most exciting parts of the project for me was the creation of the Health Action Team, which was designed to bring together any students interested in talking about health. We would also work as a group to put together a presentation for a local health center and two health workshops. The grant included money for stipends for the team.

Four women joined the Health Action Team: Mary, Elaine, Juana, and Gabi. Given my limited schedule, and transportation issues and personal commitments of every student, the staff and I were grateful to have a group of this size. The group was uniquely multicultural; in an area that is more than 97 percent white and English-speaking, two of the four women are Spanish-speaking: one from Honduras and one from Mexico.

The Students' List of How to Make Patients Feel More Comfortable

- offer translation services
- wash your hands
- listen
- take them seriously
- provide services at an affordable cost
- provide a children's room with a sitter
- ensure that patients spend less time waiting naked
- provide health education material that uses bigger writing [font size] and is easier to understand

Juana and Gabi are advocates for their community: bringing people to the center, helping others with license exams, filling out forms, making telephone calls. Mary and Elaine are also strong advocates for themselves and their families. They both have children with special needs and have years of experience with the medical community. The size and makeup of the team presented certain challenges and infinite possibilities.

In the few months we had, we were able to meet three times. For half of the group, it was a new experience to be in a bilingual activity. Both Juana and Gabi were ESOL students who spoke varying amounts of English. Juana or I translated any conversation that Gabi did not understand.

Mary called me following our first meeting. She felt left out, suspicious that we were talking about her, and uncomfortable with the amount of Spanish I had used in our discussion. Elaine felt the same way, she told me. This provided an opportunity for us to begin to talk about our own bias and the challenges faced by ESOL students everyday. She considered leaving the group, but voicing her discomfort made it easier for her to stay.

Many of the activities in our meetings were adapted from *Beyond Prescriptions — Meeting Your Health Needs — A Plain Language Workbook About Health*. This is an excellent resource that addresses the personal and political aspects of health literacy. We focused on the discussion of health rights and responsibilities. It was much more difficult for team members to voice health rights than responsibilities, but we came up with a good working list. The group also shared ideas about barriers and resources. The participants had all experienced some common barriers to health care. Elaine was able to inform Juana and Gabi about free transportation services, which are a valuable resource in a rural area. These group discussions provided the framework for our clinic presentation.

Mary, Elaine, and I went to the local health clinic to talk to the staff about health literacy. I talked about the need to link health and literacy work. Mary shared our list of health rights and responsibilities. Elaine shared a list of recommendations that the team felt would improve access and make patients feel more comfortable seeking care at the clinic. These lists are in boxes on this page and the next.

After the talk, the staff completed evaluations. They all expressed appreciation. Some stated that it was the first time they had the opportunity to hear from the people who use the clinic, in a non-clinical setting. The clinic manager said, "These are voices we do not generally hear. We need to pay attention to them." She also talked about ways to start a child care morning so that women could visit with their health care provider alone. It seemed to be a positive experience for everyone.

The Health Action Team was the part of the Elizabeth West Project most directly affected by the temporary nature of the grant. The team had the potential to have a more significant impact on each individual member and the broader community, but could not be sustained without the initial effort of a designated staff member for a longer period of time.

Health Workshops

The workshops were prepared with help from the four members of the Health Action Team. They chose the topic most interesting to them, worked on the agenda, and prepared class materials. My goal was to have them co-facilitate each workshop. This only happened once, in part because of the limited time and flexibility inherent in short-term funding.

The first in the series of health workshops, "It's Cold Season Again!" looked at what does and does not work to cure the common cold. It was one session and five people attended. We waded through the myriad over-the-counter medications, discussed the need for antibiotics, shared home remedies, and made cough syrup (see recipe above).

Homemade Cold Syrup

Mix:

- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- 4 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 1/2 cup water

Let this sit for four hours, then strain and add:

- 1/2 cup brandy (or water).
- 1 cup honey
- Take 2 tablespoons every four hours. Keep refrigerated.

"Stress Management for Women"

Health Rights

- clean water and good housing
- to be listened to and believed
- to not have to pay too much
- to feel safe in our homes and communities
- to be treated with respect

Health Responsibilities

- to speak up and ask questions
- to learn about things ourselves
- to follow through or get a second opinion
- to eat healthy and exercise
- to take care of ourselves

was a three-part class that relied heavily on the *Deep Breathing while Doing it All* curriculum developed by the Tobacco Free Greater Franklin County Coalition's Stress Management Task Force (turn to the Blackboard for information on how to get this curriculum). I also invited a local massage therapist and yoga instructor to share techniques with the class. Participants left with practical skills to use to deal with tension. In the evaluations, written or discussed with their teachers, one participant expressed a commen theme: "Just having the chance to spend time with other women talking about stress was a stress relief itself. When can we do it again?"

The final workshop was on "Domestic Violence: How to Help a Friend." Although violence was not explicitly mentioned as a concern in the initial survey, we felt it to be a contributing factor in many health problems. Juana co-facilitated this session with me. All of the material was provided in Spanish and English, although Juana was the only ESOL student in attendance. There were nine other participants. This workshop was unique in that both staff and students attended it. Months later a participant called to talk about a new relationship. She recognized some of the behaviors we had discussed in her new partner. With courage and support, she ended the relationship.

Afterwards

Close to a year after the Elizabeth West Health Literacy Project ended, I returned to the Sumner Adult Learning Center. Two of the women I worked with have since received their GEDs, and one is home full-time caring for her new baby. The ESOL students are taking classes closer to home. Many of the women continue to come to the Center for help with reading, parenting, and college preparation. There are no workshops on health issues and no Health Action Team.

The connection with the local clinic has weakened. During the course of the grant, 12 referrals were made to the health clinic and six referrals were made from the clinic to us. This was evidence of a heightened awareness of community resources on the part of the clinic. However, without continuing personal interaction — a face and a name — these have dropped off in the last year. Lacking the funds for a coordinator, no one is right there to turn to with questions or referrals, which is most difficult for the staff.

In all the areas where students work are brochures on stress management, childhood illnesses, exercise, pregnancy, high blood pressure, and other health issues. An entire bookshelf is dedicated to in-depth health material. These references are a reminder of the Elizabeth West Project. They are not interactive, they are not personal, they are not bilingual. They are evidence of the staff's continuing commitment to keeping health issues a visible part of their literacy work and of the difficulties in doing so without adequate support.

About the Author

Beth Russet lives on the coast of downeast Maine with her husband and two boys. She worked as a family nurse practitioner with a focus on women's health in a migrant/community clinic in North Carolina. ❖

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Internet Resources

- ☐ The Internet provides almost an embarrassment of riches in the realm of literacy and health. Start at the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS Health and Literacy Special Collection (**http://www.worlded.org/us/health/lincs** or **http://www.nifl.gov/lincs** and click on "Collections" and then on "Health & Literacy"). The site is maintained by World Education. It opens up the world of health curricula for literacy and English for speakers of other languages classes, resources on providing basic health information in accessible language, information about the link between literacy and health status, and links to organizations dedicated to health literacy. Click on "Discussions" to find an electronic discussion list on health and literacy.
- ☐ For resources on trauma and learning, go to **http://www.jennyhorsman.com.**

Books used by Beth Russett in Maine (see page 30)

- ☐ *The Deep Breathing While Doing it All* curriculum, developed by the Tobacco Free Greater Franklin County Coalition's Stress Management Task Force, produced by The Literacy Project, Greenfield, MA. Telephone: 1-413-774-3934.
- ☐ *Beyond Prescriptions — Meeting Your Health Needs — A Plain Language Workbook About Health* by the Women's Network Inc., Prince Edward Island, was published by Literacy Services of Canada. Telephone: 1-780-413-6491. The book addresses the personal and political aspects of health literacy.

Resources on Immigrant Health Concerns

- ☐ Ayanian, J. Z., Weissman, J. S., Schneider, E. C., Ginsburg, J. A., & Zaslavsky, A. M. (2000). "Unmet health needs of uninsured adults in the United States." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 284, 2061-2078.
- ☐ EthnoMed, at **http://healthlinks.washington.edu/clinical/ethnomed/** Contains in-depth profiles of various ethnic communities' cultures and health concerns. Maintained by the University of Washington.
- ☐ McGoldrick, M., Giordano, J., & Pearce, J. (1996). *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*. New York City: Guilford Press. Also reader-friendly, this book describes family interaction and mental health issues for more than 40 cultures.

Resources on Culture and Health Care in the United States

- ☐ Galanti, G. (1997). *Caring for Patients from Different Cultures*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. A clear and sometimes entertaining text written for nursing students, it gives 172 case studies of cultural conflicts that occurred in US hospitals.
- ☐ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2001). *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity — A Supplement to Mental Health: a Report of the Surgeon General*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services. (available on-line: **http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/cre/sma-01-3613.pdf**).
- ☐ **http://www.healthfinder.gov/justforyou/** links with many health-related sites, and has a Spanish version.

Resources on Writing as Healing

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CONNECTING RESEARCH & PRACTICE

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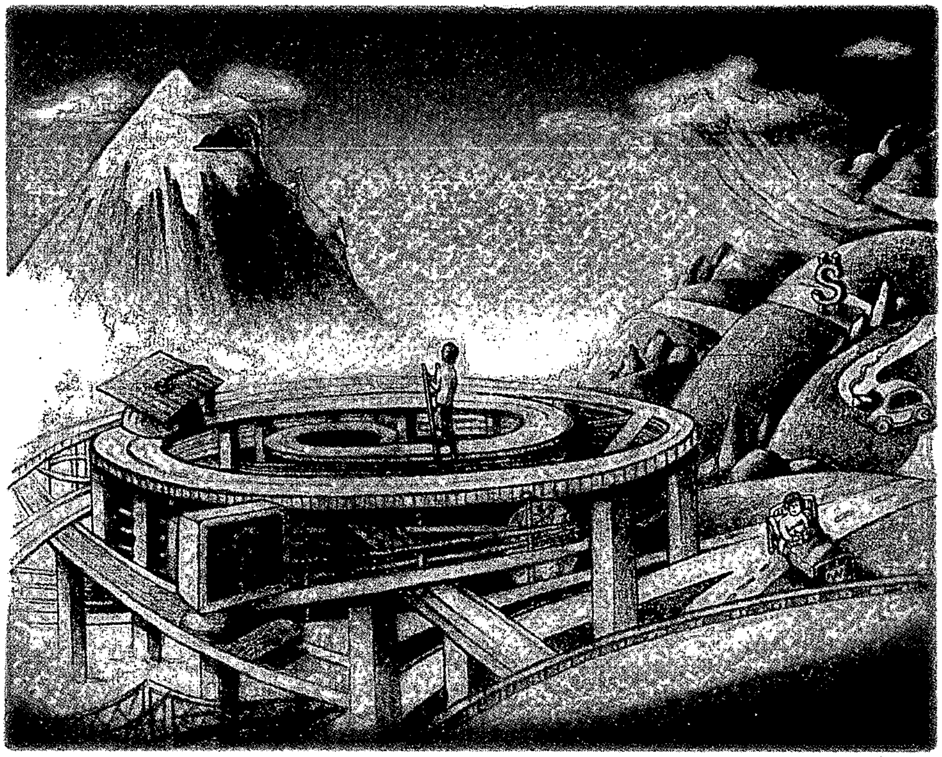

Pathways to Change

A Summary of Findings from NCSALL's Staff Development Study

by Cristine Smith & Judy Hofer

Opportunities for continued learning are viewed as an essential part of any professional's development, whether doctor, lawyer, farmer, or teacher. Indeed, one expert in the educational field calls teaching "the learning profession," since effective teachers are continually studying and learning how to serve learners better (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999). But why do some teachers get a lot from professional development, while others gain very little?

In our multiyear study of 100 New England adult basic education (ABE) teachers, we found great variation in the way teachers change after participating in professional development. Relatively few experienced major transformation, manifested as putting new ideas into action in a substantial

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Focus on Basics is the quarterly publication of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. It presents best practices, current research on adult learning and literacy, and how research is used by adult basic education teachers, counselors, program administrators, and policymakers. *Focus on Basics* is dedicated to connecting research with practice, to connecting teachers with research and researchers with the reality of the classroom, and by doing so, making adult basic education research more relevant to the field.

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WORLD EDUCATION

Welcome!

One of my art teachers once told me: When you hold up your painting, pay attention to the color of the shirt you're wearing. The same can be said for professional development for teachers. Professional development will only be of benefit to teachers if their working environment — the "background" that necessarily frames a professional development endeavor just as the shirt frames the art work — is addressed. This theme emerges in many of the articles in this issue of *Focus on Basics*. Federal and state policies, programmatic flexibility, and peer and collegial support must work together to enable teachers to make changes based on professional development; otherwise, those resources are, in a sense, wasted.

In our cover story, NCSALL's Cristine Smith and Judy Hofer present the findings from their multiyear study of staff development. Teachers' "pathways to change" are formed, they report, in part by the programs and systems in which they work. M. Cecil Smith and Amy D. Rose pick up that theme, in the story that begins on page 12, advocating for an approach to professional development that takes into account the organizations in which teachers function.

While not directly addressing the issue of teachers' working environment, Vermont practitioner Tom Smith and Connecticut's Shelly Ratelle make a strong case for it in articles on pages 16 and 19. Smith and his co-workers met in study circles to explore topics of interest and concern to them. The collegial setting enhanced their learning and set the stage for the development of programwide guidelines based on their experiences. Ratelle praises the peer support element of the Professional Development Kit (PDK), an online professional development resource for teachers, observing that recognizing peers as resources helps in successfully transferring the content of the workshops to the daily practice of teaching.

Sandra Kestner describes Kentucky's redesign of its professional development program in an article that begins on page 23. Key stakeholders from all levels of the system were involved in shaping the program. Writing candidly, Kestner points out that a commitment to improve the employment structure and preparation requirements of adult educators now in the field will be necessary to ensure the success of the new system.

The state's role in professional development for adult basic education is discussed by state leaders from Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Massachusetts in the "Conversation with FOB" on page 29. Resources for staff development are provided on page 31.

A variety of different approaches to professional development are featured in this issue, including study circles (page 16) and workshops coupled with online resources (page 19). Reuel Kurzet writes about using classroom videos taken at NCSALL's English for speakers of other languages lab site in Oregon as a focal point for professional development. Turn to page 8 for that article and for information on the role of the lab site in ABE research. And think about the color of the shirt you're wearing.

Sincerely,

Barbara Garner

Barbara Garner
Editor

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Pathways to Change

continued from page 1

way; likewise, relatively few experienced no change at all. Most teachers changed a small to moderate amount, some learning new knowledge and concepts, others applying new knowledge in the classroom. Teachers' pathways to change are neither simple nor linear, but complex and shaped by the interaction among who they are, what professional development event they attend, and how the programs and systems in which they work function.

In this article, we focus primarily on the individual factors that influenced how ABE teachers changed after participating in professional development activities. We present briefly the most important professional development, program, and system factors that explain teacher change. This does not mean, however, that we found that the individual factors are most important in explaining change; teachers are both shaped by and shape their programs, just as programs are also shaped by and shape the larger ABE system. When trying to understand what explains change, think of teachers as part of an ecosystem made up of the individual, the program, and the larger ABE system. Aspects of one affect all the others.

Who Teachers Are

Understanding the individual factors that influence teachers involves knowing something about their personal characteristics, educational backgrounds, attitudes, and motivation. Teachers who gained the most from professional development were those who were open to and felt a need to learn. These teachers came to the professional development with a willingness to explore their own beliefs and actions as teachers and were not satisfied with just adding new concepts and techniques to their existing practice. They wanted their actions in their classroom and programs to match and reflect their evolving ideas about good teaching. They were able to initiate a back and forth process between their thoughts and actions to synchronize the two.

After participating in professional development, Elizabeth, for example, tried several new techniques to help learners clarify their individual goals. (Pseudonyms have been used throughout the article.) The techniques helped, but she was not satisfied, because she held a competing belief that the class as a whole also needed direction. Elizabeth struggled with creating curriculum for the class that took into consideration learners' individual needs. Meg also tried a new technique, asking students about the forces supporting and hindering their persistence as learners. Listening to them, she realized she was not as learner-centered as she thought she was and wanted to be. To bring her actions into alignment with her new understanding of learners' needs, she persuaded her director to allow her to change the class schedule to fit with learners' requests. She also helped the students conduct a survey about preferred class scheduling for the upcoming semester. By experimenting with developing curriculum more centered on the needs of students, she raised another series of questions: How to incorporate basic skills instruction into her more project-based approach to instruction? One year after participating in professional development on learner persistence, Meg could be described as still being in the thick of learning from the experience. Her "pathway" as a teacher has been profoundly altered.

Whereas both of these teachers were insistent and relatively skilled at bringing their actions into alignment with their beliefs about good teaching, we found that many teachers did not possess either the desire or this reflective skill. They had difficulty connecting their new thoughts and actions to a framework or theory about teaching and discerning the implications for future actions.

In-depth interviews with 18 teachers revealed that 10 attended the professional development offered by the study because of a strong desire to improve their teaching or an interest in the topic. The other eight attended primarily for other reasons. Two felt external pressure to attend: they were sent by their director or participated to fulfill certification requirements. As one teacher of General Education

> ***"Teachers' pathways to change are neither simple nor linear, but complex and shaped by the interaction among who they are, what professional development event they attend, and how the programs and systems in which they work function."***

Development (GED) said, "[The program director] pushed me into it. I said, 'Are you going to pay me? Sure, I'll go. What's the problem? I can go on a Friday.' If they're going to pay me to do it and I can benefit from it, sure....But I would have wanted to go to a writing workshop if one had been available."

Others — particularly four of the experienced teachers who had attended training and conferences over the years — were attracted more by the model of professional development than by the topic. Two teachers talked about their desire to participate in a national study and be part of an important effort in the field. Almost all the teachers expressed the desire to attend professional development in order to share and learn from other teachers and, to a lesser extent, to gain reassurance that they were doing a good job. New teachers — as well as more experienced teachers who seldom receive feedback on their teaching — viewed professional development as a chance to hear about other teachers' practices and to assess whether they were moving in the "right" direction. This was the view of an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teacher, who said, "We're on our own... There's no support....Maybe that's why I gravitated towards the mentoring... I was so desperate for some kind of feedback! Am I doing a good job?"

Pressing needs, problems, or goals not directly related to the professional development topic motivated some participants to attend. For example, a teacher who was having difficulty with her director wanted advice on how to work with her colleague. The professional development activity provided an arena in which to confer with peers. And some teachers, usually new, were interested in learning any teaching techniques that they could use immediately in their classrooms.

Teachers did not always enter into professional development fully aware of their needs. Sometimes their perceptions of their needs evolved or gained more definition during the course of the professional development; sometimes needs that had been previously dismissed gained importance. These teachers typically found the professional development to be meaningful, providing them with insights they had not previously had or appreciated in the same way. Caroline, for example, attended a mentor teacher group. A new GED teacher, she recognized that her need to be treated with respect by her colleagues was, in fact, a legitimate desire. Having grown up poor, she often felt a greater sense of camaraderie with learners than with other staff. "Sometimes I relate to the learners maybe more than the teachers. Maybe that's some of my trouble," she said. By working with a mentor and the other teachers in her professional development group, Caroline learned that she did not have to take full responsibility for the problems she had experienced with her colleagues. In addition, she had the right to work in a more supportive environment.

TEACHERS who learned and did more to address learner persistence, after participating in the professional development, were more likely to be those who:

- **began their teaching in the field of ABE,**
- **had fewer years of experience in the field,**
- **did not have master's or doctoral degrees.**

Meg, the teacher who learned about her need to become learner-centered, also realized the importance of her need for improved working conditions. By making a connection between learner persistence (the topic of the professional development) and teacher persistence, she realized that until teachers' needs were better met, services to students would continue to suffer. "If the teacher's not motivated, then learners will not be. What we came to realize is that we need to do something to make sure the teacher is motivated. As teachers we are always looking toward making sure that learners' needs are met. I can't do that if my needs are not met." She advocated for improved working conditions for teachers both in her own program and throughout the state, successfully lobbying her program director to pay teachers to meet regularly to talk about teaching issues and conducting an informal survey of teachers' working conditions in other programs.

Given the wide range of reasons teachers have for participating in professional development, the goals of policymakers and staff developers responsible for offering professional development may not match the goals of the teachers who attend. The variety of motivation that brings people to any given professional development activity means that a wide variety of outcomes should be expected.

Background Characteristics

Three very specific background characteristics appeared to influence how teachers changed as a result of participating in professional development. Teachers who learned and did more to address learner persistence, after participating in the professional development, were more likely to be those who:

- began their teaching in the field of ABE,
- had fewer years of experience in the field,
- did not have master's or doctoral degrees.

This does not mean that other types of teachers made no change, nor does it indicate anything about the quality of their teaching. However, in our sample, experienced teachers with more formal education (especially if they attended the activity for reasons other than a strong need to learn) do appear to be more settled. They seemed more likely than less educated or new teachers to enter the professional development with a high degree of confidence and satisfaction about their own teaching. We were surprised that teachers' educational levels emerged as such as strong factor in how they changed. It does, however, fit with the idea that those teachers who feel they really need to learn more about theory and practice of good teaching and learner success — those who are newer to teaching, newer to the field of ABE, and without as much formal education — would show more change in thinking and acting related to the topic of the professional development.

The Nature of the Staff Development

Another set of factors that emerged as important in understanding how teachers change relate, not surprisingly, to the professional development itself. It was surprising that the model of professional development in which the teacher participated — multisession workshop, mentor teacher group, or practitioner research group — did not have as much impact on change as other factors. The greater the amount of time

The Staff Development Study

Our research question was: ***How do practitioners change as a result of participating in one of three different models of professional development, and what are the most important factors — individual, professional development, program, and system — that influence (support or hinder) this change?***

One hundred teachers from Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut participated in up to 18 hours of professional development in one of three models of professional development between July, 1998, and June, 1999. The three models were:

- ***Multisession workshops:*** up to 16 teachers came together for three or four full-day group sessions, over a span of one to three months
- ***Mentor–teacher groups:*** up to five teachers met for four group sessions over a span of four to six months, interspersed with two mentor observations of each teacher's classroom
- ***Practitioner research groups:*** up to seven teachers met over a span of six months and conducted inquiry projects in their own classrooms or programs.

The professional development topic was learner motivation, retention, and persistence. Designed by the research team, the professional development was facilitated by experienced teachers or professional development professionals in each state. The objectives of the professional development were to help participants to:

- learn more about the topic of learner motivation, retention, and persistence
- be critically reflective about their work
- try out new learning by taking action to address learner motivation in their classroom or program.

We measured change in terms of movement towards the objectives of the professional development offered by the study. We also took into account teachers' views about teaching and working in the field of ABE at the beginning of the study and at the end. When teachers named and took action based on concepts they learned related to the topic of the professional development (which, in this study, was learner persistence), we called it "change on the topic." When teachers felt that they gained in positive ways that were not directly related to the topic, such as by increasing their confidence, reducing their sense of isolation, or learning more about the field, we called it "change off the topic."

Each participant completed three questionnaires: the first before participating in the professional development, the second immediately after the professional development concluded, and the third one year later. The questionnaires asked about teachers' backgrounds; their program and teaching situation; amount and type of other professional development before, during, and after the NCSALL professional development in which they participated; their views about teaching; their thinking on the topic; and self-reports of action on and off the topic (as a learner, a teacher, a program member, and a member of the field). In addition, 18 participants (two from each model from each state) were selected randomly and interviewed before, immediately after, and one year after the professional development. Their classes were observed and their program directors interviewed. The 15 professional development groups were audiotaped and notes were taken as well. ❖

that teachers attended, for example, the more they learned and did on the topic of the professional development. The quality of the professional development also mattered. Both the teachers' own perception of the quality of the professional development, and the rating given to each professional development group by the researchers, were important. Skillful facilitation, good group dynamics, and a balance between adhering to the model and adapting activities to meet participants' needs and expectations characterized high-quality professional development groups. The higher the quality of the group, in the teacher's mind and according to a set of criteria, the more the teachers reported getting from their participation. Teachers' perception of low quality also played a role in whether or not they dropped out of the professional development before completing it, even in cases where the researchers rated the quality high, indicating that individual teachers assess professional development differently.

Although differences between professional development models were not significant, those who participated in practitioner research groups demonstrated the most change overall, largely via change off the topic in areas such as increased awareness of the field, a greater appreciation for learning with other teachers, and knowledge of research. Practitioner research groups, however, also had the greatest percentage of dropouts (38 percent dropped out of practitioner research, compared to 14 percent from mentor teacher groups, and no dropouts from multisession workshops). Mentor teacher group participants seemed to learn and do more to address learner persistence, and slightly more teachers who had participated in this model put learning and action together in an integrated and substantial way.

Program and System Supports

A final set of factors that we identified as important in understanding teacher change is the programs and systems within which teachers work: their working conditions. We defined working conditions as access to resources, access to professional development and information, access to colleagues and director, access to decision-making, and access to a job with benefits. (See "The Working Conditions of ABE Teachers," by Smith et al., *Focus on Basics*, 4D, p. 1, 2001, for more information.) The working conditions that influenced teacher change the most include access to benefits, number of working hours, access to prep time, and freedom to construct their own curriculum. Teachers who received benefits such as medical insurance and vacation through their ABE jobs seemed to get more from the professional development than those who did not. To a lesser extent, working more hours a week and having prep time were also related to teachers' acquiring new knowledge and taking action as a result. While access to more paid staff development release time was not directly related to more teacher change, it was related to the number of hours teachers attended the professional development, and this was related to more change. Not surprisingly, being required to use a particular curriculum in the classroom limited teacher change; teachers who felt they were able to make changes in the goals, content, materials, or activities in their classrooms were better able to take action to address learner persistence. We also found that those who teach GED and define their main purpose as supporting students to pass the test as quickly as possible were the most bound to adhering closely to workbooks and the least likely to take actions that addressed the broader needs of learners.

> ***"...what we know about serving adult learners also applies to teachers."***

Program structure plays a complex role. Teachers who had some voice in decision-making and who worked in programs that had not already implemented many of the strategies presented in the professional development seemed more able to advocate for and take action than teachers who had little voice in program decisions. For example, Debbie, an ESOL teacher who worked in a satellite site and rarely saw other teachers, was stymied by her inability to influence program practices. She wanted to start a learner "buddy" system for new learners, but after being turned down by her director when she asked to add Saturday classes to better accommodate student schedules, she never tried again to initiate such a system. In contrast, Erica, an ABE teacher working in a family literacy program with strong student involvement, was able not only to incorporate learner goal-setting into her instruction but also to work with other teachers in her program to explore how better goal identification could become part of the program-wide intake process.

Teachers in programs that were already implementing strategies presented in the professional development generally did not feel the need to initiate further change outside of their classrooms. We also found ample support in our study for the common-sense idea that teachers who had opportunities to talk or meet with other teachers in their programs also felt more supported to take action based on what they had learned. For example, attending professional development along with colleagues whose names she had barely known struck one ESOL teacher as powerful: "Having it [the professional development] all within the same program, that whatever program change we needed to do we could do as a group. I thought that was very significant... very positive for the program." We heard over and over again, however, that opportunities such as this were rare in many programs.

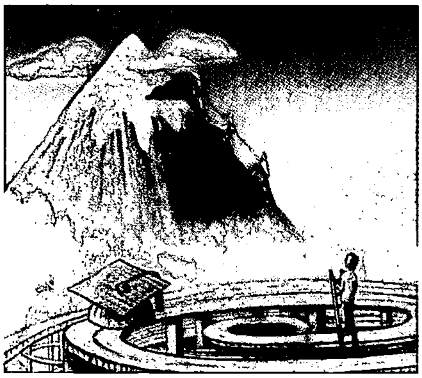
Implications

The most obvious conclusion is that all three models of professional development can support teacher change. However, the differences between teachers — their motivation for learning, background, program context, and reactions to the professional development — also means that one model will not suffice. One implication is that professional development systems should offer a variety of types of activities.

Our findings also indicate that what we know about serving adult learners also applies to teachers. Teachers' learning profiles are unique. Who they are, what they care about, what professional development they attend, and what program they come from all play a role in determining how much teachers will learn from professional development and what use they make of it when back in their classrooms and programs. Also, like adult learners, teachers sometimes recognize needs and goals in the process of learning, and these new insights affect their "pathway" to change.

Just as adult learners are helped by identifying short- and long-term goals (Comings et al., 1999), teachers need help in identifying needs. Both new and experienced teachers can use guidance to develop plans for professional development. These plans, in turn, can help professional development staff and program directors to organize activities that meet the paramount needs of teachers, thereby maximizing what teachers will gain from them.

Teachers need to be supported to learn how to do their jobs. Teachers need to be supported to attend professional development for as many hours as possible, and the professional development needs to be of high quality. Our research found that professional development does not need to be facilitated by college professors or adult education experts; teachers, with training and support, can run high-quality professional development for other teachers. On-site professional development activities are useful, too, especially when they provide teachers with role models or mentors from whom they can learn. Just as adult learners benefit from the support of other learners (Kegan et al., 2001), teachers greatly value and learn from colleagues. Teachers want feedback from colleagues and directors, especially when these individuals have knowledge of the craft of teaching. Regular feedback would reduce the isolation many teachers feel, reinforce what they are doing well, and help clarify their needs and goals as learners. Regular feedback also builds a program culture that takes seriously the expectation that learning is an essential aspect of teaching.



The presence in our study of teachers who expressed the desire to connect theory and practice, but did not know how to do so, leads us to think that professional development should provide direct instruction in it. We believe that models such as mentor–teacher groups help teachers acquire these skills. They walk teachers through the process of thinking about a problem, taking action to address it, analyzing how it worked for learners, and reflecting on what this means for one's beliefs about teaching and learning.

Teachers care about their programs. They may make better use of what they learn in professional development when they have a chance to shape program policies and practices to serve learners better. This calls for program structures that allow teachers to share new ideas and strategies they have learned with both their fellow teachers and their administration.

Just as adult learners benefit from supports such as transportation, child care, and counseling, teachers who have supportive working conditions such as benefits, prep time, and paid professional development release time may find it easier to learn more and do more as a result of participating in professional development. Teachers might also benefit from the addition of activities, during professional development, that lead them to analyze how to increase their own supports, decrease hindrances, and realistically plan for next steps.

Conclusion

Acting upon our findings presents a challenge to the field of ABE. Resources will be needed to improve the quality of professional development, to enable teachers to attend for more hours, and to improve teachers' working conditions. Perhaps an equally important challenge for professional developers and program directors is how to support all teachers — no matter how experienced — to remain open to learning.

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Teachable Moments: Videos of Adult ESOL Classrooms

A Two-Way Model of Professional Development

by Reuel Kurzet

Have you ever attended a professional development session or read a research report and wondered if the presenter or author had ever even been in a real adult education classroom? Consistent with NCSALL's mission to build collaborative partnerships between researchers and practitioners, the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) Lab School, based at Portland State University and working in partnership with Portland Community College, is developing and testing a two-way model of research dissemination and professional development. The goal is not only to disseminate research findings but also to create feedback mechanisms in the design of our professional development activities, so that ESOL practitioners and researchers in the field have input into the ESOL Lab School's research and professional development processes. Over time, the feedback loop should improve the quality and usefulness to practitioners of our research dissemination and professional development activities.

A Participatory Structure

We began by using a participatory model within the Lab School itself, creating teams for project management, research, and professional development. Our staff development team consists of Kathryn Harris, a research associate; Dominique Brillanceau and Sandra Banke, the practitioner research associates at the Lab School; and I am dissemination associate. We describe our dissemination efforts through the image of ripples radiating outward from a small pebble tossed into a pond. With our goals, internal structure, and direction set, the ESOL Lab School's professional development team began to formulate a professional development model by preparing a presentation for the annual conference of Oregon Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ORTESOL) on October 26, 2001. In other words, our first "audience" for professional development was ourselves.

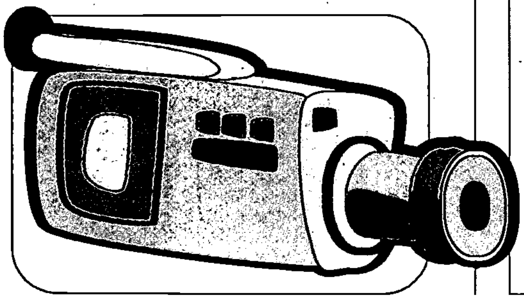
Using Audio-Video Technology

The Lab School's professional development activities are designed to be informed by and connected to the teaching and research of the Lab School. As part of its research, all the adult ESOL classes are audio- and videotaped. Half of the classes that are recorded have their classroom interactions categorized; half of these (25 percent of the total) are transcribed. In particular, student pair work, group work, and brief student-to-student interactions (such as in a

"Find someone who...." activity) are targeted for transcription; in the future, other portions of classes will be selected for transcription, as determined by various research questions. This creates an ever-growing corpus of authentic material for research and professional development. For ORTESOL, we decided to explore how the data collected for Lab School research purposes and the technology used to collect that data also could be incorporated into a delivery strategy for professional development in ESOL. Thus, the first professional development project undertaken by and for those of us on the professional development team was to play with the audio and video technology and the collected data to understand the unique contributions to professional development that could be gained from the audio and video corpus of "real," as opposed to scripted, adult ESOL classes.

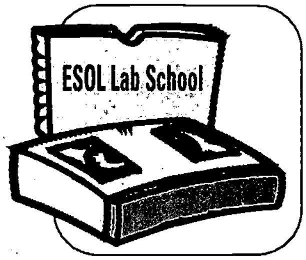
As the instructors whose classes were audio- and videotaped, our practitioner research associates lead the way. First they viewed videos of several classes that they had taught. Even that small step brought new insights about how different the classes looked when viewed on video from how they had seemed while being taught. The multiple cameras allowed close-up views of how individual students responded to an activity at a level of detail not possible when one is teaching an entire class of students in "real time."

Next, the practitioner research associates looked for a clip that would illustrate one of several broad research interest areas of the Lab School, such as the development of community among learners within the classroom. The Lab School had only been running for a month at that point; connecting research findings to professional development would have to wait. The focus returned to whether and how we could use the audio and video media and the data collected to date for worthwhile professional development.



Looking Closely at Teaching

While continuing to view classes, one of the practitioner research associates noticed a portion of a class illustrating a "teachable moment." The teacher had set up a paired language activity to practice talking about daily activities, but one student was completely off-task. He was telling his partner about getting his car towed. The teacher overheard the digression and decided to take this incident and make it into a brief mini-lesson. The video clip lasts only a little over three minutes, but shows the entire progression of events involving the digression as a "teachable moment." Coincidentally, a similar "teachable moment" occurred in the paired class, which was the other same-level class taught concurrently. This incident was about a student getting a parking ticket and was about seven minutes long. The two practitioner-researchers looked at the two clips together and



Classroom Practices

The Lab School will investigate adult ESOL instructional practices believed by practitioners to be effective but that have not been empirically tested. Areas of particular interest include the most effective type of curriculum, the best role for grammar instruction, the effectiveness of various grouping strategies, the most appropriate uses of technology in the classroom, and the validity and utility of various kinds of assessment activities.

Second Language Acquisition

The Lab School provides an opportunity to address the great need for longitudinal research in second language acquisition. Research areas include the relationship between first-language literacy and second-language acquisition; the role of student interaction in language development; the roles that age, experience, and learning style play in second-language acquisition; and the predictable stages of language development in learners.

ESOL Program Retention

Typical research in adult education programs involves only those adults able to persist in their studies. Missing is the study of adults who are unable to persist. The Lab School research will address the issues involved in ESOL program retention including the reasons that some students persist while others do not, aspects of the ESOL programs that promote retention, life events that influence attendance, and life events that promote second-language acquisition.

Contact Information

The Adult ESOL Lab School is based at Portland State University, in the Department of Applied Linguistics. For more information, visit http://www.labschool.pdx.edu

Adapted from "A National Labsite for Adult ESOL" by Steve Reder, Principal Investigator, and Kathy Harris, Research Associate, Portland State University, Department of Applied Linguistics.

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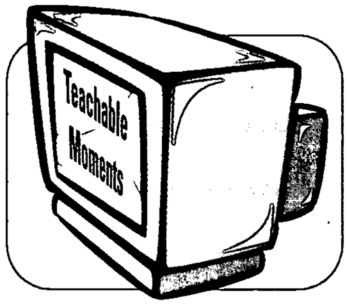
realized that they provided useful case study material for an exploration of digressions as potential "teachable moments."

Now the effort turned to seeing how all members of the professional development team saw the two video clips. We were preparing for our presentation at the ORTESOL Conference as we were still learning a great deal both from the audio and video media as well as from the content of the two clips selected. At the next professional development team meeting, the two practitioner research associates, the principal research associate, and I viewed the two clips together and discussed what we saw. It took us some time to learn how best to view the video segments of the classes. Eventually we realized that we needed to develop the habit of viewing the classes descriptively rather than judgmentally. The descriptive perspective was simply more effective for personal professional development purposes: not to critique the teachers but rather to understand the instructional choices they made, the strategies they employed, and how they might be similar to and different from what we ourselves might do in similar circumstances. To learn deeply from the media, we needed to avoid making judgments about what the teacher was doing and learn to look — and look again. This new way of looking at language classes became a focus for our presentation.

Next we viewed the video clips again and began to develop some questions to guide discussion of the video clips at the ORTESOL Conference. Another surprise: although all of us are very experienced ESOL teachers and/or teacher educators, we discovered that we each saw different things when viewing the video clips. Not only did we notice different elements from each other, but we also saw different things ourselves when we viewed the same video clips a second and third time. One viewer noticed how students were interacting with each other. Another focused on how the teacher framed the "teachable moment" within the larger lesson. In a second viewing, someone's attention was drawn to what students who appeared not to be listening were doing. These different perceptions lead us to the realization that the video clips were powerful tools for professional development. The diverse observations allowed us to explore a wide range of possibilities for teaching a single lesson as well as the considerations that might go into the process of deciding about what to do as a teacher at any given moment. We also realized that the discovery of the different perceptions and discussions about those different perceptions were in themselves powerful professional development experiences. Sharing different perceptions of the same video clips became another focus for our presentation.



> "To learn deeply from the media, we needed to avoid making judgments about what the teacher was doing and learn to look — and look again."

Getting feedback from ESOL practitioners and researchers outside of the Lab School — the development of a two-way dissemination system — had been an established goal of the project since its initial planning stages. Providing for audience input and response was our third focus. We came up with some questions to elicit other ways participants thought we could use the video clips and what kinds of research questions the clips might answer. At this point, we had not only learned a great deal from the video clips ourselves, but were also ready to initiate some "ripples" out to the community of adult ESOL practitioners in the state. Our own learning unfolded in an organic, developmental manner and had thus created the agenda for our presentation.

The First Professional Development Activity

In our first public professional development activity, we showed the two brief video clips of "teachable moments" in the Lab School classes to ORTESOL conference participants, both graduate student pre-service teachers as well as in-service faculty, from newly hired to veteran. We used these clips to provide not only a case study but also what we had found to be a shared experience of the classes. We then led several discussions to address our multifaceted agenda. First, we introduced the participants to the new way of looking at ESOL classrooms, so that they could experience firsthand the power of the Lab School's audio–video corpus of actual adult ESOL classes. Second, we helped participants begin to describe — rather than evaluate — what they saw happening in the brief clips. From there, we lead them to reflect upon and discuss both the instructional practices they saw illustrated in the clips and their own teaching practices in similar classes. Finally, as part of our goal to develop a feedback loop for the Lab School, we asked participants how they thought the media and technology of the Lab School could be used to deepen their understanding of second language acquisition and to enhance their professional development.

Learning about Teachable Moments

The participants responded to the media much as we had. They realized that the video allowed them to see a class in ways that they could not while they were engaged in teaching. Most of the participants did not report great difficulty in looking at the clips descriptively and could see the value in that perspective. Little did we know that we were to be further engaged with our own professional development. When the professional development team had viewed the two video clips of "teachable moments," we had listed various criteria that we thought teachers considered, consciously and unconsciously, in deciding whether or not a digression was valuable as a potential teachable moment. At the ORTESOL workshop, participants identified some, but not all, of the criteria we had and came up with significant criteria that the four of us had not considered. The discussion then continued in a new direction as the participants also developed a list of criteria that teachers consider while they are exploiting a teachable moment. The participants seemed to be as amazed as we had been at how much they saw in two very brief video clips. They commented on how they could not see nearly as much when they were teaching their own classes.

Future Directions

Our next planned professional development activity is to initiate a modified study circle in which a small group of adult ESOL practitioners will meet four times to explore a single topic in depth. The meetings will be set up following the model of NCSALL's study circles (see page 16 for information). In addition to reading materials independently prior to group discussion, however, the participants will view relevant video clips at the meeting and discuss them immediately afterwards, as was done at the ORTESOL workshop.

The Lab School professional development team has also begun to search for literature on the impact of the immediacy of a shared experience through video as a professional development tool. We will be experimenting to find out what kinds of professional-development-delivery strategies not only exploit the unique opportunities provided by the Lab School's audio and video corpus and technology but also have the capacity to provide sustained professional development experiences.

The ESOL Lab School and its professional development activities are still in their initial stages of development. The success of the fall ORTESOL workshop, as judged by the breath and depth of participants new understandings of "teachable moments," has convinced us that the Lab School's media and technology are potentially powerful professional development tools. Gradually, we will gain increased understanding of the most effective ways to use these tools to provide state-of-the-art professional development opportunities in adult ESOL.

About the Author

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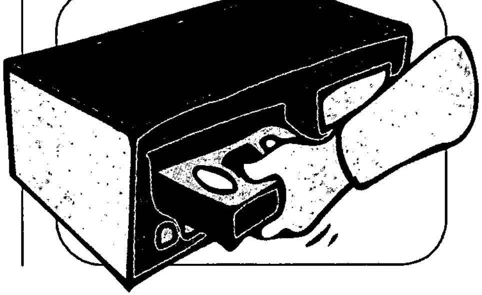

What we learned about "teachable moments"

Through our viewing of the two video clips showing "teachable moments," and especially through our rich discussion with our colleagues about those video clips, we created a list of criteria that teachers consider, consciously and unconsciously, when deciding whether to exploit a digression for a "teachable moment." Later, I consolidated the lists into a series of questions teachers ask themselves to determine the potential value and use of the digression.

Criteria

How well does the topic of the digression fit with
- the curriculum of the program?
- the goals of the course?
- the interests of the students?
- the needs of the students?

How many of the students will have need for or interest in this topic?
- If it's only useful for a few, would this be better covered during office hours?

Does the digression lead to an opportunity to teach important information about
- US culture?
- Civics?
- English?
- Resources in the local community?

Is there anything extremely controversial about the topic of the digression?
- Will it offend any of the students?
- If so, is it still worth doing because of some strong link with the curriculum?
- Do I have enough information to cover the controversial topic(s) fully, openly, and in an unbiased manner?

Can I link this potential teachable moment to the day's/week's/term's
- Grammar point(s)?
- With other course content?
- In what ways?

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Using a Learning Organization Approach to Enhance ABE Teachers' Professional Development

by M. Cecil Smith & Amy D. Rose

Professional development is defined as a change process "in which instructors gradually acquire a body of knowledge and skills to improve the quality of teaching for learners and, ultimately, to enhance learner outcomes" (Kutner et al., 1997, p. 1). Most adult basic education (ABE) teachers do not have degrees or preparation in adult education, so continuing education and training are deemed essential in the field (Crandall, 1993; Belzer et al., 2001). Professional development activities often fall short, however, in meeting practitioners' needs for training. By extension, they also fail to meet the needs of the ABE programs that rely upon them to increase teachers' skills and knowledge and improve performance in the ABE classroom.

We describe here an approach to ABE professional development and organizational change that can lead to greater alignment between ABE practitioners' needs and staff development offerings. We believe that professional development must be grounded in practice to facilitate teachers' transfer of knowledge learning and skills training to ABE classrooms. Such grounding is best accomplished through the adoption of a situated cognition approach to learning. Situated cognition involves the adaptation of knowledge and thinking skills to solve unique problems. It is based on the idea that knowledge is influenced by the activities, context, and culture in which it is used (McLellan, 1996).

The success of a situated cognition approach, however, requires a revamping of not only professional development training but also the manner in which ABE programs are organized. We advocate a shift from top-down organizational approaches to a collaborative teamwork approach that engenders a learning organization model (Senge, 1994). We call upon ABE program administrators and professional development trainers to adopt this model in working toward a closer alignment of teacher development with classroom practices.

The Problem

Professional development programs sometimes appear to be created and offered under the assumption that ABE teachers lack specific knowledge or skills. The result is that presenters seek to instill knowledge in teachers' heads as if teachers were empty vessels. This reflects a deficit-driven training model that Schon (1987) calls the technical–rational approach. Using this approach, someone identifies a deficit or gap to be filled and then training is provided to ameliorate that deficit.

Because many of ABE teaching's real-world problems do not come neatly packaged, practitioners may find themselves unable to transfer or adapt the technical knowledge obtained in professional development training to their classrooms. For example, teachers committed to a particular method of instruction may lack the flexibility needed to work with a heterogeneous population with a multiplicity of learning styles. The critical issue then, in Schon's (1987) view, is to redesign professional development so that it focuses more appropriately on the "actual competencies required of practitioners in the field" (p. 10).

ABE teachers may be highly motivated to improve their practices, yet the constraints of time and budget sometimes prevent them from carrying through with their plans. Also, the transfer of training from the workshop to the ABE classroom (i.e., far transfer) is problematic. The degree to which the knowledge and skills learned within professional development can be readily transferred from one teaching situation to another (i.e., near transfer) is likewise uncertain.

We do know that the kinds of knowledge obtained in artificial, time-limited in-service programs cannot be easily transferred to actual classrooms (Berryman, 1990; Perkins et al., 1990). The complexity, uncertainty, and "messiness" of classroom instruction can rarely be adequately reproduced within such programs. This lack of authenticity may impede both the transfer of knowledge from workshop to classroom and the transformation of instructors' knowledge into applicable teaching and assessment skills.

Given the apparent difficulty in achieving transfer of learning, how can professional development programs ensure that ABE teachers will be able to continuously improve their practice? Ideas from two theorists suggest some useful approaches to training. Cervero (1988) argues that effective professional education programs need to be contextually specific, not premised on the notion that teachers will simply go out and readily apply the concepts they have learned. By "contextually specific," Cervero means that learning is never independent of the situation in which the acquired knowledge is to be applied — in other words, cognition is situated in particular contexts. Learning activities, from a situated cognition perspective, appear as imprecise and complex problems within authentic situations. They require learners to discover relevant procedures for solving these problems. Therefore, simply informing ABE instructors about adult learning theories, with the expectation that they can then apply these theories in any teaching situation, is both unrealistic and ineffective.

Schon (1987) claims that effective practice is shaped by two forms of knowledge: knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action. Schon uses the term knowing-in-action to refer to behaviors that are "publicly observable" (p.25). In other words, we reveal what we know through what we do. Reflection-in-action occurs whenever our behavior (i.e., knowing-in-action) fails to bring about a desired result and we pause to reflect upon what went wrong. Such cognitive reflection leads to experimentation, according to Schon, and ultimately to new behaviors. The task, then, for professional development programs is to assist ABE teachers in pairing knowing-in-action with reflection-in-action.

The implications of these ideas for professional development are significant. As noted above, ABE teacher training that is isolated and abstracted from the real world of the classroom will be less effective in knowledge transfer than training that intricately connects the teacher, the classroom, and the to-be-learned teaching skills and knowledge. In recognition of this, professional development programs in which ABE teachers themselves assume the major responsibilities for planning, implementing, and evaluating their learning are increasingly common.

Facilitating Transfer of Training

Mikulecky and colleagues (1994) have described several approaches to training that can foster the transfer of newly acquired skills and behaviors. First, the trainer must explain and model the to-be-learned behaviors or concepts for the learner. This approach is, however, most effective if the new knowledge is also linked to knowledge that learners already possesses. For example, complex teaching skills (such as instructing learning-disabled adults in metacognitive strategies to increase their reading comprehension) may need to be broken down into simpler components so that ABE teachers can learn each instructional component in a systematic way. Having teachers think about their own metacognitive skills, and how they use these skills and strategies for learning, can therefore be useful in helping them to understand the processes of teaching others how to use such strategies.

> *"...professional development must be grounded in practice to facilitate teachers' transfer of knowledge learning and skills training to ABE classrooms."*

Second, sufficient time must be provided for the learner to practice the to-be-learned skills, acquire the requisite knowledge, and adapt and modify what they have learned to fit their teaching environment. For this reason, single-session professional development workshops are largely ineffective in promoting long-term teacher change. Peer teachers or coaches may be particularly useful because they can monitor the practices of less-skilled teachers, provide corrective feedback, and help them adapt their knowledge to particular classrooms.

Third, the professional development trainer must provide substantial and specific feedback to learners regarding the adequacy of their skills or behaviors. The situated cognition model suggests that whenever learners serve as "cognitive apprentices" to experts, more effective learning can occur (Berryman, 1990; Collins et al., 1989). Thus, pairing skilled with less-skilled teachers in situations where learners have multiple opportunities to observe and receive coaching and constructive advice is effective. Putting their newly acquired knowledge into practice, ABE teachers can apply what they know (knowing-in-action), and can review and reconsider their methods (reflection-in-action) until they achieve mastery.

A situated cognition approach to professional development acknowledges that the movement from novice to expert teacher is highly complex. It also recognizes that expert–novice interactions are not one-way. Mutual decision-making and problem solving are involved, and expert teachers who model instruction are learning along with their less-skilled counterparts. Situated cognition is, therefore, highly consistent with Schon's ideas about reflection in practice, and can create seamless connections between professional development and actual classroom practices. Yet even situated approaches to professional development will be inadequate if the ABE programs themselves do not support teachers' critical reflection-in-action.

When ABE programs are structured to provide support for teachers to implement their newly acquired knowledge, transfer of knowledge, and the transformation of that knowledge into teaching skills, is enhanced. This is further supported by research on transfer demonstrating how transfer is determined and arranged by the social and cultural environment rather than being a capacity of the individual problem-solver (Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 1983). ABE programs must establish environments in which teachers can engage in the kinds of critical self-reflection crucial to improving their teaching. Such supports are best established, in our view, when ABE programs function as learning organizations.

Learning Organization Approach

According to Watkins and Marsick (1993), the learning organization "...is one that learns continuously and transforms itself. Learning takes place in individuals, teams, the organization, and even the communities with which the organization interacts. Learning is a continuous, strategically-used process: integrated with, and running parallel to, work. Learning results in changes in knowledge, beliefs and behaviors. Learning also enhances organization capacity for innovation and growth" (pp. 8-9).

Learning organizations increase the capacity for organizations, and the persons within them, to adapt and change. Systemic thinking characterizes the individuals within learning organizations. That is, work roles must be considered within the context of a team, the work team's role within the organizational context, and the organization's role within a broader social context. Personal and professional development are crucial to the organization's success. For example, an ABE program can best function as a learning organization if the program's personnel challenge their prevailing assumptions and confront their own

The ABE program at Olney Central College

The ABE program at Olney Central College (OCC; Olney, IL) exemplifies a learning organization approach. The program employs one full-time and nine part-time teachers. A few years ago, OCC's Learning Skills Center Director, Donita Kaare, adopted a proactive approach to professional development. The ABE staff sought to serve better the adult students identified as having special learning needs. Kaare therefore enrolled in several professional development and training activities that focused on special-needs learners. She then had her entire staff participate in similar programs. The process of establishing a learning organization approach to ABE required about three years of work, according to Kaare. The result of this investment is that the ABE program today operates in a highly strategic and forward-reaching manner.

From a strategic perspective, every teacher is involved in professional development activities explicitly focused on helping the program to meet students' needs. These activities have included GED 2002 training, assessing learners with special needs, and using diagnostic and prescriptive approaches to instruction. Kaare reports that the ABE staff members now function as a collaborative team, mutually supporting and training one another. Often the teachers bring suggestions to Kaare for professional development activities they wish to pursue.

The forward-reaching features of OCC's learning organization approach are exemplified by the program's efforts to identify new areas of need. For example, the ABE program is now focusing attention on women's literacy issues and the provision of services for elderly learners. The teachers also make formal presentations to other groups and agencies, such as to rehabilitation services and adult literacy programs, regarding the characteristics of low-education adults. In doing so, the teachers gain confidence in their knowledge and skills.

Drawing from a variety of external and internal funding sources, Kaare has been very successful in supporting her teachers' professional development activities. Whenever staff members attend workshops and conferences, they share what they have learned with their fellow teachers in regular staff meetings that are highly structured and goal-oriented. Building a learning organization, according to Kaare, requires time, talent, and teamwork: "having a positive attitude towards learning and professional development" is essential to success.

The results for the OCC staff — and their students — have been remarkable. Over seven of the past 10 semesters, 95 percent of ABE students have successfully completed their learning programs. This compares to a success rate of approximately 75 percent prior to the program's evolution into a learning organization.

Contact Information

To learn more about how the ABE program at Olney Central College has implemented a learning organization approach, contact Donita Kaare by phone at 618-395-7777. ❖

and others' reluctance to challenge established ways of thinking — and teaching. The ABE program's mission and goals must be shared among all members of the organization. This suggests a team-oriented approach to professional development. Team learning, in turn, requires a systems perspective so that all members see themselves, and all teams that make up the organization, as interdependent (Chase, n.d.). For an example of how one community college ABE program established a learning organization approach, see the box on page 14.

Thinking of ABE programs as learning organizations goes beyond the notion of professional development as simply "filling in" skill deficits and knowledge gaps among teachers. Adult learners and teachers instead work together to analyze the different classroom situations that arise. These interactions can lead to novel, yet appropriate, solutions to the problems of literacy teaching, learning, and assessment. The learning organization model thus presumes a critical perspective that enhances the possibilities for continual professional growth. ABE programs organized as learning organizations create "teaching teams" consisting of a mix of expert, competent, and novice teachers who consult in a continuing, strategic, and goal-directed manner. Expert teachers model effective instruction and reinforce less-skilled teachers' efforts at improving their teaching. Expert teachers also benefit from these interactions by reflecting upon their actions as trainers

Reflection and action are integral to the process of teacher growth and renewal. Both the learning organization and the individual must change, however, if true growth is to take place. It does little good for ABE teachers to engage in professional development if the programs in which they practice remain inflexible and unresponsive. Literacy organizations must be vital organisms that constantly anticipate and adapt to change: whether these changes are driven by societal concerns, legislative and policy actions, economic considerations, or learner preferences.

Finally, professional development outcomes occur at three levels: instructors, programs, and adult learners (Kutner et al., 1997). Although rarely measured, professional development also has an impact in several ways on the adult students who enroll in ABE programs. Their degree of satisfaction with the programs in which they are enrolled (in part, a reflection of their teachers' skills and knowledge), the learning gains that they make, and the ways in which their behaviors change as a result of learning can all be linked to their teachers' professional development activities.

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Study Circles Challenge the Intellect and Strengthen the Professional Community

by Tom Smith

As winter dragged into "mud season," a half dozen adult basic education (ABE) personnel huddled in the warmth of the literacy center, engaged in a debate over student–teacher boundaries. Unlike the tedious discussions of reorganization, impending state mandates, and updates on assessment requirements, teachers were hotly debating the work they care about most — teaching, — and how to best reach their students.

This discussion, held at the Vermont Adult Learning (VAL) offices in Burlington, was the second of three in a study circle focused on goal setting. Seven of us, a mix of teachers, administrators, and volunteers, participated in two study circles, each comprised of three sessions. NCSALL's Practitioner Dissemination Research Network (PDRN) had introduced the concept of a peer-led study circle. As a 15-year veteran teacher of ABE and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), I had been selected by VAL to participate in PDRN's training.

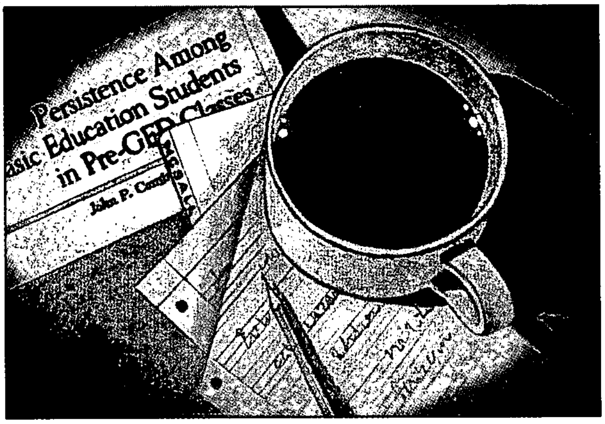
The training brought teachers from throughout New England together to do their own research and to share professional literature with their colleagues back home. To get the most from the professional literature, PDRN promoted the use of the study circle, providing us with a package of documents around a theme, including academic studies and published articles, and suggested activities to stimulate discussion. As a study circle leader, I chose to select my own topics rather than use the PDRN-developed themes. PDRN staff identified a variety of relevant readings and gave friendly critiques of my discussion plans. This level of professional support not only inspired confidence, it also expanded my range of teaching techniques and in itself was a form of individualized staff development.

In our first study circle, we at VAL examined goal setting, a topic introduced to us by a study by John Comings and colleagues (1999). Their research addressed the chronic problem of student turnover and "stopping out," concluding that students' sense of goals was a key component of their active participation (persistence) in ABE programs. After reading this, we read articles highlighting the obstacles to goal setting related to race, class, and family violence.

How Personal?

One of our more exciting discussions — judging from the animation and tension it provoked — revolved around how personal we get with our students. Do we simply interview them and try to deepen their understanding of their goals and possible avenues to achieving those goals? Or do we invite students to discuss what they see as barriers to their progress: past learning experiences or troublesome personal relationships, for example?

About half the teachers who use the more personal approach found that many students want to share stories from earlier educational experiences, or talk about their relationships and how these block their progress. Those advocating this approach found that the personal is educational and believe that this model is crucial to unlocking student potential. Conversely, those who thought that this type of inquiry is intrusive and beyond our training were concerned that in uncovering pain we open a Pandora's Box that we cannot control. They worry that this



Ideal Components of a Study Circle for ABE Practitioners

- Five to eight participants
- Three or four sessions exploring a given topic of interest to participants
- Sessions lasting two to three hours
- Participants attend each session having read materials handed out previously
- Materials represent the most current thinking on a topic
- Participants agree on an agenda and specific discussion questions, leaving time for evaluation of the session
- Any member of the agency can lead the sessions

approach has the potential to hurt students more than help them.

In the third session of the study circle, we examined an approach used in Florida that asks students to integrate their past experiences with their current thinking. The group then developed a list of goal-setting recommendations (see box) with the aim of creating a uniform approach for our agency. We started from the perspective that many, if not most, students desire structure, approve of a mechanism that helps them focus, and welcome the opportunity to monitor their successes. Furthermore, these factors point to the efficacy of goal setting. We emphasized that goal setting is a process; it is an evolving skill best learned through practice, and publicized our work in VAL's statewide newsletter.

In reviewing our discussions, we agreed that teachers should be conscious of not imposing their expectations on or making judgments of students. It might be helpful if teachers share their goals, either personal or for the group, during the process. Finally, we voiced a need for more discussion about the relationship between creating group goals and the progress of individual learning.

Second Circle

The second study circle, comprised of a slightly different group of people, examined the "youthification" of ABE: the growing number of younger learners in ABE classes and the impact they have on programs and older students. This circle had a different tenor and outcome from the first. We read about the physiological and developmental issues of adolescence and looked at how race and class at this age play out in the ABE classroom. After discussing developmental issues, we assessed the positive and negative aspects of having adolescents in our classes. Taking the time to list the strengths that youth bring to the classroom moved us from stereotypical to more balanced thinking about our younger students.

In our second discussion we sought to understand our younger learners better by remembering what those years had been like for us. What was scheduled as a half-hour discussion took most of two hours, as participants shared their past — and, in a sense, current — vulnerabilities with surprising openness. Not only were we able to reach back to those volatile years individually, but we also discovered unknown sides of each other. One participant spoke of herself as a confident 14-year-old lesbian who, by her senior year in high school, had lost almost all positive sense of self. I shared my experiences as a physically immature boy who was humiliated in the gym showers and further undercut by a sense of class (i.e., economic) inferiority.

From this eye-opening exercise, we went on to study what being in the classroom might be like for people who had experienced oppression related to class, race, sexual orientation, substance abuse, or backgrounds, and how teachers' or other students' stereotypes could undermine an individual's participation. Out of this discussion emerged a desire on our parts for more training to allow us to serve these student populations better.

The storytelling left the most lasting impression on me. Our task had been to focus on the teens in our classrooms, but we found that examining our own experiences growing up helped us to understand more fully the issues facing our younger students. That sharing of personal stories was more powerful than any of us could have imagined. It helped to build new levels of trust among the participants, including the county coordinator, who had been on the job for only a few months and was unknown to other staff members.

Results

At the end of both study circles, participants' comments stressed how good it felt to be challenged

Goal Setting

We developed these guidelines on goal setting as a product of our study circle.

- Individualized.
- Contains well-defined steps that create a visual image of the process.
- Short-term goals are packaged in small bits that reinforce early successes; long-term goals speak to "dreams."
- Contracts work for some students.
- Goals should expand beyond the academic to include other roles the student has: spouse, parent, worker, etc.
- Goals should be re-evaluated periodically with the student: goals change as the student's self-assessment changes. This is especially helpful when done in a group context to broaden individual lessons and increase mutual support.
- "Guesstimate" the impact of meeting goals will be on family and friends — both positive and negative as students begin to make progress.
- Try to deepen an understanding about the roots of potential backlash: when a student's friends, relatives, and/or spouse attempt to sabotage the student's motivation.
- Groups have the strength to offer opportunities to confirm and validate as well as expand horizons and suggest new directions.
- A sense of personal safety is a prerequisite in initiating a group goal-setting process. This is especially true in light of students' experiences with trauma / violence.
- One-on-one is good for those students who don't work well in groups: those feeling vulnerable or not up to others' standards.
- Students welcome praise, celebration, and awards at certain steps along the way.

intellectually. The process had made them feel more professional, and the discussions provided participants with valuable insights. Unlike staff meetings, where subject matter too often seems imposed, this process affirmed our work, enhanced our self-respect, and built our sense of functioning as a team.

Two different county coordinators experienced the power of the study circles. Both spoke of these forums' value as a form of staff development and of the need to use this and perhaps other forms of study circles. As a result of their observation and participation, study circles are being implemented statewide within Vermont Adult Learning programs.

Reflections

In looking at this model, a few points need to be highlighted. Study circles must focus on topics that teachers have determined are priorities. The reading selections need to be relatively brief but represent quality research or expert opinion. If staff are responsible for organizing the material, time to do that must be budgeted into their schedules. Besides collecting valuable information, the exercise of organizing and leading a discussion is an effective form of leadership development. Diverting from the planned syllabus allowed for unintended discussions, which were most rewarding. Well-organized but free-flowing conversation focused on a particular topic can have positive effects on team building.

When teachers and staff choose the subject matter for study circles, it meets a direct and perhaps an immediate need. Instead of relying on outside experts, this peer-led form of staff development builds on a staff's strengths, integrating the knowledge they have collectively developed. In this sense, it is respectful of educators' experience and yet still intellectually challenging.

Although the primary purpose of these study circles was to increase VAL staffs' professional knowledge, I cannot overstate the importance in them of the personal dimension. In the personal storytelling session, participants commented on how "exposing ourselves" had created greater bonds of trust. This made it easier for me to share some of the personal problems I was to face later. Since this experience, I have introduced more "storytelling" opportunities in my ESOL classes, which has strengthened our sense of community in the classroom.

We cannot always know where a reading will take us. If content goals are clear, however, and participants are willing to pursue topics in which they are truly engaged, study circles can meet a wide variety of needs. Whether it is to increase pedagogical expertise or enhancing team building, our experience demonstrates that this kind of forum can be extremely productive.

About the Author

Tom O. Smith teaches for Vermont Adult Learning at the Community College of Vermont in Burlington. He has been teaching adult literacy and English for speakers of other languages for 16 years. He has been active in Vermont's third party politics, holding elective office for 12 years. ❖

Setting Up a Study Circle?

Interested in running study circles on the same topics we explored? Here are our resource lists.

Goal Setting

Comings, J., Parrella, A., & Soricone, L. (1999). *Persistence Among Adult Basic Education Students in Pre-GED Classes.* NCSALL Reports #12. Boston: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.

Florida Human Resources Development, Inc. (1999). *Florida Works: Career Building Skills for Adult Basic Education.* Tallahassee, FL: Adult Education Division of Workforce Development.

Horsman, J. (1998). "'But I'm Not a Therapist' The Challenge of Creating Effective Literacy Learning for Survivors of Trauma." In S. Shore, (ed.) *Australian Council for Adult Literacy 21st National Conference: Literacy on the Line. Conference Proceedings.* Adelaide: University of South Australia.

Rockhill, K. (1987). "Literacy as threat/desire: Longing to be SOMEBODY." In J. Gaskell, & A. Mclaren (eds.). *Women and Education.* Calgary: Detselig Enterprises.

Youthification

Anderson, M., & Megyesi, A. (1999) "Youth in A.B.E: Going Beyond the Stereotypes." *The Change Agent.* Issue 9.

Erikson, E. (1950). *Childhood and Society.* New York: Norton, 261-262.

Begley, S. (2000) "Getting inside a teen brain." *Newsweek* 28 Feb 58-59.

Hayes, E. (2000) "Youth in adult literacy education programs." In J. Comings, B. Garner, & C. Smith, (eds.) *The Annual Review of Adult Learning and Literacy.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 74-110.

Shor, I. (1996) *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a Critical Pedagogy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 12-19.

Tatum, B. (1999). *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* New York, NY: Basic Books.

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PDK Couples Web Resources with Peer Interaction

Teacher Shelly Ratelle found it enlightening to be the learner in a learner-centered approach to professional development

by Shelly Ratelle

I teach adult basic education (ABE) and General Educational Development (GED) subjects and employability skills to youth and to women who are recipients of temporary aid to needy families (TANF; formerly AFDC) for EASTCONN, a Regional Education Service Center in Connecticut. Always looking for new ideas, I recently participated in training on how to use the Professional Development Kit (PDK) developed by the National Center of Adult Literacy (NCAL).

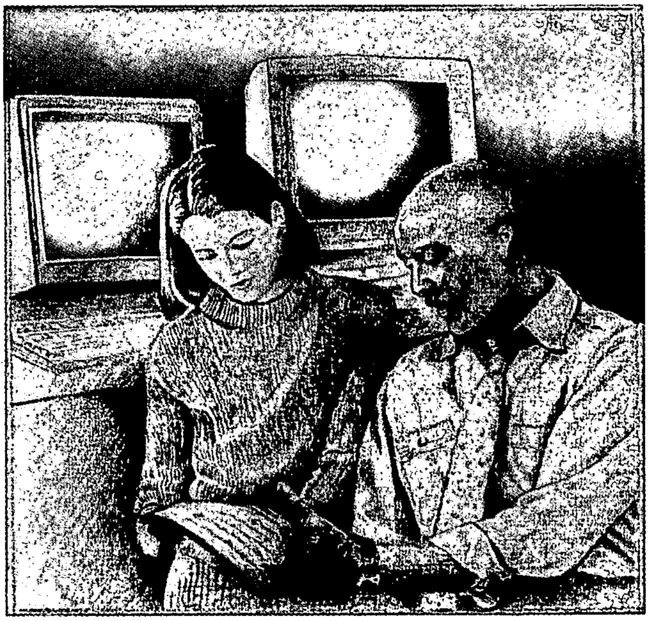
The creators describe it as follows: "The Professional Development Kit: Multimedia Resources for Adult Educators is a teacher-centered system that provides systematic and sustainable professional development opportunities to adult educators." PDK is indeed a comprehensive tool kit for teachers who are developing lessons. It includes a model for writing effective lesson plans, a large database of articles and Web sites for educators doing research, and a place to record your outcomes (i.e., lesson plans) and thoughts (similar to an online journal). Two other components particularly stood out for me: the engaged learning environment, and peer collaboration, including a customizable Web-based forum in which to converse with other teachers about my work.

Engaged Learning

Engaged learning is an eightfold way of describing one kind of learning environment (see the table on page 20 for details.) In this environment, the learners are responsible for and the driving force behind the learning. They work in flexible groups. Under the direction of a teacher, who acts as facilitator, guide, or sometimes co-learner, they move through authentic tasks to produce useful products, which then serve as opportunities for assessment. For example, students studying writing may research a specific community and put together a guide that will be given to newcomers by realtors. The teacher may serve as a link to resources or make suggestions that would fill in gaps, but the students themselves propel the project. The assessment comes from two authentic sources: realtors' agreement to use the product; and community comments concerning accuracy and ease of use that are fed back through the realtors, who agree to compile comments in return for free use of the guide.

Peer collaboration, which is the other piece of PDK that struck me as particularly useful, takes many forms. Teachers are taught to support each other by asking questions about goals, learners, skills, time frames, and other specific factors. This practice aids teachers who are creating lesson plans to produce good-quality, relevant products. Peers are recognized as resources. This turned out to be important to me in transferring the content of the PDK workshops to my job, because I have many peers at work, but no "workshop presenters" available to remind me what to do.

I first learned about PDK at a state technology conference. Upon hearing that I had been selected to attend, I was asked to introduce myself to other participants via e-mail. That was the first sign that this training was going to be different. I sat, just like my peers must have, and nervously typed a message introducing myself to 25 people, saying that I looked forward to working with them. We would meet for two days, work back in our programs for three weeks, and reconvene for a one-day follow-up session. We were required to attend the training and produce one lesson plan that integrated technology with any subject matter of our choosing. In



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Indicators of Engaged Adult Learning

Variable	Indicator of Engaged Learning	Indicator definition
Vision of Learning	Responsible for learning	Learner involved in setting goals, choosing tasks, developing assessments and standards for the tasks; has the big picture of learning and next steps in mind
	Strategic (and Transformative)	Learner actively develops repertoire of thinking/learning strategies (and critical awareness to empower pursuit of individual and collective goals)
	Energized by learning	Learner is not dependent on rewards from others; has a passion for learning
	Collaborative	Learner develops new ideas and understanding in conversations and work with others
Tasks	Authentic (and Builds)	Pertains to real world, is addressed to personal interest (and on experience) rooted in the lived experience of the learner
	Challenging (and Rewarding)	Difficult enough to be interesting but not totally frustrating, usually sustained (and conveys clear and tangible benefits to the learner)
	Integrative	Involves integrating information of many types and from a variety of sources to solve problems and address issues related to daily life and work
Assessment	Performance-based	Involving a performance or demonstration, usually for a real audience and useful purpose
	Generative	Assessments having meaning for learner; maybe produce information, product, service
	Seamless and ongoing	Assessment is part of instruction and vice versa; learners learn during assessment
	Equitable	Assessment is culture fair
Instructional Model	Interactive (and Accommodates)	Instructor or technology program responsive to learner learning differences needs, requests (e.g., menu driven) (and adapts instruction to suit a variety of learning styles and preferences)
	Generative	Instruction oriented to constructing meaning; providing meaningful activities/experiences
Learning Context	Collaborative	Instruction conceptualizes students as part of learning community; activities are collaborative
understanding	Knowledge-building	Learning experiences set up to bring multiple perspectives to solve problems such that each perspective contributes to shared for all; goes beyond brainstorming
	Empathetic	Learning environment and experiences set up for valuing diversity, multiple perspectives, strengths
Grouping	Heterogeneous	Small groups with persons from different ability levels and backgrounds
	Equitable	Small groups organized so that over time all learners have challenging learning tasks/experiences
	Flexible	Different groups organized for different instructional purposes so each person is a member of different groups; works with different people
Instructor Roles	Facilitator	Engages in negotiation, stimulates and monitors discussion and project work but does not control
	Guide	Helps students to construct their own meaning by modeling, mediating, explaining when needed, redirecting focus, providing options
	Co-learner/co-investigator	Instructor considers self as learner; willing to take risks to explore areas outside his or her expertise; collaborates with other instructors and practicing professionals
Learner Roles	Explorer	Learners have opportunities to explore new ideas/tools; push the envelope in ideas and research
	Cognitive Apprentice	Learning is situated in relationship with mentor who coaches learners to develop ideas and skills that simulate the role of practicing professionals (i.e., engage in real research)
	Teacher	Learners encouraged to teach others in formal and informal contexts
	Producer	Learners develop products of real use to themselves and others

Reprinted with permission from *Practice Guide — Assessing Lifelong Learning Technology (ALL-Tech): A Guide for Choosing and Using Technology for Adult Learning by Regie Stites*. Published by NCAL, Report PG98-03. (1998) Philadelphia, page 8. http://literacyonline.org/products/ncal/pdf/PG9801.pdf the spirit of engaged learning, we were not given the definition of technology, but were encouraged to explore what that term meant to us. Each of us created our own definition that we then used in our lessons. I prefer a definition that includes calculators, copy machines, video, and audio, along with computers.

Although apprehensive about what was to come, I nonetheless expected what I had usually experienced in workshops: lecture-style delivery, little hands-on work, and even less transfer to my job. I attend as much training as I can, but often I have to work hard to pay attention to lectures. I prefer to learn kinesthetically or through discussion. Kelly Limeul (PDK project manager, NCAL) and Jennifer Elmore (instructional design consultant) were the two facilitators. Acting in the Guide or Facilitator role as described in the engaged learning table, they did no lecturing. They are very knowledgeable about technology and the PDK model itself; they encouraged participants to help each other, getting us to utilize and support our peers and to think for ourselves. To best enable the PDK participants to support each other, we worked from a common model when writing our lesson plans. Kelly and Jennifer brought with them a generic lesson plan model, which you could find in any teacher resource book, and offered it as a basis for discussion. As a group we modified it slightly, making only minor changes, but yet making it ours. The resource database section of PDK provides articles about adult learners and was available as a reference while planning, but Kelly and Jennifer spent our face-to-face time asking guiding questions that helped us to evaluate our own work. Later, we used the same questioning technique to evaluate our peers' work. This experience with learner-directed, goal-driven learning helped us understand and include engaged learning concepts in the plans we wrote. It was enlightening to be on the learner end in an engaged learning environment.

Peer Groups

The 25 or so participants would be forming smaller groups ourselves. We could choose our peer groups by geography (some participants came with several others from their work place), by subject taught, or any other method. About midway through the second day, after hearing all 25 people talk about engaged learning and the kinds of lessons they might do, we chose and met with our smaller peer groups. (See Collaborative Vision of Learning and Flexible Grouping indicators in the table.) I had two criteria when selecting peers: I made sure they taught a subject that was related to mine; and I looked for people who were already using a project-based or nontraditional, engaged learning environment similar to mine. This brief meeting set the stage for what would come during our homework time.

In addition to modifying the lesson plan model, exploring engaged learning, and forming peer groups during our face-to-face time, we also learned how to post our drafted lesson plans, questions, ideas, and comments on peers' work to the PDK Discussion Board. Over the next three weeks, as we wrote our lesson plans, we would use the Discussion Board (a password-protected area of the PDK online resource) to communicate with our peer groups and with Kelly and Jennifer, who asked and answered questions. Everyone who visited the board could read all messages and reply to any of them. (See Learning Context and Instructor Role as Facilitator in the table.)

We also supported each other during this homework period through peer group conference calls. Each of the approximately six peer groups made one call, and Kelly and Jennifer were included in all of them. During both the online discussions and the phone call, we used the questioning technique previously modeled by Jennifer and Kelly to help our peers evaluate their own work. We asked questions such as "Do you think your students would be able to read that?" or "What is the role of the learner in that situation?" We also did lots of encouraging.

The first task for the homework period was for each participant to complete one lesson plan. The second task was for each peer group to plan a short presentation featuring highlights of our lesson plans or what we learned from the PDK process, to be given on our final face-to-face day. I am not normally a "skit" person, but I was inspired to write one. My teammate was a great sport and acted with me. The final meeting was like a reunion, and the presentations allowed us to celebrate the accomplishments of the people with whom we had worked over the previous several weeks.

Reflections

The teachers with whom I worked in PDK were supportive, interested, and hard working. This training model allowed me to appreciate what my co-workers and others in the field know and are doing. I produced a good lesson plan for PDK,

The Professional Development Kit

Multimedia Resources for Adult Educators

by Kelly Hunter & Nathalie Applewhite

The Professional Development Kit (PDK) is composed of three main elements: an interactive Web site, a collection of videos on CD-ROM, and a guide to help users navigate the PDK system and design their own professional development plan. The online gateway to the PDK system is at www.literacy.org/pdk. Its three main sections are PDK Community, Investigating Practice, and Knowledge Databases.

PDK Community

PDK Community contains online discussion boards and personalized portfolio activities. The discussion boards provide the opportunity to communicate with other adult educators and experts around the country. Community members can also develop their own public or private discussion boards.

The portfolio takes a teacher–researcher approach in encouraging practitioners to investigate their own classroom practice through guided activities. The activities include self-assessment, data collection, action planning, lesson planning, case study development, and reporting. Practitioners who engage in these activities can save them online, and develop a personalized program for professional development.

Investigating Practice

The Investigating Practice section is designed to inform and engage teachers in an exploration of the major issues in adult basic education (ABE). This section contains more than 10 hours of edited video organized into three main areas:

- *"Voices from the Field"* presents short introductions to important issues, new directions, and professional development needs in ABE, General Educational Development (GED), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), workplace literacy, learning differences/ disabilities, and integrating technology.
- *"Classroom Investigations"* is made up of in-depth explorations of actual teachers' practices covering the areas of writing for ABE and GED, math for ABE, reading, speaking, and listening for ESOL and reading and learning differences for ABE. This window into classrooms offers reflections from the teachers and students as well as classroom products and related resources.
- *"Topic Area Investigations"* explore issues such as learner anxiety, teachers' roles, and motivation from a cross-classroom perspective.

While viewing the material, teachers are encouraged to think about the following questions: *What's working? What isn't working? What is happening in my practice? What would I do differently and why? What do I need to know?* After exploring these questions, teachers are encouraged to document their thoughts, questions, and lessons learned in their portfolios or share their ideas in a discussion board. They may also want to gather more information from one of the Knowledge Databases.

Knowledge Databases

The Knowledge Databases section contains an extensive collection of articles, essays, lesson plans, and additional online resources related to the field of adult education. With more than 200 articles and still growing, the searchable "Articles" database contains online adult education documents from various resources and organizes them in one place, making it easy for users to find appropriate resources.

Using PDK

Teachers can use PDK to guide them in reflecting on and improving their teaching strategies and to connect with other professionals in the field. Professional developers can use PDK to extend and enhance professional development initiatives or design new ones. Depending on the needs of the individual or the program, PDK can be a short-term resource or part of a longer-term plan.

Cost

All of the PDK web resources, including the PDK Guide, are available for free at www. literacy.org/pdk. The CD-ROM, which contains the entire collection of videos, is available for free while supplies last. (Request them via e-mail from Ashley DelBianco at delbianco@literacy.upenn.edu; include your complete address and phone number). ❖

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partly because of the encouragement and feedback that I got from my peers: an extremely valuable resource.

Since returning to my own program, I have tried to use the discussion board format to encourage Connecticut adult educators to exchange ideas and support each other. The small number of postings there (most of them are mine) suggests that the initial bonding is extremely important in getting users to feel ties strong enough to span the seemingly impersonal medium of the Internet.

After attending PDK, I have been even more inclined to apply engaged learning concepts to my classroom, especially through the specific application of project-based learning. Recently a student expressed discomfort when I asked my class to edit each other's writing. I asked if she would be more comfortable asking questions instead of pointing out mistakes, a technique that comes directly from PDK. Instead of telling her peer that her writing had no introduction, I encouraged her to ask, "Can you show me your introduction?" This enabled the author to realize her piece lacked an introduction, and the editor — the uncomfortable student — did not have to feel pushy or critical. My PDK experience will remind me to use my peers as an important resource in my work, as I guide students to use theirs in the same way. Meanwhile, I'm glad I got the opportunity to experience PDK.

PDK is available online at http://www. literacyonline. org/pdk/about_pdk.iphtml

About the Author

Shelly Ratelle started in adult education as a volunteer math teacher in a multilevel class. She later earned her master's in Adult Education from East Carolina University (NC). She has taught ABE and GED preparation to a variety of populations in North Carolina and Connecticut. ❖

New Directions for Professional Development: Kentucky's Journey

How Kentucky's professional development system was redefined to support new, aggressive, statewide goals for adult education

by Sandra Kestner

> ***The strength of adult education in Kentucky is the dedication of the many teachers often serving under difficult conditions, without adequate support, and often with compensation and benefits less than teachers in the public schools. Recognizing the seriousness of the adult literacy issues in Kentucky, there is clearly a need for a statewide strategy to improve the professional preparation of adult educators in Kentucky.***
>
> Aims McGinness, Jr.,
> Adult Education
> Task Force Report, 1999.

The National Literacy Act of 1991 required states to utilize a minimum of 10 percent of certain federal funds for instructor training and development. In response, Kentucky's Department for Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) created a branch to focus on training and selected me to lead the effort. Before that, staff development in Kentucky consisted primarily of an annual adult education conference, sponsored by DAEL. Some regional workshops had been offered, but the information presented was often inconsistent from region to region. I observed that program quality varied, especially in the manner in which students were assessed and instructed. Too few professional development activities were offered to meet all of the needs of the system and certainly no comprehensive plan existed to improve the skills of our adult educators. Practitioners were doing the best they could with limited training.

Greetings from
KENTUCKY
1st

One of my first assignments as the new branch manager was to create a plan for professional development. Working with other specialists in the field, our branch designed a practitioner-centered, comprehensive, long-range training plan for the continual delivery of professional development. Policy was established and requirements were put into place that included mandated training for new instructors, specific number of hours of participation each year, and professional development plans for all instructors. Professional development funds were allocated to programs by a funding formula to be used as incentives for instructors' participation.

To help make professional development more accessible and to meet growing demands for training, DAEL issued a request for proposals for professional development (PD) services. Submitted proposals had to reflect the department's newly designed PD system's policies and procedures. By 1996, six regional PD coordinators were contracted to facilitate, coordinate, and provide local professional development activities for adult education practitioners.

> "Our regional professional development system was an effective model that accomplished a great deal; however, the adult education delivery system was about to change. As a result, the professional development system also had to change significantly."

Issues Influencing Our System

Many issues had an impact on the efforts of our professional development system: part-time instructors, often with no background in adult education; rapid turnover in the field; many adult education supervisors who had numerous other responsibilities and limited time to devote to adult education and program improvement; large numbers of nondegreed paraprofessionals teaching in isolation; and instructors with underdeveloped teaching skills. To meet the needs demonstrated by instructors, we offered a wide variety of professional development activities, including workshops, inquiry-based projects, family literacy support groups, study circles, and collegial network groups. Our efforts resulted in a strong program for adult basic education (ABE) instructors, but we nevertheless struggled with the growing need for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), workplace, and leadership training, while learning about new national initiatives such as Equipped for the Future (EFF), the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and the National Reporting System (NRS).

Although the Department for Adult Education and Literacy had established goals and objectives for professional development, the needs of providers were so great that it was hard to focus our efforts. We tried to offer what new teachers needed, and what more experienced providers wanted, as well as everything in between. Balancing local and individual professional development needs and the growing needs of new state-level initiatives directed from the top added to the tension. Our regional professional development system was an effective model that accomplished a great deal; however, the adult education delivery system was about to change. As a result, the professional development system also had to change significantly. In the spring of 2000, with the passage of new state adult education legislation and the introduction of a new governing body, our contracted regional PD system, as we knew it, came to an end.

The Call for Change

Over the past decade, Kentucky has taken bold steps to improve its total system of public education: the Kentucky Education Reform Act in 1990 (K-12 education reform) and the Postsecondary Education Act in 1997. However, much remains to be done to educate the adults who missed the opportunities now being provided to young students (Sherman, 2000). In response to the need to enhance services for undereducated adults, and alarmed by the growing gap between the skill level of workers needed to attract new industry and that possessed by the majority of the workforce, the Senate passed a Concurrent Resolution (SCR) in 1998 to create a Task Force on Adult Education. The goal of the Task Force was to "develop recommendations and an implementation plan for raising the literacy level and educational attainment of Kentucky's adults who have not graduated from high school, have poor literacy skills, or lack the skills for job advancement" (Task Force, 1998). Chaired by Governor Paul E. Patton, task force members (six senators, six representatives, and six members appointed by the Governor, including a community leader, health care leader, correction administrator, and three adult educators) were to study the "state of adult education in Kentucky."

The Task Force's Findings

The Task Force met 10 times over 18 months to address the directive of SCR 126 and heard testimony from representatives of adult education, business and industry, students, and the community. Task force members visited local adult education programs across the state and talked with providers about their concerns. DAEL's former Commissioner presented an overview of adult education in Kentucky to the Task

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Force, pointing out that while total funds for adult education are at an all time high of $21 million annually, this funding is serving about 40,000 Kentuckians per year (1999), or only about five percent of the target population.

Concerns voiced by key stakeholders outside the adult education system included an increasing number of single-parent families; decreasing education participation by men; continued high dropout rates that feed the adult literacy problem; low number of four year degrees being awarded; an aging population; and, changing workplace needs. In short, Kentucky lags behind other states with too many undereducated adults.

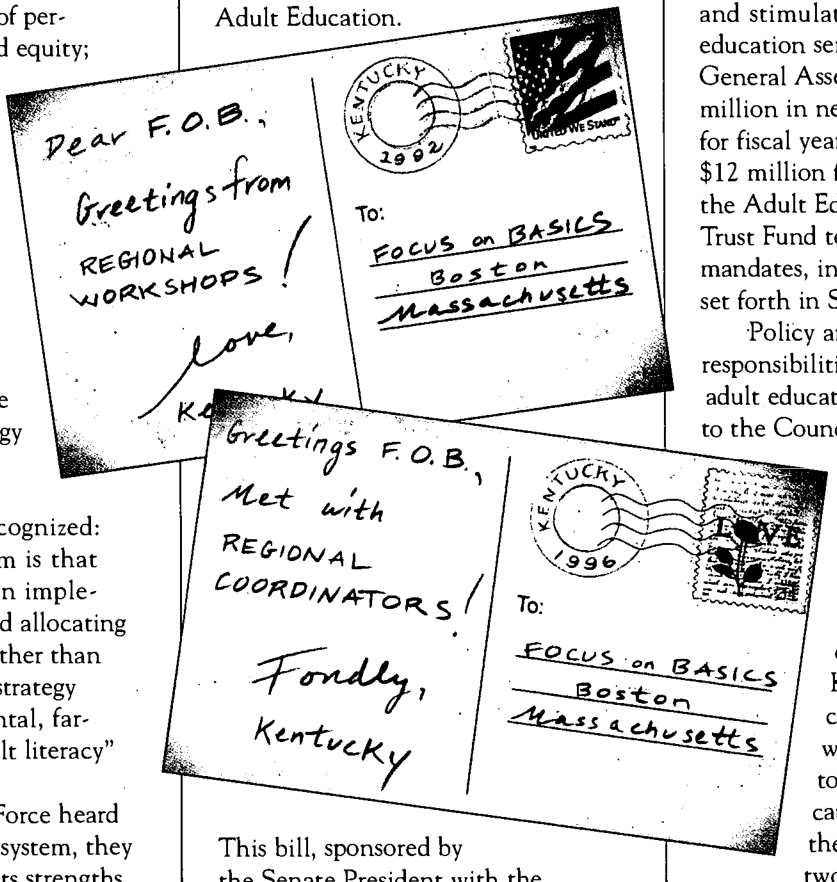
Concerns voiced by adult educators included significant disparities among counties in the basic grant funding allocations; lack of a comprehensive financial policy that addresses the issues of performance, continuity, and equity; inconsistent scope and quality of adult education services from county to county; and no clear policy or political support to deal with low-performing, inefficient providers (McGinness, 1999).

At that time, DAEL had no statutory mandate to lead a statewide strategy to see that the target population was served, which the task force recognized: "A fundamental problem is that Kentucky has focused on implementing a federal law and allocating resources to programs, rather than establishing a statewide strategy to address the fundamental, far-reaching problem of adult literacy" (McGinness, 1999).

Although the Task Force heard about weaknesses in our system, they also heard testimony to its strengths. One of the strengths is the dedication of its many teachers often serving under difficult conditions, without adequate support, and often with compensation and benefits that are less than those of teachers in the public schools. Testimony before the task force characterized this work as "missionary" in nature (LRC, 2000). The absence of a comprehensive approach to the professional preparation, development, and support of adult educators was a major concern. Although DAEL had taken action to improve the skills of adult educators, the conclusion of the Task Force was that more was needed.

The Act for Adult Education

Recommendations of the Task Force, guided by the belief that adult literacy is a fundamental barrier to every major challenge facing Kentucky, resulted in the passage of Senate Bill 1 (SB 1), an act for Adult Education.



This bill, sponsored by the Senate President with the backing of several key legislators, outlines reforms designed to improve the state's adult education delivery system and dramatically increase the percentage of Kentucky's residents served by adult education programs. In addition, the bill calls for the credentialing and professional preparation of adult educators.

At the same time, postsecondary education received a mandate to increase its enrollment by 80,000 students by 2020. A low birth rate in the state meant a lack of potential students feeding into the postsecondary system, as well as a potential dearth of workforce members. Legislators soon realized, however, that postsecondary education could draw from the large number of adults who did not finish high school or who needed remediation. A significant number, however, would have to enroll in adult basic education (ABE) to feed into the postsecondary system. To increase enrollment, encourage improvement, and stimulate reform of adult education services, the Kentucky General Assembly appropriated $7 million in new adult education funds for fiscal year 2001 and an additional $12 million for 2002, and established the Adult Education and Literacy Trust Fund to finance the various mandates, initiatives, and activities set forth in SB 1.

Policy and decision-making responsibilities and oversight of the adult education trust fund were given to the Council on Postsecondary Education (referred to as the Council), while the DAEL, which remained in the Cabinet for Workforce Development, continued to coordinate adult education services in Kentucky. The Council, in collaboration with DAEL, was directed by legislation to develop an Adult Education Action Plan allocating the Trust Fund according to two criteria: all investments should be capable of expanding to increase the number of participants in adult education programs; and all investments should help build community adult education capacity. The plan is shaped on the premise that all initiatives should be assessable, accountable, and avoid duplication of services to leverage and maximize resources (Action Plan, 2000).

The Task Force's Charge

One of the recommendations of the Task Force was the "professional preparation, development and certification of adult educators" (Task Force, 1998). To support change initiated at the policy level, we needed to design a new, statewide professional development system with an infrastructure capable of supporting a large-scale reform effort while still being responsible to the needs of practitioners. The professional development system had to be able to support 900 adult educators, 51 percent of who teach less than 24 hours each week and 49 percent teach 24 hours or more each week. These practitioners would be required to serve 300,000 adult learners by the year 2020, in contrast to the approximately 65,000 adults a year currently being served.

Early in 2001 a team was formed to guide the renovation of our professional development system. Consisting of key stakeholders from all levels of adult education and all service delivery areas, the collaborative partners included representatives from public universities, community and technical colleges, Kentucky Educational Television, the Kentucky Virtual University (KYVU), the Kentucky Virtual Library (KYVL), the Council, public libraries, business and industry leaders, and adult education practitioners, approximately 20 people in all. The new system needed to include standards and competencies for adult educators and the development of a coordinated, integrated, and searchable database for centralized resources for instructors.

The adult education professional development team worked for more than seven months crafting a plan that would meet the charges set forth by the Council. Wanting to know what other states were doing, we invited Lennox McLendon, Executive Director of the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortia (NAEPDC) for state directors, to attend our first meeting to provide us with a "national perspective" on professional development. In addition, Senate Bill 1 infused new resources into adult education, which offered extended possibilities for our PD plan. For example, through our partnership with the Kentucky Virtual University, we had opportunities for distance learning for the first time. Based on previous knowledge of research and "best practices" for professional development, the new system would support program improvement, link standards for adult educators to demonstrate performance, and offer methods to improve performance and learner outcomes. Our previous system targeted the improvement of instructors' skills but had been ineffective in measuring student learning as an outcome; we wanted evaluation to be an integral part of our new PD system (Kutner et al., 2001).

Hello F.O.B.!
Spoke to
Task Force on
ADULT EDUCATION.
Regards,
K
KENTUCKY
1996
To:
FOCUS on BASICS
Boston
Massachusetts
Hi F.O.B!
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NEW PLAN
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To:
FOCUS on BASICS
Boston
Massachusetts

Our New Professional Development Plan

In July 2001, our new comprehensive professional development plan was presented to the Council. It called for an integrated system in which all processes and activities sponsored by the collaborative partners support the practice of adult educators, provide long-term opportunities, are data-driven, guided by administrative practitioners, and utilize multiple delivery methods of professional development. The Council, committed to raising the skills of our providers, awarded DAEL $1.3 million from the adult education trust fund to offer a comprehensive professional development program for adult educators currently in the field.

As part of the new professional development plan, DAEL will continue to offer orientation training for new providers (instructors and program managers) and offer online training so that instructors can remain in their programs while participating in orientation. Through the use of technology, new instructors can access training online immediately after being hired; they will no longer have to wait until a workshop is available. To address the needs of our more experienced instructors and program leaders, a new center for professional development, financed from the Trust Fund, was established at Morehead State University. The Adult Education Academy for Professional Development (referred to as the

Academy) is a university-based center for the professional preparation and development of adult educators. Through research, instruction, and model demonstration sites, the Academy will offer continuous, high-quality learning opportunities for all adult educators. Morehead was selected as the location for the Academy because it is the only postsecondary institution in Kentucky offering a master's degree in adult education, which will eventually tie into an adult education teaching credential. The Academy will also serve as the "hub" that will coordinate and work closely with other state universities to offer quality instruction for adult educators.

The Collaborative Center for Literacy Development (CCLD), housed at the University of Kentucky, was created in 1998 to strengthen the literacy skill development of Kentucky's citizens from early childhood through adulthood. CCLD currently provides research-based, in-depth, innovative professional development activities designed to improve the instructional practices of preschool-12 teachers of literacy (reading and writing). Finances from the Trust Fund were allocated to CCLD to address the instructional needs of adult educators by offering the Kentucky Adult Educators Literacy Institute (KAELI). KAELI will provide intensive instruction in adult reading and participants may earn three hours of graduate credit after completion of project requirements. The project will include four days of intensive instruction with follow-up activities twice a year at the three state universities sponsoring KAELI, and two coaching visits during the year from the KAELI professor.

> *"Our previous system targeted the improvement of instructors' skills but had been ineffective in measuring student learning as an outcome; we wanted evaluation to be an integral part of our new PD system."*

Located at the National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville is the Kentucky Institute for Family Literacy (KIFL). KIFL was created in 2000 to expand and improve Kentucky's family literacy programs. Because of their expertise in family literacy, the Trust Fund awarded KIFL funds to provide all of the required family literacy implementation training to all new DAEL-funded family literacy staff, provide technical assistance to all DAEL-funded family literacy programs, and coordinate regional family literacy network opportunities for instructors.

To sustain adequate, continuous funding for professional development, and to provide evidence to document effective professional development, an essential component of the PD system will be the continued and systematic evaluation of each initiative (Guskey, 1997). University staff will be involved early in each project to develop a plan for collecting learning and behavior measures that will include both qualitative and quantitative data. The following components will be measured: instructors reactions to the professional development experience, participants gain of new knowledge and skills, changes in instructional practices, and, changes in learner outcomes (Kirkpatrick, 1994).

Although funding for the three programs is from the Trust Fund, DAEL remains the policy-making body for professional development. The adult education action plan set the vision and established appropriate goals and guiding principles for statewide professional development.

Identifying Standards and Competencies

Early on, Kentucky recognized a need to identify the knowledge base necessary for instructors' success. As a result, a group of "expert" adult educators identified standards and competencies for adult education instructors, which were officially adopted in our state in 1995. One of the challenges for the new PD team was to create a standards-based professional development system built on using the competencies of adult educators. Since we already had the 1995 standards and competencies in place, we decided to revise and update them and add measures. For example, old language was replaced with terms representing newer initiatives, such as technology: when the standards were first developed, few programs had computers. In addition, references to Equipped for the Future and the National Reporting System were also added. The vision of the PD team is to have a competency-based credential through which educators can demonstrate that they have the required knowledge and skills to facilitate student learning. Activities conducted by the Academy will provide the foundation for future credentialing requirements. Acknowledging that we lack the necessary resources to meet salary requirements for credentialed instructors, we will continue to strive for the professionalization of adult education.

Technology and Online Resources

Another piece of the adult education action plan was a mandate for an electronic resource database for adult educators that would become part of the Kentucky Virtual Library. Leaders wanted Kentucky's adult education instructors to have access to online resources and web-delivered curriculum products. We struggled with the assignment, knowing that a national resource database already existed. The Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS), a cooperative electronic network for literacy information provided by the National Institute for Literacy, is collaboratively built by educators to benefit all stakeholders. However, DAEL and the Kentucky Virtual Library have collaborated with NIFL to build a version of this database that allows users to access the LINCS database using their own user interface and simultaneously perform cross-database searches.

To help instructors supplement their current instruction with Web-based curriculum applications, a centralized Web-based system provided through the Kentucky Virtual University (KYVU) will improve access to adult literacy programs. Web-based curricula will enable Kentucky's adult education system to reach beyond the barriers of time and place to deliver education anywhere, anytime, freeing learners from the need to attend traditional learning centers. These Web-based applications are rich in content and visual impact. A new Kentucky Virtual Adult Education website (www.kyvae.org) hosts Web-based curriculum products (PLATO, WIN, and Destinations) free for adult learners in Kentucky and will offer an online reading literacy course for first level learners.

The Future

Given new, aggressive statewide goals for adult education, what does the future hold for adult educators in Kentucky? Will our new professional development system work? Will Kentucky be successful in implementing a credential for adult educators? Enormous opportunities for shaping and reforming professional development now exist in Kentucky that were not available before. We received state funds for professional development for the first time. We have collaborative partners to help us with our vision of creating a professional development system that will support adult educators who will be required to serve increasing numbers of diverse adult learners.

It is too soon to determine the effectiveness our reformed PD system. The goal is to move from a system that depends on instructors with limited knowledge of adult learning to one in which professional competence is a basic requirement. It is a system that will use technology for professional development and that will offer instructors more options in order to serve more learners. The new system will have online learners working independently, allowing instructors to serve more students than they can in a traditional learning center environment. The challenge will be to have our teachers embrace technology and the new virtual classroom as a response to the need to participate in intensive professional development opportunities.

The call for action is clear. Unless Kentucky makes a commitment to improve the employment structure and preparation requirements of adult educators now in the field, it may not be able to offer a brighter opportunity to those who will be entering the adult education profession in the future. We believe the foundation is in place to move this system forward. It includes the support of key stakeholders who have helped to shape the content and delivery methods of professional development. The need is great and the challenge is daunting. As we look to 2020, we will continue to re-examine our goals and strategies, access our progress, and redesign our professional development system as needed (CPE Adult Education Action Plan, 2000).

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About the Author

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A Conversation with FOB...

Three States Share Advice on Staff Development

Focus on Basics talked to Bob Bickerton, state Director of Adult Basic Education in Massachusetts; Roberta Pawloski, Chief, Bureau of Career and Adult Education in Connecticut, and Ella Morin, Special Programs and Projects Division Chief in Bureau of ABLE, Pennsylvania, about the role of the state in staff development for adult basic education. Each spoke about the strong responsibility states have in this regard.

Massachusetts' Bob Bickerton describes his state's role in shaping and supporting staff development as "convening the field to develop a consensus around two broad issues: the level of investment we'll put into staff and program development, and what the priorities need to be for that staff and program development. Bringing people together to get consensus is key."

In Pennsylvania, a similar partnership between the state and the field has been forged, reports Ella Morin. "We have a bottom up / top down relationship [with the field]," she explains. "With the state leadership funds, we provide professional development opportunities that the field feels are needed. For example, several years back, when we began the program improvement initiative, we discovered some basic needs, such as assessment. We found that programs didn't use consistent pre and post tests, that they weren't using the data... so we did training on assessment, then branched out to connect it with the National Reporting System. So that area of training is a state idea but also shaped by what is happening in the field."

These three states fund organizations to provide staff development services to adult basic education programs and practitioners. Connecticut's Roberta Pawloski explains, "When provision for professional development became part of federal legislation (in around 1965), Connecticut's Department of Education made a commitment to offer professional development on a statewide basis through a single organization, the Adult Training and Development Network. Part of the Capital Regional Education Council, a regional educational service center, it's a quasi-public agency that competed for and receives a multi year grant from us. We work closely with them. Their training enhances our policies. Each year we revise the goals and objectives and they revise their plans. All the training we do statewide is coordinated through that agency. For example, we are a CASAS implementing state, so they [the Adult Training and Development Network] handle the ongoing Connecticut CASAS System training for new programs. They also provide the statewide coordination of our English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) institutes, tech efforts, reading and writing initiatives, our workplace training."

In Massachusetts, Bickerton says, "The field has said that we're going to target 10 percent of our total resources as the investment for this. Our office's role is to be sure that we build and support SABES [Massachusetts' statewide staff development system]. At $3 million year, it's one of the best-supported program and staff development systems in the nation. We also support, via $.5 million of federal Special Ed funding, the Young Adults with Learning Disabilities (YALD) program, which we use to better prepare teachers to instruct students with learning disabilities. We annually negotiate a work plan with SABES and YALD, and in that process we listen to what they have learned from the field about professional development needs. We also support new initiatives and directions and that becomes a relatively expensive work plan for the coming year."

Combining federal and state and local funds seems to be key in all three states. As Bickerton explains, "Our federal allocation is only $10.5 million dollars. We require every grantee to set aside funding to support access to additional staff development (up to 50 hours of staff development per year for everyone, and 3.5 percent for program development.) That adds another $2 million to staff and program development, above the $3 million that goes to SABES."

Pawloski describes Connecticut's approach: "Our primary delivery system is the local school district. Our state law requires all local school districts to offer on-site or cooperate with another district for adult basic education (ABE), ESOL, citizenship, and high school completion. The state reimburses districts on a sliding scale for the cost of operating the program. Local districts also have to provide matching funds in cash.

These state and local dollars give us tremendous leverage, allowing our federal dollars to do local enhancement."

Emphasizing the need for staff development through the funding process as well as supporting it financially creates a climate that encourages staff development. In Massachusetts, a set-aside for staff development is not requested of programs: from 1991 it has been required, explains Bickerton. "It's encouragement and exercising some direction. We don't believe in unfunded mandates; you [the state] have to pay for the real costs. In addition to the 2.5 percent [required], we give programs comfortable funding for substitutes...and I think we've created an environment that encourages people to stay focused on honing their skills. We are trying to do a better job. These changes provide enormous motivation and need for people to provide further development."

"In addition to the set-aside," he explains, "we require that every program identify a staff and program development facilitator to help the program integrate staff and program development. We also require every staff to take new staff orientation. And, we apply this focus to our own office: every person on staff has to include in their annual evaluation form their goals for professional development for the year. We practice what we preach."

Connecticut programs report via proposal in their annual applications what they have chosen as their target area for professional development and how they plan to do it. "We allow them to put in the cost of professional development activities and allow them to put the cost of substitutes into their state grant," explains Pawloski.

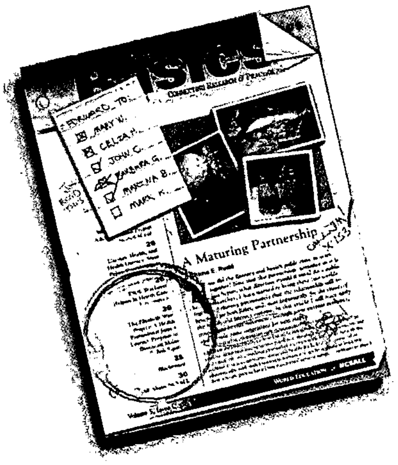
Pennsylvania programs do the same: "In part of the proposal that they write for funding, [programs are] supposed to talk about the professional development that they do for program improvement. Part of that is identifying needs for professional development," reports Morin.

These experienced policy makers have much useful and practical advice for other states. Bickerton has four suggestions:

1. Make sure that the state is dedicating resources to support professional development at all of its different levels. Unfunded mandates only yield illusions. You really need to provide the supports.
2. Look at the literature of high performance workforces if you're concerned about this funding competing with the dollars for direct services. Business has learned the need to invest in high performance workforces.
3. Get the field's consensus and support about the resources necessary to invest for this...the field has to be united behind any investment of time and money.
4. Visit other states and look at what they're doing in professional development. We don't have to reinvent wheels.

Pawloski focuses on the diversity of states, and the need to contextualize decisions. "A lot depends on how much funding a state has available for this activity. How much has to be assumed by the state DOE? 12 percent is all you have available without state money. Also, states really need to look at what is most effective delivery mechanism based on the needs of their state. How much collaboration and assistance can they get from existing organizations and entities or at the local level? I can't say one approach, local or centralized, for example, works better. Sometimes if you diffuse professional development to the local level totally, it's hard to assure it's happening. A centralized system works for us: I can, on an annual basis, direct more of how I want the professional development money to be spent. If we hear, during the course of a year, for example, that we have a gap in this, we can negotiate the inclusion of that topic."

Vision and leadership are also important, Morin reminds us. "Cheryl [Keenan, the former Bureau Director of ABLE in PA] had a long-range vision. She knew where she wanted the state to go. It can't be haphazard. There has to be a plan. Program improvement and accountability have helped a lot in shaping and identifying [professional development] needs, and then the state provides opportunities for professional development along those lines. I really like to think that we're meeting the needs of programs. You have to have buy in from the bottom up; the field has to see that it's not being "inflicted" on them, but that it's happening because they said they needed it."



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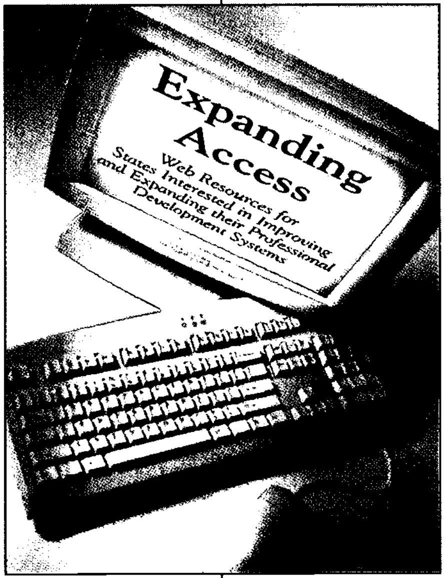
Expanding Access

Web Resources for States Interested in Improving and Expanding their Professional Development Systems

For more than 30 years, as a teacher, program director, state director, and now director of the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC), Dr. Lennox McLendon has provided professional development opportunities to adult basic educators that respond to their varied needs and time constraints. For this issue of *Focus on Basics*, Dr. McLendon compiled a list of web-based resources, predominantly posted by states, that he has used successfully in building a staff development system. Only a sample of the rich resources available to states interested in exploring professional development options,they are organized in sections based on six interrelated components that Dr. McLendon has identified as key to creating an effective professional development system. State policy, pre-service training, systems training, responsive professional development, opportunities for each practitioner to share, and self-evaluation and program evaluation combine to create an atmosphere in which all educators are accountable to learn and develop as professionals.

— Jessica Mortensen


Expanding
Access
Web Resources for
States Interested in Improving
and Expanding their Professional
Development Systems

State Policy

State policy should communicate expectations and guide development, implementation, and evaluation of professional development resources.

Ohio — *http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/ABLE/ProfDev/docs/pd_policyguide6-01.pdf*
Guidelines for financial support and compensation for professional development activities.

Pennsylvania — *http://www.able.state.pa.us/able/lib/able/gdgprn.pdf*
A policy clarifying expectations for both new and experienced staff, roles and responsibilities of each, available and allowable financial support, and rewards and sanctions

West Virginia — *http://wvabe.state.k12.wv.us/professionaldevelopment.htm*
A state policy that sets expectations for each practitioner's annual professional development and encourages programs to consider not rehiring those who do not fulfill the recommendations.

Preservice Training

Preservice training should orient new practitioners to the profession and clarify roles, relationships, and expectations that may be different from their previous educational experience.

Connecticut — *http://www.crec.org/atdn/workshops/otnae.shtml*
A two part training workshop (that carries CEU credit) and 100-page handbook for teachers with less than two years experience.

Connecticut — *http://www.crec.org/atdn/teacher_resources/cdrom.shtml*
A CDROM with information for newcomers to adult education, it has major sections: the Adult Learner, the Adult Education Program, Adult Education, and Professional Development.

Kentucky — *http://www.kyvae.org/*
A virtual education program.

Kentucky — *http://www.kyvu.org/*
A virtual university with professional development courses for adult educators.

Kentucky — *http://www.kyvl.org/*
A virtual library with an adult education section.

Kentucky — *http://adulted.state.ky.us/PD_Catalog_01.doc*
A list of Kentucky's on-line and face-to-face professional development orientation resources.

Texas — *http://cie.ci.swt.edu/newteacher/contents.htm*
A "tool kit" of links to resources on the principles of adult learning; the teaching–learning transaction; diverse learning styles, abilities, and cultures; accountability; funding streams; and continuing professional development.

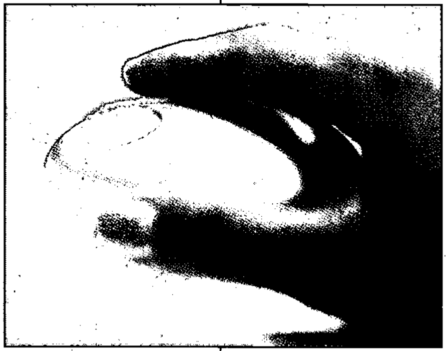
continued on next page . . .

Virginia — *http://www.vcu.edu/aelweb/*
"Core Training for New Instructors" provides training on the basics of effective instruction for teachers in their first two years of practice. Delivered via workshops, e-courses, and mentoring, it includes a discussion of "The Adult Learning System," which depicts how adult education fits into a community's system of adult education and training services.

West Virginia — *http://wvabe.state. k12.wv.us/misc_pdf/pd_catalog.pdf*
A professional development catalogue that outlines requirements that must be completed prior to beginning instruction, including different requirements for full versus part time teachers.

Systems Training

Systems training should equip every practitioner with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement state procedures (e.g., data systems, assessment systems, etc.) consistently.



Florida — *http://www.aceofflorida.org/inservice/*
Online training for the GED 2002.

West Virginia — *http://wvabe.state. k12.wv.us/misc_pdf/pd_catalog.pdf*
A variety of systems training activities can be found in their Pathways to Success catalogue.

Responsive Professional Development

Responsive professional development options should engage and support practitioners in identifying and developing those parts of their professional repertoire that need improvement.

Arkansas (hosted on Rhode Island's web site) — *http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/ark.html*
An outline of various staff development activities that provide examples of alternative ways to respond to teachers' professional development needs.

Rhode Island — *http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/inquiry.html*
Teacher inquiry projects and related research resources.

Virginia — *http://www.vcu.edu/aelweb/checkbox_pdpform.pdf*
An inquiry-based process for teachers to create a professional development plan based around self-assessment.

Virginia — *http://www.vcu.edu/aelweb/Sampler2000.PDF*
A sample of learning activities that can support the above process.

West Virginia — *http://wvabe.state. k12.wv.us/professionaldevelopment.htm*
Types of elective in-service training that instructors may select. These include self-directed learning, collegial sharing, training, and inquiry.

Self and Program Evaluation

Self and program evaluation should be carried out in relationship to some standard.

NCAL — *http://www.literacyonline.org/pdk/*
The National Center on Adult Literacy's Professional Development Kit (PDK), a multi-media teacher-centered system, contains a teacher self-assessment.

Ohio — *http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/ABLE/ProfDev/self-assessment7-00.doc*
A teacher self-assessment model that identifies potential professional development activities by rating performance in attaining specific competencies.

Pro-Net — *http://www.pro-net2000.org/CM/info.asp*
Competency lists for teachers and program managers, including an assessment that can be conducted by an instructional leader or used as a self-assessment.

Sharing

Opportunities for practitioners to share with peers what they learned through professional development activities should be provided.

Virginia — *http://naepdc.org/State%20Staff/evaluation.html*
At the end of the year, local program tutors, teachers, program managers get together to 1) report on completed professional development projects, 2) evaluate program strengths and weaknesses, and 3) plan for new professional development and program improvement plans.

NCSALL Publications

NCSALL Reports — present studies that inform policy makers and practitioners on up-to-date research findings on key topics in the field.

Reports #21: **Open to Interpretation: Multiple Intelligences Theory in Adult Literacy Education. Findings from the Adult Multiple Intelligences Study.** Kallenbach, S. & Viens, J. (2002) $10

Reports #20: **Documenting Outcomes for Learners and Their Communities: A Report on a NCSALL Action Research Project.** Bingman, B. with Ebert, O. & Bell, B. (2002) $5

Reports #19a: **Toward a New Pluralism in ABE/ESOL Classrooms: Teaching to Multiple "Cultures of Mind."** ***Executive Summary.*** Kegan, R., Broderick, M., Drago-Severson, E., Helsing, D., Popp, N. & Portnow, K. (2001) $5

Reports #19: **Toward a New Pluralism in ABE/ESOL Classrooms: Teaching to Multiple "Cultures of Mind."** ***Research Monograph.*** (750 pages) Kegan, R., Broderick, M., Drago-Severson, E., Helsing, D., Popp, N. , Portnow, K. & Associates. (2001) $35

Reports #18: **Classroom Dynamics in Adult Literacy Education.** Beder, H. & Medina, P. (2001) $10

Reports #17: **Effecting Change in the Literacy Practice of Adult Learners: Impact of Two Dimensions of Instruction.** Purcell-Gates, V., Degener, S., Jacobson, E. & Soler, M. (2000) $10

Reports #16: **The Devil is in the Details: Evidence from the GED on the Role of Examination System Details in Determining Who Passes.** Tyler, J., Murnane, R. & Willett, J. (2000) $5

Reports #15: **Cognitive Skills Matter in the Labor Market, Even for School Dropouts.** Tyler, J., Murnane, R. & Willett, J. (2000) $5

Reports #14: **An Overview of Medical and Public Health Literature Addressing Literacy Issues: An Annotated Bibliography.** Rudd, R., Colton, T. & Schacht, R. (2000) $5

Reports #13: **"I've Come A Long Way": Learner-Identified Outcomes of Participation in Adult Literacy Programs.** Bingman, B. & Ebert, O. (2000) $10

Reports #12: **Persistence Among Adult Basic Education Students in Pre-GED Classes.** Comings, J., Parrella, A. & Soricone, L. (1999) $10

Reports #11: **Changes in Learners' Lives One Year After Enrollment in Literacy Programs: An Analysis from the Longitudinal Study of Adult Literacy Participants in Tennessee.** Bingman, B., Ebert, O. & Smith, M. (1999) $5

Reports #10: **The Impact of Welfare Reform on Adult Literacy Education: Conference Papers and Themes from Small Group Sessions.** D'Amico, D., Levenson, A. & White, C. (1999) $5

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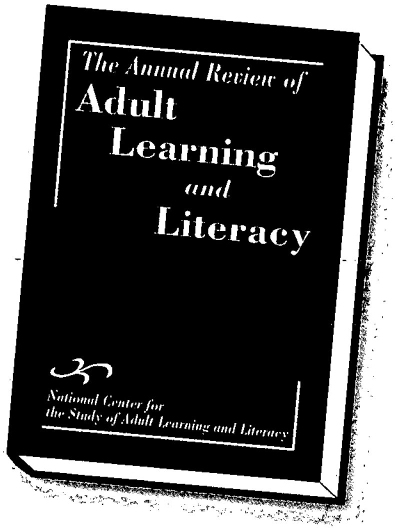
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Staff Development: the State Policy Perspective

- ☐ *Professional Development for Adult Education Instructors*, December 2001, by Michelle Tolbert, is available in print and online at http://www.nifl.fov/nifl/policy/development.pdf. This National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) publication provides background on professional development in adult education, summarizes the funding sources for professional development, and reviews data collected from the NIFL survey of state professional development systems. In addition, the report highlights professional development activities in four states — Kentucky, New York, Oregon, and Tennessee — and describes current and upcoming federally funded professional development initiatives and research projects.
- ☐ "*Building Professional Development Systems in Adult Basic Education: Lessons from the Field*," by Alisa Belzer, Cassandra Drennon, and Cristine Smith, is a chapter in *The Annual Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, Volume 2*, (2001), edited by *Focus on Basics* editor Barbara Garner, NCSALL Director John Comings, and NCSALL Deputy Director Cristine Smith. It examines how five state professional development systems were built, evolved, what has been learned along the way, how they currently work, and the challenges they face. For ordering information, see page 34.

Articles on Staff Development Previously Published in *Focus on Basics*

- ☐ *Adult Basic Education and Professional Development: Strangers for Too Long*
  Bruce Wilson & Dickson Corbett
  (Volume 4, Issue D, April 2001)
- ☐ *Professional Development and Technology*
  A Conversation with FOB...
  (Volume 4, Issue D, December 2000)
- ☐ *The New York City Math Exchange Group Helping Teachers Change the Way They Teach Mathematics*
  Charles Brover, Denise Deagan, & Solange Farina
  (Volume 4, Issue B, September 2000)
- ☐ *Guiding Improvement: Pennsylvania's Odyssey*
  Cheryl Keenan
  (Volume 3, Issue B, June 1999)
- ☐ *Why is Change So Hard?*
  Marcia Drew Hohn
  (Volume 2, Issue C, September 1998)
- ☐ *How Teachers Change*
  Virginia Richardson
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- ☐ *Facilitating Inquiry-Based Staff Development*
  Jereann King
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  (Volume 2, Issue C, September 1998)

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The manager of this list is Barbara Garner, editor of *Focus on Basics*. She can be reached at Barbara_Garner@WorldEd.org. Please DO NOT send subscription requests to this address.❖

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Volume 5D
June 2002

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