

LITERACY

UPDATE

Spring 03

Maximizing Resources through Collaboration

THE QUEENS EL/CIVICS NETWORK

by Bruce Carmel, *Queens Borough Public Library Adult Learning Centers*

In This Issue

3

Approaches to
EL/Civics Instruction

4/5

Professional Development
Opportunities
Jobs @ the LAC

6

Literacy Recognition Awardees
LAC Hotline Reopening

8

GED Announcement
from State Ed

In 2002, about 8.5 million new dollars came into New York City for English Literacy/Civics (EL/Civics) education. The request for proposals cited a definition of civics education from the *Federal Registry*: "an educational program that emphasizes contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civics participation, and U.S. history and government to help students acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members."

Of the \$8.5 million, over \$3 million came into the borough of Queens. With the increasing immigrant population of Queens and the huge demand for English classes, this funding was greatly needed. At the Queens Borough Public Library (QBPL), for example, we were holding lotteries for seats in many of our English classes. We sometimes needed extra security guards at registration, as prospective students vying for limited spaces got overzealous.

Beginning the Collaboration

Some of us had known that this funding was on the way and had been eagerly awaiting it for years. When the grant awards were announced, there was suddenly a lot of work to be done and many questions to be answered. Many of the grantees were large agencies with many years' experience in EL/Civics education. Some were smaller

organizations with less experience. In the spring of 2002, the Literacy Assistance Center convened a meeting of the grantees. This meeting was a great chance for all the agencies to get to know each other better and to learn about how we were all going to implement our programs. At this meeting, someone suggested convening some meetings by borough. Since such a big chunk of the new funding was coming to Queens, this seemed like a good place to start.

In the summer of 2002, K.C. Williams from the Forest Hills Community House and I decided to facilitate a meeting of EL/Civics grantees in Queens. We were not sure what to expect. Would people show up? What would we talk about? Would we want to meet again or would it be a one-shot deal?

The meeting took place on July 12. The turnout was pretty impressive. Representatives from the NYC Department of Education, two CUNY campuses (LaGuardia and Queensborough Community Colleges), the Queens Educational Opportunities Center, Goodwill Industries, the Consortium for Worker Education, the Education Center for Russian Jewry, Forest Hills Community House, QBPL, and the LAC attended. We had a lot to talk about: immigration issues, staff development, definitions of *civics education*, who had a civics curriculum developed, who needed teachers, who needed students.

continued on page 7

by Elyse Barbell Rudolph
Executive Director

Springing Back

The LAC is delighted to be able to go back on our word and reinstate *Literacy Update*, as well as some of the other services and programs that seemed most in jeopardy last fall.

Like most of New York—or for that matter the world—the LAC has been on a roller coaster ride since September that shows little sign of leveling off. We have had some serious setbacks and some extraordinary successes. After learning in September 2002 that we lost our city contract, we said goodbye to 10 valuable staff members, put our newsletter and Literacy Recognition Ceremony on hold, and carefully evaluated all of our work as it relates to our mission.

Now that spring has come, we're seeing light at the end of the tunnel. I'm pleased and proud to say that several very positive things are happening in the next few months.

None of it would have been possible without the friendship of our local partners and the NY State Education Department. With NYSED's support, we will be reopening our Hotline this month to serve not only the city but also the whole state. The Hotline thus joins ALIES, our data management system, as a statewide program. We're also planning for the Literacy Recognition Ceremony in June. Please see page 6 for details on both—and please note a full calendar of professional development events for May and June on page 4 while you're there.

That's old news, so to speak—restoring and expanding services we're provided for years. But we also have new things on the horizon.

Beyond expanding from the city to the state, we've also moved into supporting international literacy efforts. After our great success at the United Nations International Literacy Day in September 2002, we helped launch the U.N. Decade of Literacy on February 13 of this year. We rallied more than 800 members of the literacy community to show the world how important literacy is to all of us.

Perhaps the most exciting new development is our new Health Literacy Resource Center (HLRC). Supported by the NYC Mayor's office, private foundations, and corporations, the HLRC is part of the Bloomberg administration's multi-year initiative to improve the health of low-income New Yorkers. Working with the city and health literacy experts, we'll start with several pilot programs. The agenda includes creating curriculum to help learners adopt a healthy lifestyle, get access to health care, and follow the doctor's orders. Of course professional development is part of the mix, including a NY State certificate course in health literacy education.

I hope you'll choose to be part of some of these exciting initiatives. And look for our revamped newsletter—new look, new name, same great professional development features *plus* news and announcements for our statewide audience—in the fall. Have a good summer! ■▲◆



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Approaches to Civics Education for ESOL Learners

Recent federal and state funding initiatives have encouraged literacy programs to engage in sustained civics education, with the goal of educating English language learners (ELLs) not only about American government and political structures but also about how to effectively participate in society.

This goal has sometimes been interpreted narrowly. Under what has been called “Americanization,” new immigrants were taught almost exclusively about governmental functions to the exclusion of their histories, identities, and experiences. Thus, a teacher-directed approach has been standard fare in teaching civics. The goal was to teach such basic facts as who the president is and what the three branches of government are.

A More Comprehensive Approach

Three thinkers—Alexis de Tocqueville, John Dewey, and Paulo Freire—provide philosophical justification for an approach to civics education that goes beyond the INS’s 100 questions. De Tocqueville, the French political theorist, was captivated by the extent of associational life in America. He identified this feature as a key element in promoting democratic life; he saw Americans engaging in democracy by getting together to represent their own interests. American educator John Dewey strongly advocated using students’ experience to help them understand and practice democratic behavior; he noted that the social network of relations provides a rich context for learning. Freire, the adult educator from Brazil, emphasized the importance of dialogue in helping learners to become aware of oppressive structures and to identify societal conditions that affect them so that they can begin to solve those problems.

The two approaches to civics education discussed below build on these insights to help learners both learn about American government

and become involved in their communities, as de Tocqueville envisaged almost two centuries ago.

Problem Posing

The problem-posing approach, based on Freire’s theories, engages students in the concrete practices of government. The instructor begins the process by asking learners about problems or issues they face in the community. Students choose an issue and then dramatize it in a drawing, role play, or some other representation. Students then discuss how this issue affects them, the underlying causes of the problem, and potential solutions at the individual, group, or community level. Students could determine what actions they would like to take. Could they write letters to newspapers? Contact social action groups in the community? Write or visit their city council or state representative? In this approach, students not only enhance their English skills through discussion, reading, and writing, but also make connections between government agencies and their daily lives.

Project-Based Learning

Another approach that goes beyond mere factual knowledge is project-based learning. Learners develop a project—a handbook, video, recipe book, newsletter, journal, or other product—using a process that requires cooperation and collaboration.

Begin the process by finding out what interests and goals the learners bring to their civics education. Tell students that you want their learning to be practical, so they can use what they learn in the classroom with their families and in their community. Then explain different kinds of projects they might undertake, based on their needs and interests. An example of a previously completed project can help get students excited. Keeping the difficulty of the project in line with their English proficiency, get students to agree on

one project. Next, plan with the class how everyone will proceed to complete the project. Discuss the time frame, tasks, and student roles. Learners should work in groups to collect information and then bring their findings to class.

As work proceeds, look for ways to relate language learning to the project. For instance, learners can practice vocabulary and sentence structures they will need for their research. If the project is to compile a guidebook to local social service agencies, students can practice in pairs asking for information using “Wh” words: “What is the name of your center? Where is the center? Who is the contact person?” Use of a grammatical structure such as present tense might be added: “Who is going to the family center?” “We are going to the family center.” As the project proceeds, students’ research will bring them in contact with unfamiliar vocabulary, which can then be explained and reinforced in class exercises. To enhance writing skills, have students write their questions or compose sentences using their new vocabulary.

Once their research is complete, students can work in groups to prepare a brief write-up of the agency they investigated. If they are given disposable cameras, they can photograph the front of the agency and then place their text below the picture. At the end of the project, students have created a useful product—in this case, a booklet of pictures of social service agencies and information about each—and have enhanced their English skills in the process.

These two approaches to civics education provide students with a real opportunity for civic engagement while they learn English. Students not only learn facts about the government, but also experience processes that are fundamental to the practice and preservation of American democracy. ■▲●

May

Calendar of Events

All LAC events
take place at
32 Broadway, 10th floor.

[2]

Working with Beginning-Level ESOL Learners

Friday, May 2, 9:30 am–4 pm

Presenters: Susan Dalmas & Christopher Jorales
Queens Borough Public Library
ESOL Program

New ESOL teachers can learn successful teaching strategies and participatory activities for beginning-level ESOL learners in this workshop. Dalmas and Jorales will demonstrate the elements of a model lesson plan and how to execute it in the class effectively. They will also share ideas on how to develop practical teaching materials and project-based activities.

RSVP: LAC Reservation Line at 212.803.3323
or rsvp@lacnyc.org

[8]

Program Managers' Series

Session 3: The Future of Adult Literacy Education

Thursday, May 8, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

Presenter: Cheryl Keenan
U.S. Dept. of Education

In this third session of our Program Managers' Series, Cheryl Keenan, director of the Division of Adult Education and Literacy at the U.S. Department of Education, will provide an overview of current federal legislation and policy that will affect the direction of adult literacy education. Among the issues she will discuss are the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the relevance of the No Child Left Behind Act to adult literacy education.

Registration is essential.

RSVP: LAC Reservation Line at 212.803.3323
or rsvp@lacnyc.org

[16]

ESOL Teacher Share

Using Poetry in the ESOL Classroom

Friday, May 16, 1:30–4 pm

Presenter: Hillary Gardner
LaGuardia Community College

In this Teacher Share session, Gardner will identify successful strategies for integrating poetry into the ESOL classroom in order to promote language development and particularly development of writing skills. Participants will also discuss follow-up activities and appropriate teacher responses.

RSVP: LAC Reservation Line at 212.803.3323
or rsvp@lacnyc.org

[20]

NRS Outcomes and Reporting

Tuesday, May 20, 9:30 am–3:30 pm

Facilitator: Megan Whalen

This training will include an overview of the year's NYSED definition and interpretation of NRS outcomes. It will also provide guidance on collecting outcomes according to FY03 NRS guidelines. Finally, the training will present a table-by-table tour of the NRS Reports, including definitions of report fields, a discussion of report calculations, and strategies for troubleshooting NRS data.

RSVP: Don Campbell at 212.803.3319
or donc@lacnyc.org

[21]

Counselors' Exchange

Addressing Racism, Sexism and Homophobia in Adult Education Programs, Part 2

Wednesday, May 21, 1–4:30 pm

Facilitator: Mariann Fedele

This session of the Counselors' Exchange Series will explore ways in which program staff can address racism, sexism, and homophobia through programmatic policies and practices. Part 1 of this two-part session, which took place on April 30, addressed how adult educators can identify and deal with incidents of racism, sexism, and homophobia "in the moment." Part 2, on May 21, will focus on how adult education programs can develop pro-active strategies for dealing with these issues and develop environments that embrace diversity by promoting tolerance and respect.

RSVP: LAC Reservation Line at 212.803.3323
or rsvp@lacnyc.org

[28/29]

ALIES Data Entry Training

Wednesday, May 28, 10 am–4 pm

Thursday, May 29, 10 am–4 pm

Facilitator: Kate Rajala
Westchester LVA
Certified ALIES Trainer

Designed for individuals responsible for data entry who are new to ALIES software, this two-day training will provide a step-by-step, in-depth introduction to the ALIES software and data entry process.

RSVP: Don Campbell at 212.803.3319
or donc@lacnyc.org

June

[10/11]

Pre-Service Institute

Tuesday, June 10, 9 am–5 pm
Wednesday, June 11, 9 am–5 pm

Facilitator: Ira Yankwitt

Designed for teachers, tutors, counselors, and program managers new to the field, the Pre-Service Institute offers an introduction to key concepts and exemplary practices in adult literacy. Issues explored will include characteristics of adult learners and elements of positive learning experiences; classroom strategies in adult education; foundations of reading, writing, and English language instruction; goal-setting and intake; federal and state policy and funding; integrating technology into instruction; NYS adult learning standards; instructional planning; resources for adult literacy practitioners.

All participants are required to attend both days. RSVP by Friday, May 30.

RSVP: LAC Reservation Line at 212.803.3323 or rsvp@lacnyc.org

[13]

ALIES User Group

Tuesday, June 13, 1–4 pm

Facilitator: ALIES staff

This participant-directed meeting is an opportunity for ALIES users to share knowledge, discuss problems, and answer each other's questions. It will include demonstrations of ALIES issues and their resolutions. Participants will also discuss policy, learn tips and tricks for easier data entry, and brainstorm ideas for software improvement.

RSVP: Don Campbell at 212.803.3319 or donc@lacnyc.org

[20]

NRS Outcomes and Reporting

Friday, June 20, 9:30 am–3:30 pm
See May 20 for description.

RSVP: Don Campbell at 212.803.3319 or donc@lacnyc.org

LAC Professional Development Center Open Hours

The LAC library and computer lab are available for individuals who want to explore print or computer resources on their own or with the support of a member of our professional development staff.

Library browsers are invited to peruse our collection of professional development and curriculum materials, including books, journals, audio- and videotapes, and software. For more information about the library, please contact Winston Lawrence, Coordinator of Adult Literacy Services, at winstonl@lacnyc.org or 212.803.3326.

The computer lab is available to help you discover great online learning resources and plan how to use them. To reserve a computer workstation, contact Mariann Fedele, Coordinator of Instructional Technology, at mariannf@lacnyc.org or 212.803.3325.

Throughout May, the Learning Center will be open on Mondays, 1–5 pm. Beginning June 2, the Learning Center will be open every other Monday, 1–5 pm, or by appointment. Open days include **June 2, June 16, June 30, July 14, July 28, August 11, and August 25.**



jobs @ the LAC

Letter & résumé to Elizabeth Rivera, LAC,
32 Broadway, 10th floor, New York, NY 10004,
hr@lacnyc.org, fax 212.785.3685.

Office Assistant/Receptionist

Answer incoming calls; provide telephone & clerical support to the LAC's Referral Hotline; help arrange program events; welcome visitors; support office manager. HS diploma or GED, 2+ yrs office exp., bilingual Spanish req. Exp. with electronic communications, word processing, database software, Internet research pref.

User Support Coordinator

Manage technical assistance calls, maintain support tracking database, assist ALIES system users, communicate with NYS staff development consortium directors to plan & coordinate ALIES training, work with programs to improve ALIES support. Strong MS Word & PowerPoint skills req. Some travel in New York State.

ALIES Training Associate

Develop & deliver statewide training plan & curriculum; design paper & multimedia training materials; prepare technical documents; provide ALIES technical assistance. Exp. in curriculum development & group training req. Mastery of MS Word, PowerPoint, & Excel; knowl. HTML or other web development tools; instructional design exp.; knowl. database systems & Internet; exp. with adult literacy & related policies pref. Some travel in New York State. ■

announcing}

2003 Literacy Recognition Award Ceremony

The Board of Directors of the Literacy Assistance Center invites you to join us for the 18th Annual Literacy Recognition Award Ceremony on Thursday, June 12, from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, at the New School University's Swayduck Auditorium, 65 Fifth Avenue, between 13th and 14th Streets. RSVP required! Call 212.803.3315.

The following outstanding literacy practitioners will be honored at the ceremony:

Marsha Davis

Instructional Facilitator
NYC Department of Education
Office of Adult and Continuing Education

Maura Donnelly

Teacher
LaGuardia Community College
Adult Learning Center

André S. Gleaton

Director
Adult Education Department
Thirteen/WNET

Martha Kamber

Director of Family Support Services
Sunset Park Adult and Family Education Center

Sheila Krentz

Coordinator, Region 2
NYC Department of Education
Office of Adult and Continuing Education

Bill Littlefield

Volunteer Literacy Tutor
The New York Public Library, St. Agnes

Joan Manes

Director of Education Programs
NYC Technical College

Eric Rosenbaum

Director of Staff Development
HRA/FIA BEGIN Managed Programs

Ida Sandler

Teacher
Shorefront YM-YWHA
of Brighton-Manhattan Beach

Expanded Hotline

We are pleased to announce that our expanded LAC Literacy Referral Hotline will be opening in May. For the first time, a single phone call enables students and volunteers throughout the entire state to find a literacy program that meets their needs. Initially, information will be available in four languages: English, French, French Creole, and Spanish. Our statewide expansion has been made possible by support from the NY State Education Department. The New York City number will remain 212.803.3333. We will have a toll-free Hotline number for upstate and Long Island callers. For Hotline news and updates, please check our website at www.lacnyc.org/hotline.

Health Literacy Resource Center

The LAC is pleased to announce the formation of a new Health Literacy Resource Center. In partnership with the City of New York and various foundations and corporations, the LAC's HLRC will foster community partnerships between health providers and literacy programs in order to provide low-income New Yorkers with better access to quality health care and to low-cost or free health insurance. The center will also provide easy-to-understand information on how to improve their family's health, such as following doctors' instructions and understanding prescription medicine labels, managing chronic illnesses such as asthma, and choosing nutritious foods for a healthy diet.

Book Donations

The LAC would like to thank Scholastic Inc., Bookbinders-Guild, Verizon, Microsoft Magazine, and Barnes & Noble Astor Place for donating more than 8,000 books to the literacy community. Most of the books have been distributed to family literacy programs throughout New York City and the state. The remainder have been added to the LAC's Clearinghouse.

Literacy Celebration

On Monday, April 28, New York City kicked off its annual Literacy Celebration with a luncheon on at Gracie Mansion. Other events are being held throughout the city.

Saturday, May 3: The New York City Consortium for Adult Basic Education is holding its annual adult education conference, "Sense and Sensitivity," on Saturday, May 3, 8 am–4:30 pm, at Fashion Industries High School, 225 West 24th Street, between 7th and 8th Avenues. The conference offers morning and afternoon workshops in math, BENL, PRE GED/GED, ESOL, computer technology, learning differences, and workplace literacy. Same-day registration is \$15. For more information call Carolyn Fernando at 212.243.5458.

Tuesday, May 6: Seventh Annual Celebration of Adult Learning in NYC, 9 am–12:30 pm, at the DC 37 Auditorium, Barclay and Murray Streets.

Thursday, May 8: Cheryl Keenan, director of the Division of Adult Education and Literacy at the U.S. Department of Education, will lead the LAC's Program Managers' Series, 9:30 am–12:30 pm. For more information see page 4.

NYC Reads Benefit

During the month of May, \$1 from each ticket purchased for the Broadway musical *A Year with Frog and Toad*, at the Cort Theater, will benefit NYC Reads, Verizon's literacy partner in NYC. The funds raised will benefit adult, family, and child literacy programs throughout the city. Tickets are available through August 30. Cort Theater tickets are available at www.Telecharge.com.

Maximizing Resources through Collaboration *cont'd*

We arrived at two decisions at this meeting: that staff development was our first priority, and that we would continue to meet on a quarterly basis.

Other smaller meetings took place before the whole group met again. We discovered that there are a lot of services in the Long Island City/Astoria area. Some of those programs started visiting each other. Other meetings were held by smaller groups to share and compare civics curricula.

Collaborating through a Conference

At the next meeting, we discussed how to go about doing staff development for ESOL and civics teachers. Someone suggested an all-day staff development conference. We had no money, but we took the approach, "If we build it, they will come." We booked all the meeting rooms in the Flushing Branch Library for February 1 and hoped we would somehow cover our expenses.

The group decided to expand to include all ESOL providers who offer civics education, not just those who received an EL/Civics grant. We also decided to invite providers from all over New York City to our conference, although we would do targeted outreach in our own programs in Queens.

On February 1, "Civics Education in Adult ESOL Programs: Perspectives and Strategies," the first annual Queens ESOL Network Conference, was held. Over 150 people attended this event, making it one of the biggest staff development events of the year.

Teachers and staff developers from ESOL programs in Queens, from the LAC, and from the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development provided three sessions of workshops. The Adult Literacy Media Alliance and the Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access also presented. Topics included:

- Basic immigration information
- Using video in the ESOL classroom
- Integrating technology into instruction
- Teaching writing in the ESOL classroom
- Learning differences and disabilities
- Participatory activities for the ESOL classroom
- Health insurance access for immigrants

At the end of the day, we provided time for informal networking. Tom Orsini, team leader for adult education at the NY State Department of Education, attended the conference, and he congratulated everyone on a successful day. A few weeks later, members of the network met to debrief on the conference. We reviewed the evaluations and talked about how to improve the conference for next year.

Continuing the Collaboration

The conference served as a great way to launch the Queens ESOL network. We provided important and visible staff development for a large number of educators. But we want to be more than a once-a-year conference. We are working to create a real network that meets throughout the year.

Such a network can be useful in many ways. For instance, making up-to-date referrals is always a challenge. The network has helped us become familiar with the services that exist in Queens: what is available when and where. The network can also inform program decisions. When I make a decision now, I have a better sense of what's going on throughout the borough, not just in the library. Other issues we are hoping to address include reporting, assessment, and funding and fundraising. We are all experts in something, but none of us are experts in everything. When we work together, we get the benefits

of the knowledge, skills, and resources of all the programs.

Everyone who's been involved in the network, all the conference attendees, and anyone who has attended any of the meetings deserves to be congratulated. Special thanks are due to leaders of the network who continue to give their time generously and have helped this group flourish: Gloria Weiss, Alecia d'Angelo, Jeanne Lambert, Kitty Bateman, Susan Dalmas, Seena Sweet, Christopher Jornaes, Roberto Cruz, Roop Persaud, Ryntha Henderson-Amare, and Betty Aderman.

It's hard to find time to reach out to other programs. It's easy to put collaboration on the back burner when you have students to serve, reports to write, and proposals due. But once a commitment is made to collaboration, the rewards are undeniable. We have gotten to know our colleagues in Queens, their programs, and their work. In the process, we have maximized many of our limited resources.




GED Form Change from the NY State Education Department

In an effort to resolve data discrepancies in the GED Quarterly Reports, the GED testing office is now requiring the following:

Effective January 1, 2003, all candidates (high school equivalency or adult program enrollee) referred to take the GED test must submit Attachment M on the day of testing. This form verifies that the testing candidate is, in fact, enrolled in either an HSE or adult GED preparation program and is being referred to take the GED test. Program information (Section I), applicant information (Section II), and original signature (Section IV) of Attachment M must be completely filled out. Make sure your five-digit program code is correctly provided. The form must have the original signature of the appropriate GED Program Administrator.

If the candidates do not have Attachment M with them on the day of testing, they will **not** be allowed to use a prep code of any kind. Their test results will not be contained in any quarterly report, and the prep program will not receive results for these candidates. The GED Chief Examiners will be instructed to allow only those candidates with Attachment M to fill in preparation codes on their testing materials.

If your students are being referred from an Alternative High School Equivalency Preparation program, continue to use the GED options form and Attachment C.

Link to Attachment M on the GED website by going to the home page at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/workforce/ged/home.html>. Scroll down and click on the link for the training manual. Scroll down to the bottom of the document to see Attachment M. 



Literacy Assistance Center

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Visit us on the web for the latest news and announcements as well as a host of professional development resources for the literacy community.

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