



LITERACY UPDATE

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Literacy Assistance Center

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The Struggle to Maintain Core Values

The Impact of WIA and Welfare Reform on Programs and Classrooms

> by Alisa Belzer *Rutgers University*

Two policies that affect how adult literacy programs operate—welfare reform and the 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA)—came from the federal level, were filtered through the states, and finally came to rest in individual programs and classrooms. In spring 2001, I began investigating the consequences of these top-down policies at the local level by conducting case studies of 24 programs in six Eastern states. In each state, I interviewed a key state agency staff person to learn what the state required of programs in response to WIA and what, if any, interactions between the welfare system and the state might affect programs. These staff members also suggested four diverse programs in their state for me to study. I then interviewed staff members at each program about how these two federal policies were influencing their work. My complete report, available at www.gse.harvard.edu/~ncsall, discusses both state and local

implications, but I'll focus in this article on what I learned about the impact of federal policy on local programs.

Refiners, Reinventers, and Resisters

The programs I studied responded to the new emphases of WIA and welfare reform—both the shift in emphasis from education to work and work-related training and the demand for increased accountability—in one of three ways: as refiners, reinventers, or resisters. “Refiners” were usually already fairly well aligned with the policies’ intents and made only minor alterations to comply with the new policies. “Reinventer” programs, like refiner programs, made moderate changes to some aspects of their program, but they also added to, restructured, or created significant changes in other program operations. “Resister” programs included those that opted out of the system altogether and those that responded to policies in order to maintain funding but

found ways around full implementation. Not surprisingly, given the connection between compliance and funding, most programs took the middle “refiner” road.

The extent to which programs had to change reflected how the program already “fit” with the new policies. Some program’s philosophies, missions, funding sources, and learner populations gave them a relatively good “fit” with WIA requirements. Programs with a workforce development emphasis, for instance, were less likely to be resisters than were programs with academic or humanist goals. Fit was also shaped by the extent to which states had anticipated WIA’s changes. Programs in states that had an accountability system in place prior to WIA were in a position to tweak rather than radically alter documentation procedures.

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Testing 1, 2, 3

> Elyse Barbell Rudolph *Executive Director*

Now that people are through talking about this winter's snow and cold, the topic *du jour* seems to be testing, testing, testing. The nation's primary elections are testing the electability of the Democratic presidential candidates. Everyone remains concerned about scores on statewide tests for schoolchildren. And, in our own backyard, New York State has finally broken from using the NYSPlace test to measure progress in English language learners in favor of the BEST Plus™ (see the next page for details). This change has been more complicated than anyone anticipated because of the Center for Applied Linguistics' desire to assure that those who assess English language learners, using the test CAL developed, are adequately prepared to combine good assessment practice with sound subjective judgment in scoring the test.

In my home, testing was also the hot topic of this cold winter. In preparation for middle school, we have finally decided to test our fifth grader for learning disabilities. She's always been a reluctant reader, and now the gap between her obvious intelligence (OK, I *am* her mother!) and her ability, particularly in writing, has grown too large to ignore. At the same time, my first grader, who emerged from the womb with a Dr. Seuss book in hand, was invited to test for the gifted and talented program at her school. The results of both tests were a surprise to everyone but me. My first grader, who has been reading fluently for years, got the lowest possible score on the scale used to measure such things, while my older daughter's results revealed some sequencing difficulties that stood in the way of exposing an extraordinarily high IQ.

These results remind me that testing measures isolated skills within the complex matrix of all of the wonderful abilities and experiences people are made of. NRS-mandated testing costs us time and money and puts students on edge; we all agree that a test is hardly the kindest way to welcome disenfranchised students back into a learning environment.

So why do it? Well, primarily because it pays the bills. But tests also give us information that guides our educational plan and gives students a yardstick for measuring their own accomplishments. My kids' test results remind me to keep loving and supporting them and to make sure they read every day. If our students' test results give us the same reminder, they will have done some good after all. As we get more and more experienced at meeting the accountability demands of NRS, let's remember to look at each student as a whole person, continuing to measure learners' accomplishments by their tenacity, their smiles, and their ability to meet their own goals. ●



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> by Winston Lawrence, Ed.D. *Coordinator of Adult Literacy Services*

ESOL Testing Comes of Age in New York State

The State Education Department (SED) has taken a major step to advance language testing in New York by requiring the use of the new BEST Plus™ as the official test for all federally funded ESOL literacy programs. This new test, developed by the Washington-based Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) under contract from the federal Department of Education, will help programs document educational gain as required by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which requires use of assessment instruments whose reliability and validity have been verified. The new BEST Plus recognizes the importance of oral skills for the successful integration of English language learners—who constitute more than half of the student population in New York’s adult literacy programs—into the life of American society. As they adapt to their new social and cultural environment, students depend more on oral skills—the ones that enable them to ask questions and provide information—than on any other language skill. Thus, BEST Plus, like most language tests for adult learners, emphasizes oral proficiency.

What Is BEST Plus?

BEST Plus, a 15-minute performance-based test, allows students to demonstrate their oral proficiency in three areas: listening comprehension, language complexity, and communication. In listening comprehension, students demonstrate whether they understand a question asked of them. In language complexity, students show their ability to use appropriate phrases and grammatical structures in generating oral English sentences. The communication section measures students’ fluency.

There are two versions of the test, computer adaptive and print-based. Both are given as face-to-face oral interviews with a trained test administrator. Both assess real-life communication tasks related to health, family, jobs, civics, and community services, with questions grouped under three headings: personal, occupational, and public. A key element is a rubric that results in a score for each of the three areas tested. The three scores are tallied to give the student an overall scaled score, or Student Performance Level (SPL), of 0–10, which is then correlated with the six levels of the National Reporting System.

In the computer-adaptive version, the examiner asks and the student responds to the first question. The examiner uses a rubric to evaluate that answer and enters the score into the computer. The computer then selects the next item, based on that response, from its bank of 250 test questions; a higher-level student receives a more difficult question while a lower-level student gets an easier one. Fewer questions can thus accurately determine the student’s level. The print version comes in

three levels; the examiner administers a quick locator test to determine which level to use with a given student. There are three tests for each level, for a total of nine tests. Test administrators feel that both formats reduce students’ ability to memorize test questions.

Why Was BEST Plus Chosen?

Program managers and other key people in the literacy community met with SED officials last June at the LAC to discuss various tests including CASAS, BEST Plus, and the new NYSESLAT for K–12 ESOL students. Participants recommended BEST Plus, the successor to the 1982 BEST (Basic English Skills Test). The NYSPace test, which BEST Plus replaces in NY State, was designed for placing students, not for assessing progress. It consisted of a single pre-test and no post-test. BEST Plus, on the other hand, is designed for both placement and assessment of progress. Additionally, the items focus on themes that tap into the daily experiences of students. The fact that the test has a computer-based version is another, perhaps less obvious, advantage. Introducing students to a school with a computer-based test may help students feel confident that the program is technologically up to date.

What Are the Challenges of Using BEST Plus?

One challenge of the new test is that programs need to have computers with the requisite capabilities; some programs may need to acquire new computers or upgrade existing ones. Even when they use the print-based test, programs must enter scores into a computer to generate an accurate score; a data entry person will therefore be needed. A final challenge, and perhaps the most important, is the cost factor. While the SED is expected to underwrite some of the costs of training test administrators and purchasing test materials, the local literacy provider agencies (LPAs) will have to pay for the tests.

How Can I Learn to Administer BEST Plus?

SED has invited CAL to do a series of six-hour workshops to train test administrators; in New York City, these trainings have taken place at the LAC. About 125 practitioners have been trained, but SED recognizes that this number is not sufficient. CAL is thus training trainers from each LPA. These trainers will be available to conduct workshops for their organizations after the initial round of CAL trainings is completed. To find out how to receive training, call your LPA or contact CAL directly at 866.845.BEST. Participating in these workshops will enable all federally funded literacy programs to implement BEST Plus by July 1 as mandated by SED. ●

RESOURCES >> For Families, Children, and Programs

> by Marguerite Lukes *Director of Program Services*

In developing and choosing resources for yourself and your family literacy students, you obviously start by considering the nature of your program and of your learners. You also rely on your own knowledge of language, literacy, and culture. But before you start developing a lot of materials on your own, consider using some of the parent education and program design resources I frequently recommend to family literacy programs. If you think some of the print and multimedia resources below may fit your needs, visit the LAC's Dan Rabideau Clearinghouse to preview them. For open browsing hours, see page 11.

Parent Education



Reading Rockets

Reading Rockets, a national project of WETA public television in Washington, DC, combines print, online, and broadcast media to help teachers and parents explore early reading. The television series, *Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers*, uses footage from real schools to discuss reading development. Companion materials include an extensive website at www.readingrockets.org, print guides for educators and families in English and Spanish, and a teleconference series on teacher professional development.

Colorin Colorado!

<http://www.colorincolorado.org>

This English-Spanish companion website to Reading Rockets speaks respectfully and positively to parents about literacy development. The title comes from a phrase used in Spanish-speaking countries to end a story: “*Colorín colorado, este cuento se ha acabado!*” (Colorin colorado, this story has come to an end.) The site uses clear language and beautiful graphics to provide research-based answers to commonly asked questions about reading and writing development in young children, including perhaps the most frequently asked question, “But what if I don’t know English?” In addition, the site includes home activities, recommended resources, and interviews with authors. I highly recommend this site to parents, parent coordinators, and practitioners who work with parents.

Family Literacy Kits

Reading Rainbow, the award-winning PBS series, offers a series of Family Literacy Kits designed for parents and children to use at home. Each backpack-style kit includes a 30-minute Reading Rainbow episode, the book featured in the video, laminated activity sheets for families to do together, and a set of 25 response cards so families can report their experiences. More than 100 titles are available in English, and 10 (books and activity sheets only) in Spanish; see www.readingrainbow.org.

Navigating the Public Schools

Advocates for Children offers a series of guides on NYC public schools. “Know Your Rights: A Guide to the Legal Rights of Immigrant Students and Parents in the New York City Public Schools” is a particularly good overview for teachers, counselors, and social service providers, addressing questions about enrolling in school, placement, disabilities, services for students learning English, parents’ rights, and promotion and graduation.

Program Design, Assessment, and Evaluation

Assessing Success in Family Literacy and Adult ESL

by Daniel D. Holt and Carol H. Van Duzer,
Center for Applied Linguistics/
DELTA Systems, 2000

The revised edition of this excellent resource clearly and succinctly explores how authentic,

alternative, and standardized assessments can be combined to develop a comprehensive program evaluation. The goals of quality program design and program improvement connect the pieces. Written in an easy-to-follow style with examples from practice, the book covers assessment and program evaluation, program design and implementation, intake and assessment, and alternative assessment.

Many Families, Many Literacies

edited by Denny Taylor, Heinemann, 1997
A group of 50 participants from around the world gathered at the International Forum on Family Literacy to redefine family literacy. This book, a result of that conference, identifies principles for family literacy and presents a compilation of articles on family literacy by researchers, teachers, and parent learners. Challenging the reader to question practices based on a “deficit” view of family literacy, the articles cover the many types of families served in family literacy programs, general principles of language and literacy learning, ethics in research and program development, and principles for assessment.

Family Literacy: From Theory to Practice

by Andrea DeBrui-Pareki and
Barbara Krol-Sinclair, International Reading
Association, 2003

This new compilation of essays that aims to “connect... theory to practice” is divided into four sections. The first explores theoretical and historical perspectives that undergird family literacy programs and practices. The second provides examples of research and practice that link school and community family literacy partnerships. The third section examines programs throughout the world, including Even Start, Head Start, and Read to Me for teen mothers. The final section discusses program evaluation.

Building Communities of Learners

by Sudia Paloma McCaleb,
Pallgrave Macmillan, 1994

Though this book is a decade old, its ideas are fresh and worth revisiting. Drawing on theories of transformative and participatory education, it outlines the dangers of traditional models of schooling and describes how partnerships among families, communities, and schools can produce more positive outcomes. Every family and adult literacy educator should be familiar with the exemplary programs this book discusses in depth. ●

Family Literacy Conference

Join over 800 community members and family literacy professionals on Saturday, March 13, 8:30 am–4 pm, for “Making Community Connections for Education / Fortaleciendo la Educación en la Comunidad,” a collaborative conference for parents and caregivers, children, and parent educators, to be held at Grand Street High School in Williamsburg. Sponsored by the LAC and St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation, the conference will offer workshops for professionals, parents, and children, as well as a resource fair featuring organizations and services from all over New York. New York Giant Tiki Barber has been invited to present. The entire day’s activities are free, including breakfast, lunch, and childcare for young children. The conference is being supported by generous donations from the Altman Foundation, Scholastic, Inc., Verizon, and others. Download a registration form and brochure at www.lacnyc.org/familylit or contact Sabrina Evans Ellis, 718.599.9224 x17, for more information.

NYC ABE Conference

The New York City Adult Basic Education Conference marks its 25th year with its annual conference on Saturday, May 8, 8 am–4:30 pm. The conference, “Remembering Our Roots, Strengthening the Journey,” will take place at Fashion Industries High School, 225 West 24th Street, between 7th and 8th Avenues. The conference will offer several concurrent workshop sessions on a variety of topics, including GED preparation, health literacy, civics, oral communication, multi-level ESOL instruction, math, technology, and workforce preparation. Registration forms will be mailed by the NYC ABE Consortium and will also be available in late March on the LAC’s website at www.lacnyc.org/announcements. For more information, contact Carolyn Fernando, 212.243.5458.

Research-Based Approaches to Adolescent Literacy

The LAC is currently leading an eight-session seminar on adolescent literacy for literacy coaches, staff developers, and lead literacy teachers in the NYC Department of Education’s alternative, adult, and continuing education schools and programs. The training focuses on research-based instructional practices that foster adolescent literacy, particularly the Reading Apprenticeship framework, an instructional approach developed by the Strategic Literacy Initiative (SLI) in San Francisco. Reading Apprenticeship is designed to help students build the cognitive and affective abilities needed to engage in literacy across the curriculum; it has had a demonstrated impact on the reading skills of middle school and high school students in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. For more information on SLI and Reading Apprenticeship, go to www.wested.org/stratlit/; for information on the LAC’s adolescent literacy initiative, contact Ira Yankwitt at iray@lacnyc.org or 212.803.3356.

2004 Tri-Library Adult Learning Conference

On Saturday March 20, the Queens Borough Library will host the 2004 Tri-Library Adult Learning Conference at the Flushing Branch. In partnership with the LAC and NY READS, the Queens, Brooklyn, and New York Public Library systems are organizing this event for tutors and staff to improve the quality of instruction and keep educators abreast on new trends in adult literacy. The conference—which is held twice a year, once in the spring at the Flushing Branch of the Queens Borough Public Library and once in the summer at the Brooklyn Public Library—will offer a series of workshops on adult teaching and learning for literacy and ESOL instructors. Themes include balanced literacy, strategies in tutoring basic literacy groups, computer technology for literacy and ESOL learners, assessment practices, health literacy, and family literacy. Invitations to participate in this conference will be sent to the three library systems and to Literacy Partners.

Recently Published Professional Development Studies

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) recently produced two professional development studies, which can be downloaded from NCSALL’s website, <http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu>. Print versions can also be ordered online.

> *How Teachers Change: A Study of Professional Development in Adult Education* (NCSALL Reports #25)

by Cristine Smith, Judy Hofer, Marilyn Gillespie, Marla Solomon, and Karen Rowe
This study investigates how a sample of 106 adult education teachers in three New England states changed after participating in one of three models of professional development—multisession workshop, mentor teacher group, or practitioner research group—all of which focused on the topic of learner persistence.

> *The Characteristics and Concerns of Adult Basic Education Teachers* (NCSALL Reports #26)

by Cristine Smith and Judy Hofer
Based on data gathered for the study on *How Teachers Change*, this in-depth exploration documents what is commonly known, but not well researched, about adult education teachers, including the challenges they face, the training and preparation they receive, and the conditions in which they work. ●

Local and national conferences can provide valuable opportunities for professional development and networking. For a comprehensive list of spring conferences, see page 8.

Mar. 3

BEST Plus Training

Wednesday, March 3, 9 am–4 pm

Presenter: Center for Applied Linguistics

The State Education Department (SED), in accordance with the accountability provisions of the National Reporting System (NRS)/Workforce Investment Act (WIA), has mandated that the BEST Plus test be used as an oral assessment tool in all SED-funded ESOL programs, replacing the NYSPlace test. Accordingly, SED has contracted with the Center for Applied Linguistics to conduct a series of training sessions on how to administer the BEST Plus test. Each SED-funded program is required to send the person responsible for overseeing ESOL testing to one of these all-day training sessions.

Mar. 4

BEST Plus Training

Thursday, March 4, 9 am–4 pm

Presenter: Center for Applied Linguistics

See March 3 for description.

Mar. 5

Navigating the Healthcare System: Teaching Health Literacy

Friday, March 5, 9 am–1 pm

Thursday, March 18, 9 am–1 pm

Friday, April 2, 9 am–1 pm

Follow-up Sessions

Thursday, April 15, 9 am–1 pm

Friday, April 30, 9 am–1 pm

Facilitator: Winston Lawrence

Health literacy—the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions—is a vital part of adult literacy education. This five-part series focuses on integrating health literacy—specifically, the skills needed to navigate the healthcare system—into the ABE and ESOL curriculum. Participants will develop lesson plans on healthcare navigation skills, try them out in their classes, and reflect on their success. We strongly encourage participation by teams of at least two teachers from one program. **Participants are required to attend the first three sessions.**

Mar. 5

ESOL Teacher Share

Using Folktales in the ESOL Classroom

Friday, March 5, 1:30–4 pm

Presenters: Anthony McCann, Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst
Ellen Sharp, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

Folktales and jokes can be valuable tools to help ESOL students develop writing, reporting, listening, vocabulary, and general fluency skills. As McCann and Sharp demonstrate activities that they have developed, participants will learn how to use folktales and jokes in their own classrooms.

Mar. 15 & 16

Teaching Reading to Adults: A Balanced Approach

Monday, March 15, 9 am–5 pm

Tuesday, March 16, 9 am–5 pm

Facilitator: Pat Campbell, President, Grass Roots Press

Balanced literacy is an approach to reading and writing instruction that combines both skills-based and meaning-based teaching and learning strategies. This two-day interactive workshop will address reading theories, the links between assessment and responsive instruction, miscue analysis, the identification of reading patterns and effective strategies, and participatory education and the spiral approach to curriculum development. **Registration is essential.**

Mar. 17

Program Managers' Series

Session 2: Understanding Literacy Theory and Reading Instruction

Wednesday, March 17, 9 am–12:30 pm

Facilitator: Pat Campbell, President, Grass Roots Press

Several different understandings of literacy and models of reading development and the reading process have informed adult literacy practice. These include skills-driven models, comprehension-driven models, balanced literacy, and socio-cultural understandings of literacy. This session will provide an overview of various approaches to literacy, curriculum development, and reading instruction so that participants will be better equipped to make informed, evidence-based decisions.

Mar. 18

SkillsTutor Demonstration

Thursday, March 18, 10:30 am–12:30 pm

Facilitator: Kevin Sweeney, Achievement Technologies

SkillsTutor—a multimedia test preparation software designed by Achievement Technologies—offers online and CD-based activities and tutorials to help ABE and GED students build skills in a variety of areas, including writing, language arts, math, science, information skills, and social studies. Participants will learn how the system can be used not only to enhance classroom instruction but also as a standalone program for self-directed learning.

Mar. 19

Foundation Training: Instructional Technology Curriculum Development

Session 2: Cooperative Learning in Instruction

Friday, March 19, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

Facilitator: Mariann Fedele

Using cooperative learning as an approach to instruction helps students better develop their language and literacy skills, as well as skills such as goal setting, problem solving, and interpersonal communication. In this workshop, participants will explore the steps involved in developing cooperative learning projects, analyze and critique examples of technology-based cooperative learning projects from actual adult literacy classrooms, and develop a plan to integrate technology and cooperative learning strategies into their own instruction.

All LAC events take place at 32 Broadway, 10th floor.
**Unless otherwise noted, RSVP to LAC Reservation
Line at 212.803.3323 or rsvp@lacnyc.org.**

Mar. 23 & 24

ALIES Data Entry Training

Tuesday, March 23, 10 am–4 pm
Wednesday, March 24 10 am–4 pm

Facilitator: Olga Gazman

From ALIES installation through ALIES reporting, this training provides a step-by-step introduction to the ALIES software and the data entry process. Highlights include installing and upgrading ALIES, inputting data, updating data, generating data management reports, using the Ad-Hoc Reporting tool, and running the NRS Data Check Reports. New data entry users, as well as those in need of a refresher, are invited to attend this event.

Please attend both days.

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

Mar. 26

Mathematical Exploration and Inquiry in the Pre-GED and GED Classroom

Session 2: Data

Friday, March 26, 1:30–5 pm

Presenters: Denise Deagan & Solange Farina, NYC Math Exchange Group

This is the second workshop in a four-session series designed to introduce pre-GED and GED math instructors to methods and resources that will enable them to better facilitate instruction around the major strands of the new GED math test. Participants will explore a series of engaging math problems appropriate for pre-GED and GED classes. As participants develop their own problem-solving abilities and strategies, they will learn how to generate a similar problem-solving culture in their classrooms. Many useful classroom handouts will be provided.

Attendance at all four sessions is not required; however, registration is essential.

Mar. 26

Popular Education Study Group

Friday, March 26, 2–5 pm

This series explores practical approaches for teaching adults to develop an awareness of social justice issues, both in and out of the classroom. Teachers will read materials on popular education and discuss how to apply those theories in the classroom.

Apr. 2

Creating a Problem-Centered Math Classroom

Friday, April 2, 2 pm–4 pm

Facilitators: Charlie Brover, Denise Deagan, and Solange Farina, NYC Math Exchange Group

How can we create a problem-solving culture in the ABE/GED classroom? Can mathematically rich and engaging problems anchor curricula? How can both teachers and students deepen their understanding of fractions, ratios, and proportional thinking? This hands-on workshop will explore problems that adult basic educators can use to deepen their understanding of the mathematics they teach. The workshop will feature several interactive activities, and participants will receive a variety of handouts.

Apr. 7

ALIES Reports Training

Wednesday April 7, 9:30 am–1:30 pm

Facilitator: Olga Gazman

This hands-on training will feature an overview of the different types of ALIES reports and the applications of these reports in real-world scenarios. The training will also include a discussion on how to make better use of ALIES reports for program management and improvement. Highlights include Data Management Reports, Ad-Hoc Reports, Data Check Reports, and Funding Reports, such as EPE and NRS. This training is for experienced ALIES users who want to learn more about reports.

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

Apr. 14

ALIES Knowledge Sharing Session

Wednesday, April 14, 10 am–1 pm

This participant-directed meeting allows ALIES users to share knowledge, discuss problems, and answer each other's questions. The session will include demonstrations of ALIES issues and their resolutions, tips and tricks for easier data entry, policy discussions, and a brainstorming session on improving the software. A member of the ALIES staff will facilitate the session.

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

Apr. 16

Foundation Training: Instructional Technology Curriculum Development

Session 3: Project-Based Learning

Friday, April 16, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

Facilitator: Mariann Fedele

In this session, participants will learn methods for putting students in the driver's seat when it comes to meeting their educational goals. Specifically, participants will examine the steps of project-based learning as an instructional method for meeting students' language and literacy goals and as a foundation for introducing technology into the curriculum.

Apr. 22 & 23

ALIES Data Entry Training

Thursday, April 22, 10 am–4 pm
Friday, April 23, 10 am–4 pm

Facilitator: Olga Gazman

See March 23 & 24 for description.
Please attend both days.

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

Apr. 29

Teaching Health & Literacy in the ABE and ESOL Classroom

Thursday, April 29, 9 am–5 pm

Facilitator: Sabrina Kurtz-Rossi, M.Ed., Project Director, Literacy & Health Initiative, World Education

Designed for adult literacy practitioners interested in integrating health content into their ABE and/or ESOL classroom, this session will offer participants hands on experience searching the LINCS Health & Literacy Special Collection, at www.worlded.org/us/health/lincs, for lesson plans and other appropriate resources. Participants will learn how to evaluate resources for content accuracy, source credibility, cultural appropriateness, language/level, ease of use, and classroom applicability. In small groups, participants will work to develop sample lessons on health topics of interest to their students. Participants will also be encouraged—with support—to pilot their lessons with their students and participate in a follow-up interview regarding their experience.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONFERENCES

Local and national conferences provide valuable opportunities for professional development and networking. Below is a list of spring conferences of interest to the literacy community.

March

National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) National Conference
March 1–3, Orlando, FL
www.familit.org/Conference/index.cfm

National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs (NAASLN) 2004 International Conference
March 6–9, Tampa, FL
www.naasln.org/Conference/Conference.html

New York City Family Literacy Conference
March 13, Grand Street High School, Brooklyn
718.599.9224 x17
For more information, see page 5.

Learning Disabilities Association of America 41st Annual Conference
March 17–20, Atlanta, GA
www.ldanatl.org/conf/index.html

New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning (NJALL) Annual Conference
March 18–19, Elizabeth, NJ
www.easternlincs.org/njall/2004ConfReg.htm

The 36th Annual Conference on Reading and Writing
March 18–19, Rutgers University Graduate School of Education
www.gse.rutgers.edu

Tri-Library Adult Learning Conference
March 20, Queens Borough Public Library, Flushing, Queens
Contact Susan Dalmas at 718.480.4233, Ken English at 212.340.0924, or Susan O'Connor at 718.832.3560
For more information, see page 5.

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) 55th Annual College Composition and Communication Convention
March 24–27, San Antonio, TX
www.ncte.org/profdev/conv/ccco4

First Annual (Net)Working Conference: Women, Literacy, Resources
March 27, Clark Technology Center, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA
www.litwomen.org/welearn.html

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) 38th Annual International Convention and Exposition
March 30–April 3, Long Beach, CA
www.tesol.org/conv/index-conv.html

April

Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed 10th Annual Conference
April 18–24, Omaha, NE
www.unomaha.edu/~pto/conference.htm

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) National Meeting
April 21–24, Philadelphia, PA
www.nctm.org/meetings/philadelphia/index.htm

Adult Numeracy Network (ANN) Math Institute and 10th Annual Meeting
April 24, Philadelphia, PA (in conjunction with NCTM national meeting)
www.std.com/anpn/

Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) National Conference
April 24–28, Columbus, OH
www.coabe04.org or call 866.996.2223

New York Association for Continuing/Community Education (NYACCE) Annual Conference
April 25–27, Albany, NY
www.nyacce.org/

May

International Reading Association (IRA) Reading Research Conference
May 1, Reno-Tahoe, NV
www.reading.org/2004/2004_RRC.html

International Reading Association (IRA) 49th Annual Convention
May 2–6, Reno-Tahoe, NV
www.reading.org/2004/

The 25th Annual New York City Adult Basic Education (NYC ABE) Conference
May 8, Fashion Industries High School, New York, NY
Carolyn Fernando, 212.243.5458
For more information, see page 5.

>> JOBS @ LAC

The LAC is seeking two individuals to join our dynamic work team. Send résumé & cover letter to hr@lacnyc.org or fax 212.785.3685 by March 30. No phone calls, please.

Deputy Director

Reporting directly to the Executive Director, the Deputy Director will primarily be responsible for developing, directing, and coordinating programs, projects, and activities in the Professional Development and Referral Units of the LAC. Specific responsibilities include providing direction to the development of new training strategies in literacy education and public awareness. The Deputy Director will also participate in the cultivation and solicitation of foundation and individual support, as well as assist in the management of special projects, events, and the overall daily operations of the LAC. The Deputy Director will be a visionary self-starter who can identify and respond to current trends, with a proven ability to work with key external constituents, including public and private contributors and contractors, and with diverse local organizations and individuals. This highly qualified senior manager will have 5–10 years management experience in the nonprofit, private, and/or government sectors along with demonstrated experience in new program development that is responsive to educational and social policy initiatives. An advanced professional degree in education, management, or social work is preferred.

Literacy Specialist

The Literacy Specialist will provide training, technical assistance, and resource development as part of the LAC's citywide family literacy initiative. Reporting to the Director of Program Services, the Literacy Specialist will disseminate information to the LAC's family literacy network, as well as design and implement needs-based programming. Specifically, the Literacy Specialist will assist in the design and implementation of professional trainings for family literacy program staff; compile existing resources on family literacy and intergenerational learning; maintain contact, disseminate information, and conduct regular meetings with family literacy network members; maintain a database of family literacy network members, regularly updating information; respond to inquiries about the initiative from professionals and members of the public; maintain records; participate in professional development staff meetings; and represent the LAC at conferences and professional meetings. Some travel required. Master's degree or equivalent, and/or 3–7 years related experience in the field of adult education, parent education, early childhood education, or intergenerational programming desired.

For a complete list of current job openings in the local literacy community, go to www.lacnyc.org/jobs.htm.

The Struggle to Maintain Core Values *continued*

The most important changes programs made in response to WIA and welfare reform had to do with program operations and structures, instructional emphasis, access to resources, and assessment and documentation procedures.

Operational Changes

Some changes in program operations were responses to a changing learner population. For example, some programs added instructional hours for welfare clients or evening or Saturday classes for working students. One program decided to try a learning-lab format that allowed for drop-in, on-demand instruction for working students. Accountability demands led to other kinds of operational changes. One program closed to students one day a week to give staff time to complete paperwork. Another program began grouping students by “functioning levels” in order to teach to and document NRS outcomes more easily. Several programs added or enhanced student orientation for more systematic pre-testing. Some of these changes forced programs to reallocate staff resources, often decreasing instructional time.

Instructional Changes

Instructional changes included greater emphasis on pre-employment, job retention and training, and other “life skills,” as well as more time spent “teaching to the test” and identifying and documenting learner goals. In some states, work requirements for welfare recipients left teachers with a higher proportion of involuntary and “hard-to-serve” learners, including those with severe learning disabilities or drug addictions. Many teachers said that responding to new policies has made them feel they have to know more, do more, and spend more time with learners on non-academic matters—all without further training or additional pay.

Increased Access to Resources

While many saw the policy changes as impairing their ability to fulfill their core mission, some programs received additional funds as a result of welfare reform. These additional dollars allowed programs to add classes or support programs (usually related to employment) or to acquire new materials. In some cases, welfare reform increased learner demand for program services. Both WIA and welfare reform helped some programs create new, productive collaborations with other service agencies, leading to better communication and more efficient pooling of resources.

Assessment and Documentation Changes

As a result of WIA’s National Reporting System (NRS), many programs had to become more systematic about pre- and post-testing. A few programs, especially tutor-based programs, had to adopt new assessment instruments. All programs had to adjust to new procedures for tracking and reporting student outcomes, even though some had

procedures in place in anticipation of NRS that needed only to be adjusted. Many of those interviewed understood the need for accountability. One site coordinator said, “If I was the state and I was putting out money, I would want to know that there was progress being made with it.” However, many programs reported that heightened accountability came at a cost.

Although many programs report that they are collecting better data and making more strategic use of it, increased accountability has spawned a “fudge” factor at other programs. One director noted that, unless program staff feel confident a learner can pass the GED, they omit reporting GED attainment as a goal. Practitioners from at least three programs reported screening out some students they would previously have accepted, worrying that they will be penalized for accepting students who are unlikely to show quick gains.

Data management has added to many instructors’ workloads, sometimes at the cost of time spent working with learners. Administrators, too, report that time spent managing data takes away from their ability to act as educational leaders. Many reported feeling burned out and demoralized by the increased demands.

Some programs also noted changes in student morale. While some programs found that the accountability system encouraged students because it enabled them to see tangible results for their efforts, other programs reported that students resisted testing and were discouraged by the results. At least one teacher noted that increased testing caused more students to drop out of his class.

Implications

Practitioners’ perceptions of the changes brought about by WIA and welfare reform were mixed. However, most felt the changes came at the sacrifice of their ability to focus on their core mission. They did not simply drop what they had been doing in order to respond to new demands. Rather, they usually tried to integrate the new with the old, in the process adding substantially to their workload.

The solution to the problem of being relegated by policy makers to a passive role is to become active. E. Hayes’s article in *The Welfare-to-Work Challenge for Adult Literacy Educators* (Jossey-Bass, 1999) asserts that, since there is no opting out of unlikable or impractical policies, practitioners need to advocate for change. They need to become well informed about the law, educate policymakers, and create new networks. The practitioners I interviewed who had been involved at the state level in determining implementation procedures for WIA were well positioned to use their connections and knowledge to support appropriate program change. Working with top-down policies that emerge from political agendas rather than from the needs of the field need not mean martyr-like acceptance. Rather, such policies demand professional commitment and action. Only by advocating for what we believe in can we hope to assist learners in reaching the outcomes they deserve. ●

Balanced Literacy Instruction

> by Gayle Cooper-Shpirt *City University of New York Adult Literacy Program*

Balanced literacy is an approach to reading education that combines phonics instruction with whole-language approaches that emphasize comprehension and fluency. Traditionally, students have been taught to read using either “top-down” techniques, which focus on comprehension, or “bottom-up” techniques, which focus on decoding. Though these strategies were once considered opposed to each other, recent research suggests that new and developing readers should learn and practice both sets of skills (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, National Academy Press, 1998).

Balanced literacy instructional programs take many forms, but they always include a variety of activities that foster word recognition, fluency, comprehension, and writing development. Depending on the context, activities can take between 10 and 45 minutes and can be conducted independently, in pairs or small groups, or with the entire class. Because every activity develops a different aspect of literacy, each is generally repeated at least once every third session. Most balanced literacy programs include some of the following components.

Reading Aloud and Modeled Reading. Teachers read to students to demonstrate proficient reading, to provide access to texts that are beyond students’ ability to read (but not comprehend), to build vocabulary, and to introduce students to a variety of genres. Even students who read at the lowest levels can be taught complex concepts through thoughtfully planned read-alouds.

Shared Reading, Dyadic Reading, Echoic Reading. In shared or dyadic reading, teachers and students (or student pairs) read aloud chorally, using short, level-appropriate texts. Shared reading provides an opportunity for teachers to model phrasing and for students to engage in repeated reading, which increases fluency. Echoic reading supports the same skills, but the teacher reads first, and students repeat the same text.

Guided Reading. Students work in small groups based on shared strengths and needs. The teacher models a strategy using a level-appropriate text. Strategies can include bottom-up techniques—for example, examining word parts to support decoding—or top-down techniques—making predictions, asking questions, or visualizing while reading. Students practice the strategy as they read the text independently. Afterward, the teacher may review the strategy and ask students to share their experiences. Guided reading sessions allow students to practice a repertoire of reading strategies and develop independence.

Independent Reading. Students select their own texts, which they read silently during class time. Teachers may conduct pre-reading “think-alouds” to discuss strategies for choosing a text and to remind students of guided reading techniques, but students are on their own during independent reading time. Independent reading helps students increase stamina, develop tastes, and practice strategies outside of the guided reading group.

Writing Workshop. The teacher presents writing “mini-lessons” addressing issues that have come up in previous student writing; the mini-lessons introduce students to top-down and bottom-up strategies, stylistic and genre-specific features of writing, and aspects of the writing process. Following the mini-lesson, students work at their own pace. Simultaneously, the teacher holds “mini-conferences” with five to eight students per class period. Toward the end of the workshop, students share their writing, either in small groups or with the entire class. Writing workshops help students understand and engage in all aspects of the writing process.

Shared Writing. Students and teacher compose a piece of writing together. With beginning students, the teacher may act as a scribe, writing student-generated sentences verbatim so that students can then copy them. With more advanced students, the teacher guides the writing, helping students focus on specific print and genre conventions. Students contribute as their skill and comfort levels allow. Shared writing draws attention to letters, words, sounds, and organizational structure. It also helps beginners with punctuation and the physical process of putting pen to paper.

Guided Writing. The teacher models writing in a specific genre, such as the journal or the essay. Teachers may introduce the genre by drafting material on the board, thus demonstrating the writing process, or by reading accessible examples, such as samples of student work. Students then write in the designated genre with the teacher’s support. This activity introduces students to different forms of writing and helps them practice writing with a specific purpose in mind.

Independent Writing. Students compose their own texts, sometimes with the help of fellow students. Independent writing helps students develop fluency, allows them to come up with their own objective for writing, and promotes the use of writing as a private, “thinking” activity.

Word Study. Students study how words work using hands-on activities: sorting words based on orthographic features, playing word-study games, keeping word-study notebooks, and applying what they learn to the texts they read. Students may learn about letter names, letter-sound relationships, word patterns, syllables, and affixes and roots. Words are chosen based on students’ developmental levels. Word study promotes fast and accurate recognition and production of words, so that readers and writers can be free to focus on making meaning.

Balanced literacy instruction looks different depending upon the levels, strengths, and needs of students. The classroom context and student needs and strengths determine how individual teachers use the model. It’s a flexible and dynamic approach that respects students as individuals and recognizes the complexity of the ways in which they learn. ●

See the Calendar on page 6 for an LAC professional development workshop on balanced literacy, March 15 and 16.

Employment for Adults with Limited English Proficiency

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) released a policy brief entitled “The Language of Opportunity: Expanding Employment Prospects for Adults with Limited English Skills” in August 2003. Written by Heide Spruck Wrigley, Elise Richer, Karin Martinson, Hitomi Kubo, and Julie Strawn, the report outlines the demographics of low-income adults with limited English proficiency (LEP) and recommends ways to provide access to high-paying jobs for LEP adults. Below are some highlights of the report’s findings; the complete report, as well as a seven-page brief, is available from www.clasp.org (search on the title and authors listed above).

The Immigrant Workforce

The report’s conclusions about the presence and needs of immigrant adults emphasize the need for adequate training and education for LEP adults.

> According to the 2000 Census, 8.3 million adults, or 5% of all working-age adults in the U.S., speak English not well or not at all. Most of these are immigrants or refugees.

> Immigrants accounted for fully half of the growth in the U.S. workforce in the years 1990–2001.

> In the next two decades, as immigration continues to increase and baby boomers retire, immigrants are expected to provide all of the net growth in the U.S. workforce.

> New immigrants are increasingly settling in cities and states that have not previously served as “gateway” locations (such as New York City).

> Because many immigrants, particularly recent arrivals, have limited English skills and educational backgrounds from their own countries, they are more likely than the native population to work in low-wage jobs.

> Recent immigrants are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as native-born Americans.

Effective Language and Job Training

Based primarily on research in welfare-to-work programs—because there is little research specifically on education and training programs for LEP adults—the authors make specific recommendations on the most effective ways to prepare LEP adults for higher-paying jobs.

> The most effective training focuses on a combination of services, including ESOL instruction, job search skills, and job training, which includes both the skills needed for a specific occupation and the “soft” skills that help immigrants adapt to the U.S. workplace.

> Short-term “bridge” programs are needed to move LEP adults quickly into job training and higher education. Immigrants with limited resources simply do not have time to go through a sequence that starts with ESOL education, moves through GED preparation, and only then provides the opportunity for job training or college education.

> Current job training programs must be adapted to fit the needs of LEP adults. Recommended changes include assessing language proficiency rather than simply basic skills, hiring bilingual staff, and providing hands-on training to help LEP adults learn job skills more quickly.

> Program staff and LEP learners should plan together for a career path that can lead from a lower-skilled job for which the LEP adult is currently qualified, through positions of increasing responsibility that require higher levels of education and English language skill.

> In areas that are bilingual, job training in the native language can move LEP adults quickly into employment; they can continue their English-language education while working, in order to enhance their long-term prospects for a high-paying job.

The CLASP report also makes recommendations for state and national policymakers, such as providing for the combination of services suggested above in the Workforce Investment Act, allowing legal immigrants to receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits and services (currently, immigrants must wait five years before receiving TANF), and allowing more than the current 12-month limit on education and training under TANF so that immigrants have enough time to acquire both the language and job skills they need to get a good job.

LAC Professional Development Center Open Hours

Every Monday, 1–5 pm

Computer Learning Center

Learn how to select the software and websites most appropriate for your curriculum and how to integrate popular office software into project-based learning in our 16-station Internet-connected computer lab. For information, contact Mariann Fedele, 212.803.3325 or mariannf@lacnyc.org.

Dan Rabideau Clearinghouse

Explore the city’s largest collection of materials for adult literacy education. From professional development resources to ABE curricula, our collection features a diverse array of books, journals, and audiovisual resources. For information, contact Dr. Winston Lawrence, 212.803.3326 or winstonl@lacnyc.org.

The Clearinghouse will be closed on March 15, though the computer lab will remain open.

GETTING THE WORD OUT



New York Reads, a partnership between the LAC and Verizon Reads, is launching a poster campaign this month to raise public awareness of literacy needs. The poster “Everybody Loves Reading,” features the female cast members of the popular television series *Everybody Loves Raymond*. The message of Literacy Champions Doris Roberts, Patricia Heaton, and Monica Horan is “Everybody loves reading— but 1 in 3 adult New Yorkers can’t read a story to a child.” The poster encourages the public to call the LAC Literacy Referral Hotline to volunteer in a literacy program or to refer someone they know who needs to improve their literacy or English language skills. The poster will be distributed at NY Reads and LAC events and may even appear in newspaper and magazine ads. In addition to Verizon, corporate sponsors include Scholastic, Inc., IBM, and others. Single copies are being mailed to all LAC constituents; to receive free bulk copies for distribution, contact Jan Gallagher, director of communications, jang@lacnyc.org or 212.803.3332.



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