



LITERACY UPDATE

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Literacy Assistance Center

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Addressing New York's Topic A

The Immigrant Family Literacy Alliance

> **Jack Rosenthal** *President, The New York Times Company Foundation*

Full disclosure. It has become common for journalists to say this phrase in order to acknowledge personal involvement in a subject. Here's mine: I am an immigrant. My father, from Germany, and my mother, from Lithuania, came to this country by way of what was then Palestine, where I was born. I proudly remember a moment at the YWCA in Portland, Oregon, when I was eight. The occasion was a naturalization ceremony, and I, knees shaking in my short pants, was called on to lead all 200 new citizens, including my parents, in the Pledge of Allegiance.

My father came to this country with serviceable English, but my mother knew almost none. I vividly remember playing on the floor while she and dozens of other women laboriously inscribed "pin" and "pen" on the blackboard. Even many years later, my mother spoke a unique English. She would complain, for instance, that my daughter was spending money "like a drunken driver" or that waiting for us to call her each Sunday was like "sitting on pins and noodles." Still, she and her classmates learned English, and I learned firsthand that knowing the language was the way to become a real American.

The Obvious Direction

So when we at The Times Company Foundation asked ourselves what new urgent need we should now work to meet, I was predisposed—full disclosure—to look in one direction. Indeed, at this moment in New York City history, that direction is obvious. With crime down, high school graduation rates up, and the mayoral campaign over, Topic A is immigration. And for immigrants, Topic A must surely be English.

The City Planning Commission tells us that 40 percent of the city's population is now foreign born, the most since 1905. And the

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Old Year's Resolutions

> Elyse Barbell *Executive Director*

When talking with my daughters about their New Year's resolutions, I was struck by how familiar their wishes sounded. They were not only similar to the resolutions they made a year ago—they were remarkably akin to ones I made when I was their ages, \$%#\$\$# years ago. I perceive their world as a much different place from the one in which I grew up, and the challenges they face far riskier than my own—yet their desire to have world peace, keep their rooms clean, and earn the right to acquire the latest *it* toy is as old as the ages.

I had the same feeling when I recently talked with a group of NYC's literacy leaders. The provision of adult literacy services in the age of accountability, under the constant threat of budget cuts, is far more challenging now than it was 20 years ago. Yet, despite the myriad of rules and requirements, these dedicated practitioners-turned-leaders are still deeply engaged in the process of providing extraordinarily tailored services to ensure that every learner need is met—and met well. I am struck (again) by how hard we still work to serve—to teach—our learners in the face of these odds.

With this thought in mind, I have watched and listened to the many individuals who come to the LAC each week from a wide variety of sectors, and have realized that this commitment is not exclusive to the “leaders.” I've witnessed the same dedication from everyone—teachers, volunteer tutors, data managers, student organizers, curriculum developers, you name it. After the (legitimate) griping is over, we are left with a community of thoughtful, caring, smart, and surprisingly energized literacy providers who are perfectly willing to reinvent the wheel—each time making it more effective than the last. The value of this investment of time, energy, and persistence is priceless.

So, finally, I sat down to make my list of New Year's resolutions:

- > Work for world peace
- > Buy an Ipod
- > Support the provision of high quality adult literacy services to help adults and families become more confident, productive, and active members of their communities—the LAC's mission for the past 20 years. ●



LITERACY UPDATE

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SPOTlight

> Louis Miceli *Workforce Professionals Training Institute*

When adult learners are asked to consider what is more important to them, the education they have attained or the job they have (or hope to acquire), they often have difficulty discerning which is most important.

The Adult Education Conundrum

As an adult educator and workforce development practitioner/manager, I was often confronted with what appeared to be competing priorities in my training rooms: Adult learners came to our programs to learn English, to acquire a secondary diploma, to get assistance to enter college. Where did employment fit in? When I struggled to work with our teachers to help young people achieve a 9.0 TABE math score, it seemed that a part-time job at the local retail chain paying minimum wage equated with anything *but* opportunity.

When we worked hard to get our learners engaged in our programs, and then lost them after a few months because they acquired part-time, low-wage, low-skilled jobs, I was frustrated, and often the teachers in our programs were demoralized. Three precious months of intensive learning can often make only a small dent in the learning gains needed for school drop-outs, low-skilled or non-readers, or persons whose native language is other than English.

Over time, as our learners continued to leave our programs to get jobs, or worked concurrently with our training courses, coming in after a long day to struggle through three hours of evening instruction, we had to take notice. Many told us that work was as important as their capacity to master English, pass the GED exam, or get into college or further training.

So my team got together and talked about how to better address both needs of our learners. Part of the answer rested in something that was right in front of us, something we already practiced—career development—which involves teaching about employment in our academic programs and contextualizing academic competencies with workplace competencies.

Thinking about Careers

“Career” is often defined as a sequence of progressive life experiences that connect one’s education, employment, and occupational goals. Most of our teachers and trainers, through adopting a developmental or learner-centered philosophy and approach to our curriculum, had already integrated much of our students’ feedback regarding what they needed to learn, and how what they learned could be contextualized for the workplace.

One clear program goal required teachers and learners to integrate their community into the classroom, and vice-versa. It was common to see an ESOL instructor with a group of Chinese-speaking students out and about among the shops in Sunset Park, discussing and debating the necessary tools to negotiate grocery purchases or using basic math skills to calculate a household budget.

Education and Employment at Odds? Not in the Career Developmental Model

Things began to change when some of these ESOL students asked their job supervisors to host a class visit. Such field trips—almost always initiated by students—became rich opportunities for learners and instructors alike to get a clear sense of the skills necessary to thrive in the workplace, regardless of the particular occupation. For instance, a visit to a warehouse allowed us to integrate safety and hazardous materials awareness into our intermediate and high school science curriculum. Students in the construction trades connected our trainers to specialized tradespersons: during site visits to studios, students explored math skills associated with carpentry; later, they created worksheets on using fractions in the workplace. Because learners’ needs and interests drove the curriculum, the career development model was developmentally appropriate and learner centered.

Bringing It Together

What made the difference for us was connecting the worlds of workplace preparation and adult education, building flexibility into our curriculum and our scheduling, so that students could work while they learned. We integrated academic activities, resulting in educational gains as well as improved job performance. In our career development model, students can connect classroom activities to workplace expectations. They are more likely to understand abstract academic concepts when those concepts are connected to a job they know and like. With improved academic skills, they are able to improve their workplace performance and, by correlation, their ability to keep their jobs. Many of our pre-GED-1 students, those with TABE scores of 5–8, experienced impressive academic gains in the contextualized classes—in some instances, two full grade levels in three months.

Workforce development and adult education are complex, dynamic fields that exist in a political and sometimes burdensome funding environment in New York City. The “forces of change” are upon us, as federal legislation will continue to compel educational and employment services to be more seamlessly integrated. So where does one begin? In February, the LAC and WPTI will co-sponsor a special event in which practitioners from both fields will convene to talk about the challenge of bringing education and employment services together. ●

Workforce Professionals Training Institute (WPTI), founded by Louis Micelli in 2003, is a non-profit training intermediary organization that, similar to the LAC, provides professional development opportunities for staff in a variety of non-profit organizations, including workforce development organizations, community colleges, youth programs, and multi-service community-based non-profit organizations. For more information, visit them at www.workforceprofessionals.org, or call 646.278.5686.

RESOURCES >> for Educators Working with Immigrant Families

> Alecia D'Angelo *Professional Development Associate*

The more informed we are on issues of immigration and public school reform, the more effective we are as ESOL family literacy teachers. These resources offer crucial background information for educators teaching in an immigrant family literacy setting.

Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners

www.familit.org/Publications/Practitioner-Toolkit-ELL.cfm

Published by the National Center for Family Literacy, the National Center for ESL Literacy Education, and the Center for Applied Linguistics, this toolkit offers a foundation for thinking about family instruction that is relevant to the linguistic and content needs of parents, making it especially useful for new family literacy practitioners or newly-funded family literacy programs. Specifically, “Part III: Parent Education in Family Literacy Programs” and “Part IV: Topics in Adult ESL Education and Family Literacy” offer thoughtful ideas of teaching approaches for ESOL family literacy classes.

Immigrants and Schooling: Mexicans in New York

Edited by Regina Cortina and Mónica Gendrea

The Center for Migration Studies of New York, 2003

There are over 11,000 Mexican-born students in the NYC public school system. This number is expected to grow. This book is a collection of essays that explore the current trends in Mexican immigration to New York City and how educators can best nurture the needs of families of Mexican origin. The essays explain the system of education in Mexico, as well as the educational and social experiences of children arriving in New York. The book offers valuable suggestions for how to create successful partnerships between teachers and parents and how to provide the best possible opportunities for educational success for New Yorkers of Mexican origin.

Leaving Children Behind: How “Texas Style” Accountability Fails Latino Youth

Edited by Angela Valenzuela

State University of New York Press, 2005

This book questions the state of “high stakes” testing that currently exists across the U.S. Children and teens are being assessed on the basis of their performance on a single test score. Valenzuela has assembled essays that argue for obtaining a more well rounded picture of student ability. She calls for the development of a rigorous, yet holistic academic assessment system. The concepts in this book make for engaging content discussions in parent time or ESOL classes.

No Child Left Behind, Educational and Advocacy Series

Harvard University Civil Rights Project

The *No Child Left Behind, Educational and Advocacy Series* includes a resource guide and video series that break down the No Child Left Behind Legislation into small chunks of immediate interest to parents and educators. The guide and video use plain language to explain the law itself and the way the law affects schools and children. Topics in the resource guide include graduation rate accountability, teacher quality, general testing issues, the effects of testing on minorities, the effects of testing on curriculum, and NCLB school report cards. The series provides a simple breakdown of how schools are accountable under No Child Left Behind and how the law should and should not affect children’s academic success. It is particularly useful for parents with children attending public schools who have been labeled “In Need of Improvement” under NCLB. The series is available for order at Harvard University Civil Rights Project website at www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu.

Urgent Message for Parents, Community Action for Public Schools

Center for Law and Education

www.cleweb.org

This brief, yet informative booklet offers simple, plain language explanations of school standards and the rights of parents to advocate for children. It is a great resource for family literacy classes with parents who have questions about school performance and accountability. It offers suggestions on how parents can become further involved in their children’s education. Refreshingly, the suggestions are both practical and realistic given the multiple responsibilities that parents balance.

Reaching Out to Diverse Populations: What Can Schools Do to Foster Family-School Connections?

By Chris Ferguson

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, September, 2005

Though geared toward public schools, this strategy brief is useful for family literacy practitioners working in all settings. Ferguson offers suggestions for initiating effective collaboration among families and schools. He focuses on respecting families and developing outreach strategies that engage parents and their interests. He also provides some great ideas for talking to parents about school involvement or working with schools to strengthen parent involvement. The strategy brief is available online at www.sedl.org/connections/. ●



Call for Nominations for Literacy Recognition Awards

The LAC invites you to join us in celebrating the achievements of the NYC literacy community by nominating an outstanding NYC literacy practitioner to be honored at the 21st annual Literacy Recognition Award Ceremony. The ceremony will take in late May or June 2006. Each honoree's program will receive a library development grant from the Bookbinders' Guild of New York.

Eligible candidates must be:

- > Administrators, teachers, volunteers, counselors, staff developers, or support staff members
- > Currently working in a BE, ESOL, Math, BENL, GED, family literacy, health literacy, or related program that serves learners age 16 and over
- > An outstanding contributor to the success of their students, their program, and/or the NYC literacy community

For nomination guidelines and to download a nomination form, visit our website at www.lacnyc.org or call Tony Pupello 212.803.3330. Nominations are due by January 31.

New from NCSALL

NCSALL recently announced the availability of two new study circle guides and a forum guide. Designed for adult basic education and literacy practitioners, the *Research-Based Adult Reading Instruction* provides the steps, materials, and readings to conduct a 10-hour study circle. The *Skills for Health Care Access and Navigation* is a 15-hour study circle designed to prepare participants to help their students develop basic skills needed for accessing health-related services and for navigating health care systems. The *Health Literacy Public Health Forums: Partners for Action* was designed to assist public health professionals and members of departments of health to conduct a forum on health literacy.

To download free copies or to order printed copies of these publications, please visit the NCSALL website at www.ncsall.net.

LAC Welcomes New Program Staff

This fall, the LAC welcomed two new staff members. Nell Eckersley (left) is our new ALIES program operations coordinator. Before she joined the LAC, Nell was the director of the adult ESOL program at the Edith and Carl Marks Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst. Her familiarity with the practical application of NRS and ALIES, combined with her knowledge of policy issues surrounding adult education, will be of great value to the field.

Irrit Dweck (right) will be working on the LAC's Health Literacy Initiative as a professional development associate. Irrit comes to the LAC from Catholic Charities, where she coordinated the ESOL program for refugees and political asylees. In addition to creating and implementing curriculum for intermediate and advanced ESOL classes, Irrit was responsible for developing relationships with cultural institutions that offered free programs to the classes. Prior to that, Irrit worked at the Arab American Family Support center where she was able to use her Arabic to help recent Arabic-speaking immigrants advocate for themselves immediately following 9/11.

The NYC Consortium for ABE Conference Call for Presenters

The York City Consortium for Adult Basic Education recently announced a call for presenters for its 27th annual conference, to be held on Saturday, May 6, at Fashion Industries High School in Manhattan. The theme of this year's conference is "Building a Partnership for Success." The NYC Consortium for ABE is interested in presentations that highlight outstanding and innovative practices and capture issues relevant to the field. Presenters are encouraged to actively involve teachers and students in the workshop; to use audio-visual aids, group activities, and roundtable or panel discussions; and to have team presentations. An auditorium is available for any workshop format involving a large numbers of attendees. Submissions are due on February 15.

Submission forms are available on the LAC's website at www.lacnyc.org/about/announcements. For more information, contact Carolyn Fernando at 212.243.5458 or sonofhendrick@yahoo.com.

Guide to Online Resources on Family Involvement

A new guide from the Harvard Family Research Project contains information about what national organizations are currently doing in family involvement and home-school partnerships. It contains web links to research, information, programs, and tools about parenting practices to support children's learning and development, home-school relationships, parent leadership development, and collective engagement for school improvement and reform. The resource guide is located at www.gse.harvard.edu. ●

CALENDAR of events >>

Jan. 10

ALIES Data Entry

Tuesday, January 10, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

Facilitator: Kate Tornese, Literacy Volunteers of Westchester County, Inc.

This one-day training provides a comprehensive introduction to the ALIES data entry process. Highlights include navigating ALIES data entry screens; upgrading ALIES; backing up data; inputting student, class, and instructor information; and updating outcomes, tests, and contact hours. New data entry users, as well as those who need a refresher, are invited to attend. This session will also be held on February 16. Please attend only one session.

RSVP: ALIES Support at 212.803.3357 or aliessupport@lacnyc.org.

Jan. 20

Popular Education: Civic Leadership and Student Engagement, Part 2

Friday, January 20, 1:30–4:30 pm

Facilitators: David Greene & Calvin Miles, Grassroots Literacy Coalition

Explore how to facilitate the growth of student leaders while helping students develop their language and literacy skills. Specifically, examine ways in which students can effectively create, present, and communicate messages to different audiences.

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

Jan. 27, Feb. 17, Mar. 3

Teaching Health Literacy: Disease Prevention and Screening

Friday, January 27, 1–5 pm

Friday, February 17, 1–5 pm

Friday, March 3, 1–5 pm

Facilitator: Winston Lawrence, Ed.D.

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 three-part series focuses on integrating health literacy—specifically the skills need for disease prevention and screening—into the ABE and ESOL curriculum. Participation is limited to those who have attended the first two health literacy study circles. Participants are required to attend all three sessions.

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

Jan. 31

Instructional Methods for the Adult Literacy Classroom

Are you interested in using student-centered practices in the classroom? Are you looking for new ways to encourage student participation? Designed for ESOL, GED, and ABE instructors, this hands-on, activity-oriented series introduces five instructional methods and techniques for the adult literacy classroom: cooperative learning, project-based learning, ways of using authentic materials in the classroom, ways of using new technologies in the classroom, and ways of applying multiple intelligence theory and individual learning styles inventories in the classroom.

Using New Technologies in the Adult Literacy Classroom

Tuesday, January 31, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

Facilitator: Mariann Fedele

From wikis to podcasts to blogs, this workshop will introduce some of the latest technologies being used to support adult literacy instruction. There will be examples of teachers who have successfully integrated technology into their students' learning experiences, as well as opportunities to practice using the technologies.

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

Feb. 7 & 28, Mar. 14, Apr. 4

Financial and Consumer Literacy Education for Families

Tuesday, February 7, 9:30 am–4 pm

Tuesday, February 28, 9:30 am–1 pm

Tuesday, March 14, 9:30 am–1 pm

Tuesday, April 4, 9:30 am–1 pm

Facilitators: Lisa Van Brackle, Irrit Dweck, & Alecia D'Angelo

This four-part series for adult and family literacy educators explores approaches and strategies for teaching financial and consumer literacy. Examine student needs and learn about a curriculum framework that outlines ways of approaching three pertinent topics: navigating financial and consumer systems, chronic financial concerns, and smart habits. Based on this framework, develop an action plan and lessons that integrate financial literacy into adult and family literacy curricula. Attendance at all four sessions is required. Space is limited, so registration is essential.

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

Feb. 10

Family Educator Network

Friday, February 10, 9:30 am–1 pm

Facilitator: Alecia D'Angelo

Open to adult and family literacy educators, parent coordinators, and K–12 educators, this meeting is an opportunity for educators to share their expertise and experiences working with parents and caregivers. The goals of the network are to share resources and examine effective instructional strategies for supporting parental involvement in schools, and to identify and discuss research on best practices in parent education. There will be hands-on and participatory group-learning activities. Space is limited, so registration is essential.

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

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

Feb. 10

Storytelling and Music in the ESOL Classroom

Friday, February 10, 1:30–4:30 pm

Facilitator: Regina Ress, ESOL Consultant

Stories often have a musical component, and music often tells a story. In this highly participatory workshop, popular storyteller Regina Ress demonstrates how to integrate storytelling and music into the ESOL classroom. Learn how to use the arts to enhance the practice of the four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and to teach vocabulary and grammar, all the while encouraging cross-cultural awareness and personal expression.

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

Feb. 16

ALIES Data Entry

Thursday, February 16, 9:30 am–4:30 pm

Facilitator: Kate Tornese, Literacy Volunteers of Westchester County, Inc.

See January 10 for description.

RSVP: ALIES Support at 212.803.3357 or aliessupport@lacnyc.org.

Feb. 21

Instructional Methods for the Adult Literacy Classroom

See January 31 for series description.

Using Authentic Materials in the Adult Literacy Classroom

Tuesday, February 21, 9:30 am–3:30 pm

Facilitator: Alecia D'Angelo

From a child's report card to an electric bill, a job application to the evening news, authentic materials are the various texts we all encounter in our everyday lives. Research shows that using these kinds of materials in ESOL classes increases student motivation. In this interactive workshop, examine reasons for using authentic texts in the classroom, explore ways of introducing and teaching with these texts through hands-on lesson planning, and discuss how they can be used to connect reading and content area instruction.

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

LAC Professional Development Center Open Hours

Every Monday, 1–5 pm

Closed Monday, January 2, 2006

Computer Learning Center

Visit our 16-station Internet-connected computer lab to explore ways to use computers to enhance instruction. Browse the web for sites that lend themselves to your lessons, or build a project that uses common office software to enhance communication skills. 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. The collection of books, journals, and audiovisual materials encompasses professional development materials as well as curriculum and reading materials for ESOL, ABE, and GED learners. For information, contact Dr. Winston Lawrence, 212.803.3326 or winstonl@lacnyc.org.

Immigrant Access to Health Care

> Irrit Dwick *Professional Development Associate*

ESOL teachers play many different roles as they train students to advocate for themselves and their families. During a unit on health, students often come to teachers with medical bills, prescriptions, health insurance pamphlets, and a slew of questions. Often, immigrant students are afraid of or nervous about using a hospital for fear of how it might affect their immigration status. As teachers, we do not always have the information at our fingertips or the resources to answer these questions. The New York Immigration Coalition does. In their three-hour workshop entitled “Immigrant Access to Health Care,” the New York Immigration Coalition answered many of the concerns voiced by our students.

The workshop is divided into three categories:

- > Access to health care for uninsured immigrants
- > Immigrant eligibility for public health coverage in NYS
- > Immigrant concerns

The material covered gives teachers the resources and tools they need to help their students navigate through the complex health care system of New York City.

The facilitator explained that all immigrants have the right to be treated for a medical emergency. In the event of a medical emergency, undocumented low-income immigrants can apply for emergency Medicaid. Additionally, health professionals are not supposed to report patients to immigration authorities. Furthermore, using benefits does not prevent U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents from sponsoring relatives.

This is just some of the useful information that The New York Immigration Coalition shared at the workshop. The New York Immigration Coalition (www.thenyic.org) is a resource for teachers and case managers. It can help guide us through the complex web of the health care system of New York. This in turn will assist our students in advocating for themselves to receive better health care. ●

RAEN Update

> Ira Yankwitt *Director of Professional Development/ NYC RAEN*

As part of the New York City Regional Adult Education Network (NYC RAEN) project, we are initiating a Practitioners Roundtable series. Unlike our Program Manager’s Series, which typically centers around presentations on policy or research, these roundtables are designed to provide practitioners with an opportunity to share best practices and to develop strategies for addressing pressing concerns. Our first roundtable, which took place on December 15, focused on the BEST Plus test and ESOL student placement. Notes from this session are available at the Professional Development section of our website.

Subsequent roundtables will focus on issues such as funding and advocacy; intake, goal-setting, and outcomes reporting; and connecting adult literacy to postsecondary education and workforce development. For more information, contact Ira Yankwitt at 212.803.3356 or email iray@lacnyc.org. ●

CONFERENCES

February

Learning Disabilities Association of America Annual Conference

February 26–March 1, Jacksonville, FL
www.ldanatl.org/conference/index.asp

2nd National Head Start Hispanic Institute

Head Start Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration on Children, Youth and Families
February 27–March 3, Denver, CO
www.hsnrc.org/Hispanic/index.cfm

March

3rd Annual (Net)Working Conference on Women & Literacy

WE LEARN (Women Expanding—Literacy Education Action Resource Network)
March 10–11, New Haven, CT
www.litwomen.org/welearn.html

40th Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.
March 15–19, Tampa Bay, FL
www.tesol.org/tesol2006

April

Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) 2006 Conference

COABE and the Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education
April 26–29, Houston, TX
www.coabe06.org/

2006 Reading Research Conference

International Reading Association
April 29, Chicago, IL
www.reading.org/association/meetings/research

Addressing New York's Topic A *continued*

city's population is now probably the largest it has ever been; the official estimate is 8.2 million, but some officials think it is 200,000 larger than that.

In any event, there are two striking differences between 1905 and now. Then, the newcomers were mostly Irish, Italians, and Russian Jews. They came when unskilled jobs were plentiful, and they settled into enclaves large enough to support their native languages and cultures. The 21st-century newcomers hail from a hundred countries and come at a time when finding work and success depends ever more on knowing English.

The obvious challenge, then, is to find ways to reach many more of the 2 million-plus immigrants who speak English poorly or not at all. Small as we are, The Times Company Foundation could never hope alone to provide literacy services for more than a handful. But we are associated with a respected media company, an institution with convening power.

Allies for the Cause

That's why, starting a year ago, we connected with three expert and energetic allies. One is Jeanne Mullgrav, commissioner of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, which had recently launched nine pilot programs to bring family literacy to immigrant neighborhoods. Another is Nina Mogilnik and the Altman Foundation, who have consistently done pioneering work in the field. As the third partner, we turned to Elyse Barbell and the Literacy Assistance Center, which our foundation has supported for years. We called an all-day meeting of funders, service providers, and other authorities, local and national, at The New York Times last January. The meeting produced spirited discussion and two major points of interest. Of the 50 people invited, 75 showed up; that is, word got around, and others were eager to join in. Second, we all quickly agreed to create the Immigrant Family Literacy Alliance in order to work toward identifying and promulgating best practices, and to advocate for increased public and private services.

Greatly encouraged, we came out of the meeting and made this offer to City Hall: For every new dollar the City would commit to immigrant family literacy, we would undertake to raise half a dollar in private funds. Six weeks later, at the second meeting of the Immigrant Family Literacy Alliance, Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott gave the City's gratifying response: \$1.8 million in new funding annually for at least three years. Whoa, we said to ourselves. By making good on our part of the bargain, raising an additional \$900,000, we could ensure literacy instruction for at least a thousand more families.

Since then, our steering committee and other Alliance partners have learned how labor-intensive it is to raise money, even for Topic A. We think we have commitments now for \$600,000 of our pledge and are visiting other potential donors in the hope that we can raise the remainder while 2006 is still young.

More Hands Raised

Meanwhile, on the substantive side, the Department of Youth and Community Development, notably Commissioner Mullgrav and Richard Fish, are just issuing a detailed request for proposals inviting family literacy providers to show how they would bring their skills to some of the least-served parts of the city.

Experts tell us not only that family literacy helps make immigrant adults employable, but also that when the parents learn, their children do twice as well. DYCD's existing pilot programs demonstrate the potential. At one after-school pilot in a Washington Heights public school, two dozen elementary school students and parents excitedly answer questions about the fairy tale they've just read and illustrated. The hands that wave most eagerly are those of the young mothers. By next fall, we hope, there will be many more such hands raised; there will be another generation of young newcomers to Pledge Allegiance; and there will be another generation of adults who have learned to make their own way and to help their children succeed.

Even if that means they have to wait on pins and noodles. ●

Story Time

Using Children's Literature to Integrate the Four Components of Family Literacy

> Anita Rich *Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)*

Read, read, read to your kids. Read aloud every day. Start early, before they are sitting up—even *in utero*—and don't stop when they begin to read on their own. Too often, parents and caregivers find this universal advice difficult to follow. Many don't know what books to select and have not developed the skills they need to read aloud to their children.

The eight family literacy programs DYCD operates all adhere to the National Center for Family Literacy's (NCFL) four-component model. The challenge is to integrate the components—an essential feature of the model. Children's literature can provide a unifying theme while enhancing literacy and learning for all participants.

Adult Literacy (ABE /ESOL Classes)

Some educators worry that adult students will be offended by reading children's literature in the classroom. However, in family literacy programs—where parents are committed to developing their literacy skills so they can read to their children, help with schoolwork, and develop strong bonds—using children's books is entirely appropriate.

Children's books, with their captivating stories, colorful illustrations, repetition, and rhythm, can be extremely useful in helping learners of all ages expand their vocabulary and develop their literacy skills.

Reading, listening to, and discussing children's books in adult education classes introduces parents to a range of children's books and authors, which will help them select books to read with their children. Reading aloud to adult learners helps them sharpen their listening and comprehension skills. Teachers should read with expression, providing a model for the parents when they read to their own children.

Choose books from a variety of cultures; some parents will bring their personal knowledge to the text and have their own experiences confirmed while others will be able to compare their own struggles with those of other ethnic groups. Even wordless picture books or stories with limited text can support literacy by providing an opportunity for storytelling in a family's native language.

Children's Education

The most important role of literature in children's education is to create a love of books and develop lifelong readers. Children who hear stories and handle books in infancy and early childhood tend to become early independent readers. Learning to read through books is also much more fun than the "skills and drills" of many workbooks. Take the following passage from Mary Ann Hoberman's *A House Is a House for Me* (Puffin, 1982):

A hill is a house for an ant, an ant.

A hive is house for a bee.

A hole is a house for a mole or a mouse

And a house is a house for me.

The repetitive language helps listeners predict what sentences are going to say, while rhyme, rhythm, and meter invite them to join in choral speaking of repeated phrases. As children become aware of the sounds of initial and final consonants, vowel sounds, and rhyming endings, phonics lessons emerge. "Teachable moments" arise from story when teachers focus on these elements that children enjoy and help them expand vocabulary, strengthen listening skills, improve memory, and develop a love of books.

Nonfiction for children includes informational books on all conceivable curriculum areas. Good nonfiction, which combines accurate, well-researched facts with colorful illustrations, are excellent for teaching or enriching social studies, science, and basic math concepts.

Parent Resources

The concept of "parent as a child's first teacher" may be new for many adults in family literacy programs. The parent resources curriculum should underscore the critical role of parents in children's growth and development, and the importance of books and shared literacy in the early years. During this component, parents should review the ways in which they already contribute to their children's learning, as well as explore new ways to support their children's development. This component is where parents can learn to assess children's books for quality by examining elements such as illustration, language, humor, character, story development, and setting.

PACT Time

PACT time—designed to enhance parents' awareness of how children learn—is at the heart of family literacy services. A collaborative and supportive environment, it is also an ideal setting for parents to practice their newly learned techniques. When children's literature is the integrating thread, parents can read books aloud to small groups of children while teachers and other parents offer suggestions and support. As they rehearse ways to blend illustrations with text, hold books comfortably, perfect pronunciation, modulate their voices, and initiate discussion, their self-confidence grows. Parents may "read" wordless picture books by telling the story in English or their native language, or, when possible, choose books written in their native language. As a supplement, parents and children might attend a storytelling hour at the library, where skilled librarians capture audiences with good books and excellent reading techniques.

Parents and children can also work together on book related activities, such as making costumes, props, and scenery in order to dramatize a story. For activity ideas to go with a specific book, visit the author's or publisher's website, or do a search on the book's title, since many teachers also post lesson plans on the web. Indeed, PACT time provides unlimited opportunities for families to develop literacy skills together. ●

New City Funding for Adult Learners

The New York City Council has two new initiatives underway that will significantly increase funding for adult literacy. Together, NYCWorks and the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative will provide \$21 million in new funding.

Workforce Education

The City Council's new initiative NYCWorks has allocated \$14 million to improve employment opportunities for unemployed and underemployed New Yorkers through education,

job-specific training, and job readiness programs. Thirty-two organizations or consortia were selected last month for contract negotiations for NYCWorks grants, administered by United Way. The programs selected are located in high-need communities throughout the five boroughs and include both adult- and youth-focused programs. For more information and a list of recipients, visit www.unitedwaynyc.org.

Immigrant Opportunity Initiative

The City Council has also announced recipients for most of the \$7 million it allocated to the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative. This funding restores a previous City Council initiative to help

immigrant adults gain access to English literacy education and to strengthen their participation in the democratic process. Included in the grants is funding for:

- > ESOL classes
- > Legal services to assist recent immigrants with applications for citizenship or permanent residency
- > Legal services for immigrants that focus on wage and hour disputes and other workforce issues

A total of 58 grants have been awarded, with over half going to providers of ESOL services.

National Assessment of Adult Learning

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released the long-awaited report on the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Learning (NAAL) on December 15. This is the first report on adult learning and literacy since the 1992 National Survey of Adult Literacy (NALS). The report will include data on six "participating states," which include New York.

Like its predecessor, NAAL defines *literacy* as "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." Like NALS, NAAL assessed three components: prose literacy, quantitative literacy, and document literacy.

NAAL also has five levels in each of these three areas, but the levels are defined differently than in 1992:

1. Nonliterate in English
2. Below basic literacy
3. Basic literacy
4. Intermediate literacy
5. Advanced literacy

One of the most important differences has to do with the Nonliterate in English level. Adults who were unable to complete the NAAL surveys were given an Adult Literacy Supplemental Assessment, which tested their ability to recognize letters and numbers and to understand simple prose and documents in context, such as food packaging. The level Nonliterate in English does not correspond to NALS Level 1; nor do the other four NAAL levels correspond to NALS Levels 2–5. However, the

report includes a correlation that may help clarify how the adult literacy picture has changed since 1992.

Another important difference answers objections to the NALS raised not only by educators but also in the press. NALS placed adults in a given level if they could accomplish of that level's tasks at least 80 percent of the time. NAAL changes that standard to 67 percent. Additional information is available at the NCES website, <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>.

The NAAL report has not been released as *Literacy Update* goes to press. The Literacy Assistance Center is gearing up to ensure that this major national report gets the public attention it deserves and to translate that attention into public support for adult and family literacy programs—an effort that will continue for months to come.

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Making Heads or Tails

> Kyusok Chong *College of Staten Island*

When I came to the United States two years ago, I couldn't speak or understand English very well. Although I learned English as a second language in Korea, we were not used to speaking English in school or at home. Consequently, I didn't quite follow what American people said to me, and my words couldn't get across to them, either. I wasn't able to make heads or tails of what they meant to say to me, which made me feel out of place.

First of all, I had a very poor repertory of English vocabulary essential for American daily life. For instance, when I once went to a supermarket with my wife, she needed some "Bread Crumbs." I didn't know the proper name for it, so I asked a saleslady who happened to be circulating the scene about

"Bread Powder." But she couldn't make out what it was, only making me feel awkward. From the beginning of my American life, wherever I went, each and every situation was like this.

Since I wanted to study English all over again, my friend told me that there must be a few programs for English adult literacy education at the College of Staten Island. Just a year ago, I joined the ESL class of Mrs. Avegale Torno, who enthusiastically taught us students English vocabulary, grammar, reading, listening, and pronunciation, as well as spelling. Moreover, she even showed us "Essentials to be a Writer" like prewriting, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing processes so we can make good writers one day.

In the end, I can tell heads from tails pretty well now, thanks to the Adult Literacy Program and the ESL class!

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