



LITERACY UPDATE

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Literacy Assistance Center

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Using a License to Drive Improvement *Professional Development in Massachusetts*

> Jon Steinberg

The Massachusetts ABE Teacher's License is voluntary. It is also very hard to get. Read these two facts and you probably have at least three questions: Why did the state's education authorities introduce this rigorous system but make it voluntary? Have many educators actually gotten a license? Has licensure significantly improved the quality of adult education in Massachusetts?

Before we provide some answers, let's look at just how difficult it is to get the ABE Teacher's License (which is actually a general license appropriate for all ABE, ESOL, and GED educators). First of all, you need a BA. If you've got less than five years of adult education experience, you will have to conduct at least 15 hours of field observation, including at least three hours in each of three different types of classes (e.g., ESL, GED); at least one of the classes has to involve instruction in mathematics. If you're a novice teacher, you

will also have to participate in a 75-hour pre-practicum and a 150-hour practicum.

Even if you already have a K-12 license, the requirements are demanding. If you're a novice teacher with a K-12 license, you have to participate in the 150-hour practicum. If you've spent five years in front of an adult education classroom, you still have to demonstrate your teaching expertise.

Then there's the performance portfolio. However many years of adult education experience you've got, you have to submit a portfolio that demonstrates your proficiency in professional standards, either by showing successful completion of coursework such as college-level courses and or by submitting other evidence of knowledge acquisition based on ABE experience. The standards you have to demonstrate proficiency in are:

- Understanding the adult learner

- Diversity and equity
- Instructional design and teaching approaches
- Learner assessment and evaluation
- Facilitating the learning environment
- Professionalism/continuing education

Then, there's the Adult Basic Education Subject Matter Test, the first of its kind in the nation (introduced in 2004). Every candidate has to take it. Most, if not all, will find it challenging. Since a lot of adult educators would rather not think about the math section, let's look at what's tested in Language Arts: the reading process, including the role of phonemic awareness, word analysis, phonics, structural analysis, vocabulary skills and strategies; literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension of literary and expository texts; and reading comprehension strategies, including metacognitive techniques (e.g.

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Thinking Strategically

> Elyse Barbell *Executive Director*

The LAC's central location has always been an important consideration for us and a part of our identity. Having a half dozen subways and busses and the Staten Island ferry steps from our door makes visiting us convenient for people in all five boroughs; we, in turn, can get anywhere in the city quickly. It has also had other consequences. Television (and surveillance) cameras have become our constant companions. On September 11, we had a front row seat to the devastation the world saw on TV. Since then, Wall Street has been a regular source of entertainment. Within a five-minute walk, you can get fed by Trump, dressed in diamonds and thousand dollar scarves, and buy 12 tiny, perfect cupcakes for \$20.

These last two months of being an actual nonprofit (as opposed to the banks and brokerage houses that didn't start out that way) located in the financial center of the world has been a new and unnerving experience. The change in stride and tone from confidence to fear is palpable. The walk from the World Trade Center past Wall Street is a daily reminder of what happens when you do not work carefully, think strategically, and plan for the future.

The LAC is in the last stages of completing the groundwork for a three year strategic plan. We are deeply grateful to all of you who contributed your ideas, and helped us understand your own planning processes and what you will be needing from us in the coming months and years.

Our vision is taking shape. We have established three key priorities for the future. Thanks to our new Adult Literacy Education Core Curriculum (ALECC), even more than in the past, this has been the year of the teacher at the LAC. ALECC will ensure that all new adult education instructors can base their curriculum development and implementation on a broad base of knowledge. As you can see from our new spring course catalog, we are also striving to meet and exceed the professional development needs of instructors at all levels, while providing management and leadership programs for managers and directors. Our vision for the future includes an Institute of Continuing Professional Education, which will offer intensive programs and certificates in major areas of adult education. Our goal is to ensure that New York City has the best trained adult educators in the world.

Our second major area for growth will be in network building and advocacy. Our work to date in the RAEN, the GED Testing Network, the Family Literacy Network, the College Transition network, the ESOL Teacher Share, the health literacy collaborative initiatives, and the Family Literacy network has convinced us that networks are a highly effective way for practitioners to share best practices, seek advice on challenges and formulate mutually beneficial programs and goals. We would like to find a way to link these networks together and to outside partners in a sophisticated advocacy strategy that can promote the adult literacy field and draw attention to the needs and contributions—existing and potential—of New Yorkers with limited literacy skills.

Finally, we want to expand our data and research arm. Now that ASISTS is functioning smoothly, we have an opportunity to draw on our deep data history and resources to make a strong case for the value of adult education.

We are well aware that these would be ambitious goals at any time, and particularly now, in the midst of this economic tsunami. Even so, we believe that in this time of crisis and flux we must not only work as hard as we can to preserve what we have already achieved, but lay the groundwork for a better future. The LAC is here to assist you in any way possible. Please let us know what we can do. ●



LITERACY UPDATE

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Building Signature Practices

> Barbara Sparks

Recently, two professional development specialists at the Literacy Assistance Center were discussing pollution, chemical waste, auto repair shops, and other environmental hazards of city living, especially in low-income neighborhoods—all issues of immediate concern to adult education students. As often happens here, our staff members soon began to figure out how literacy teachers and program managers we work with might incorporate these issues into literacy instruction and get students involved in finding solutions to local problems.

Experts have suggested numerous frameworks for professional development. Here at the LAC, we follow one that models effective evidence-based adult learning principles and practices. Whenever we design a new workshop, course, or other learning activity, we ask ourselves four questions:

- What do we know about adult learning?
- What do we know about the change process as it relates to learning?
- How can we use this knowledge to design an educational opportunity appropriate for diverse groups and the wide variety of practitioners we serve?
- What practical differences will applying adult learning principles make in our professional development work?

What we, as adult educators, know about adult learning

At the LAC, our approach is based on a combination of theories of adult learning and professional development and professional wisdom derived from years of experience. Both have convinced us that adult learners bring diverse backgrounds, differing values and attitudes, and unique personal experiences into their professional development program. Their levels of motivation to attend and participate will also vary, influencing not only what they learn but whether or not they can or want to apply it in their professional, social and personal lives. Research in the field also validates our experience that when they learn something, literacy practitioners, like other educators, do not usually apply it immediately.

Adult literacy practitioners who come to the LAC are as culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse as the learners they work with. We respond to this cultural variety by incorporating cultural, social and practice-based experiences and backgrounds into professional development activities. For example, we have found that some assumptions of andragogy, such as individualized learning, don't always apply. Rather than seek individual advancement, some participants in our programs gain much more from collective learning, an iterative process of back and forth dialogue and negotiation to achieve a group understanding and group goals.

Whatever their learning style, the cognitive development style of adults changes as they grow older, according to experts. The challenge for adult educators is to understand the cognitive gap between older learners

and younger learners, and how both learn best. The need to accommodate these differences reinforces the importance of contextual support, including analysis and interaction with others, opportunities for practice, and use of familiar materials. In adulthood, cognitive development is most effective when it involves activity and the active role of the individual in constructing knowledge. Whether they are participating because they were sent or came voluntarily, adults must be provided with opportunities to use what they learn.

Learning and changing

Research and our own experience have taught us that in adult literacy, time spent in professional development is not the key to its effectiveness in changing what happens in classrooms or improving student outcomes. What's required is cognitive change in behaviors or skills, and change in attitudes or beliefs. This will only occur if the changes required to apply new learning are realistic and doable. For example, some adult literacy agencies are required by funding sources to allocate money for staff training or mandate their staff to spend so many hours learning the latest teaching practices, yet when their teachers go back to the classroom, they lack the authority or resources to implement what they have learned.

Internal constraints can also be an obstacle. Before practitioners change their behavior, their beliefs or attitudes have to change. Even then, some people who acquire new knowledge are pre-disposed to put it to use, while others need support. They may, for example, need assistance in reflecting on the changes they must make in themselves before they can translate what they have learned into concrete actions. In the LAC Leadership Development Initiative, our coaching support and encouragement to engage in critical reflection were crucial factors in promoting change.

"I brought a lot of resistance to the Family Literacy Leadership Initiative table at first – a resistance to being a supervisor, to being different from the teachers with whom I was working, to working in manners other than collaborative," admitted a participant. "I was nervous, insecure, and angry about having to have responsibility over some aspects of the program I didn't want. It became clear over the course of months that I had to more fully embrace my own leadership and really follow through on the goals that I'd set for myself."

Back in the 1970s, Gene Hall and his colleagues developed a concerns-based adoption model for individual change and levels of use of innovation. The levels of use of innovation they identified describe the various behaviors that practitioners exhibit as they go through various stages of adoption of an innovation or change in practice and the types of concern that each stage generates. In adult literacy, we recognize that when teach-

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Instructional Approaches and Their Implications for Staff Development

> Leslee Oppenheim, University Director of Language and Literacy Programs, CUNY, with Kate Brandt, Gayle Cooper-Shpirt, Steve Hinds, Hilary Sideris, and Moira Taylor

The CUNY Adult Literacy/GED Program, in operation for more than 30 years, has traditionally offered instruction to community adults at the BE, ESL, GED levels at 14 campuses of the University. Recently, it has begun offering College Transition classes in academic reading and writing and college prep math for college-bound GED graduates. The program is supported by a team of staff developers/curriculum writers who provide a full complement of staff development activities in reading, writing, and oral communication that are available to all CUNY teachers. The program also provides apprenticeship training for College Transition teachers. (For more on staff development formats at CUNY, see “A Case Study in Professional Development,” *Update*, December, 2006 and “Staff Development that Works,” *Update*, November 2005). The CUNY program also provides a professional development program in math for BE/GED and College Transition teachers. Many CUNY professional development opportunities are open to the wider adult literacy community. For more than 30 years, the University has also offered instruction to community adults.

The CUNY program approach is to strengthen student reading/writing and oral communication skills through the study of a content area designed to engage students and broaden their background knowledge. A teacher who offers a pre-GED class on the Civil War might encourage students to explore the question “What were the causes and effects of the Civil War?” through a range of reading/writing/oral communication activities:

- Reading accounts of African-American life during the period and writing in response to prompts such as: What words does the author use to describe daily life under slavery?
- Studying text excerpts from Joy Hakim’s *A History of US*, in order to understand the differences between the Northern and Southern states (climate, culture, economy)
- Using photographs from the period to develop evidentiary reasoning skills. (What do you think is happening in this picture? What do you see that makes you think that? What evidence in the picture supports your observation?)
- Writing/speaking in the voice of a character in a fictional story. (Write a journal entry from the point of view of the mother of a soldier. Tell what you think she felt about the loss of her son.)
- Creating graphic organizers that illustrate historical events, such as a diagram of the causes leading up to the war
- Interpreting graphs and charts, such as one that describes impacts of the war on different segments of the population and using the information to write a simple report

In an intermediate-level ESL class on health, students can increase their knowledge about asthma and more broadly about navigating the healthcare system through reading and writing, vocabulary development, and speaking activities that increase their general communication and self-advocacy skills. The activities below are based on *Breathing Room*, a book written by CUNY ESL teacher Anna Mockler, and the supporting lesson set:

- Writing directed journal entries (What questions do you have for the doctor when your child has a fever? What have you learned about the

American health care system since you have been in the US?)

- Guiding students to ask pre-reading prediction questions from an illustration in the book. (Why is the boy sad? How do we know he is sad? What is the problem? What do you see that makes you say that?)
- Teaching vocabulary and grammar based on the questions and answers
- Introducing a graphic organizer to concretize the plot, setting, and characters and provide the information for a rewriting or retelling of the story
- Role playing what happens in a doctor’s office when the language is incomprehensible to the student: “Please slow down.” “Could you repeat that?” “Can I have an interpreter?”

At CUNY, whenever possible, we try to situate instruction in BE/ESL skills in a content area of interest and importance to the learners. How well students learn with this approach depends on their motivation and effort, of course, but also on how well the teacher establishes the foundation, orders the content, and teaches the basic skills needed to understand that content. This approach is demanding. To develop students’ basic skills within a study of content, teachers have to be “fluent” and automatic in the full range of ESL and reading/writing techniques. We have, however, become convinced that this approach works for BE and ESL learners at all except the beginning levels. It has also proved to be an effective way to help students pass the GED and enter college better prepared—not least by providing background knowledge they often lack. Without a basic knowledge of the Civil War, for example, a reference to the Old South when speaking of the presidential election might not make sense.

We hope to prepare many of the students in the literacy program to enter CUNY and succeed as matriculated college students. To achieve this, we know that students need to build a basic foundation of general information and vocabulary in a range of subjects, as well as develop the skills and habits that college students must have in reading and comprehending whole texts, writing responses to texts, developing oral and written arguments, communicating clearly, and monitoring their own learning. Research has shown that teaching reading through a content area is the most effective way to increase comprehension. It enhances students’ vocabulary and improves their general fluency and motivation to read. Teachers who select texts appropriate to their students’ level and incorporate ESL support when needed can use the content-based approach effectively with a wide range of students.

This approach is new and challenging for many BE and ESL teachers, including some who have taught for many years. At the local campus program level, the program director and teachers already experienced in this kind of instruction are responsible for providing the day-to-day professional support that teachers need. The central staff development team supports and extends the campus-based efforts, with overarching responsibility for helping teachers implement content-based curricula and teach effectively. The team is comprised of learning specialists/curriculum

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LAC Leadership Development Certificate Program

The Literacy Assistance Center is accepting applications for a new cohort of its Leadership Development for Emerging Leaders Certificate Program, funded by the Altman Foundation. This results-oriented six-month program for new and first-level program managers combines six skill building workshops with one-on-one leadership coaching. Participating program managers work with a leadership coach to identify the most significant challenges they face and identify appropriate goals. Then they develop and action plan to meet those goals. During the six months of participation, they strengthen their program and their own ability to meet critical challenges in the field.

The LAC Leadership Development program began in 2007-8. This is how one of the early participants characterized the benefits: After participating in the program, I realized that we all can be effective leaders given the necessary training and motivation.... I am putting to good use what I have learned, translating it into my work and leveraging it for my continued growth, not just as a Program Coordinator but as a person."

The first workshop in the spring 2009 certificate program will be held on January 27 and the last on June 25. Space is limited. Application forms can be found at <http://lacnyc.org/profdev/familylit.htm> and will be accepted until January 13. For more information, please contact Barbara Sparks at barbaras@lacnyc.org.

LAC Wireless

Visitors to the LAC who bring their own laptop are now able to use our wireless service when they attend events here. For information on how to connect, please ask a staff member in the 10th floor reception area.

USA Learns

On November 7, the U.S. Department of Education launched U.S.A. Learns, a free website to help immigrants learn English. Located at www.USALearns.org, it provides easily accessible and free English language training.

The Division of Adult Education and Literacy at the U.S. DOE Office of Vocational and Adult Education oversaw the design of U.S.A. Learns and provided core funding. The University of Michigan and Sacramento County Office of Education assisted in the development of the website, which uses materials previously developed with public funds.

CONFERENCES

February, May

International Reading Association

The International Reading Association will hold two conventions this year, one in the West (Phoenix, February 21-25), and one in Minneapolis, May 3 - 7, 2009, at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Non-members may register for the Minneapolis conference beginning January 6, 2009. Prepaid registration closes April 6, 2009.

March

WE LEARN

Stronger Leadership @ Literacy: Empowering Women to Action.

Women Expanding: Literacy Education Action Resource Network will hold its sixth annual (Net)Working Gathering & Conference on Women and Literacy March 6-7, 2009, at the University of Rhode Island, Downtown Providence Campus. Registration Information and Schedule Outline at <http://www.litwomen.org/conference.html>

National Center for Family Literacy

National Conference on Family Literacy

March 1 - 3, 2009, Orlando, Florida
<http://www.familit.org>

May

New York City Consortium for Adult Basic Education

The NYC Consortium for ABE will be celebrating its 30th annual conference year on Saturday, May 2, 2009 at Fashion Industries High School in Manhattan. The conference will offer three formats: panel discussions, presenter-centered sessions, and inquiry-

based/participant-centered sessions.

As in the past, the conference is designed to serve the staff-development needs of BE, ESOL, BENL, PRE-GED, GED, and (CTE) Career & Technical educators in New York City. The NYC Consortium for ABE is interested in presentations that highlight outstanding and innovative practices as well as capture relevant issues affecting our field. Presenters are encouraged to actively involve teachers and students in the workshop, to use audio-visual aids, group activities, open/panel/roundtable discussions in designing their presentations, and to have team presentations. For a presenter's application, please contact NYC Consortium For Adult Basic Education, Old Chelsea Station, PO Box 472, New York, N Y 10011 or Carolyn Fernando at (212) 243-5458 or email: sonofhendrick@yahoo.com.

New York Association for Continuing and Community Education

NYACCE will hold its 58th annual conference May 3-5, 2009 at the Marriott Hotel in Albany. The theme will be Proud History... Bright Future, celebrating the history of adult and continuing/community education in New York. Suggested topics include ABE/GED programming and instruction, distance learning, family literacy, leadership, and support services. More information is available at <http://www.nyacce.org/NYACCE-CFP-2009.pdf>.

Verizon Tech Savvy Awards Deadline Extended

NCFL has extended the deadline to accept nominations for the 2009 Verizon Tech Savvy Awards to January 12, 2009.

Four \$5,000 regional awards and one \$25,000 national award will be presented at the National Conference on Family Literacy in Orlando, FL, March 2, 2009. For more information and guidelines and to apply online, go to www.familit.org/techsavvy-awards.

January 13

ASISTS Data Entry Training
Tuesday, January 13, 9:30am–4:030pm
Facilitator: TBA

This training introduces new users to the Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) web-based data system. Topics covered include navigating ASISTS data entry screens; inputting student, class, and instructor information; updating outcomes, tests, and contact hours and running management and funding reports.

January 21

Action Research Project in Women's Literacy and Learning
Wednesday, January 21, 10:30am–3:30pm
Facilitator: Barbara Sparks

Working with women learners entails understanding gender differences and instructional needs including how women construct knowledge, make meaning and use literacy skills in everyday life according to findings of two focus groups conducted by the LAC. This action research project into women's literacy and learning seeks to delve deeper into questions of contextualized programming for women in various types of literacy centers. Each participant will be guided in conducting inquiry into questions of interest in their individual program, (such as developing more culturally relevant curriculum, collecting and using women's feedback in program design, understanding the unique needs of women learners, among others) with the objective of implementing and integrating new findings into existing practices and evaluating outcomes.

January 22

Health Literacy and Plain Language
Thursday, January 22, 9:30am–3:30pm
Facilitator: Estella Natal

One of the most challenging tasks for adults who are in contact with the healthcare environment is coping with the volume of information presented orally and in print. Understanding the principles of health literacy and the role of plain language will help health professionals overcome a major communication barrier. Participants will learn to use readability scales, review brochures and practice converting difficult text into plain language.

This session is for health administrators, health educators, community health workers, and other member of the health care community.

January 22

Family Literacy Leadership Initiative

Thursday, January 22, 9:30am–3:30pm
Facilitator: Barbara Sparks, Be Jensen

This session is for the third cohort of the Leadership Initiative, a program for new family literacy program managers and includes both one-on-one coaching and skill building workshops. This session focuses on interactive program planning, a model where community context and needs drive the process and program design.

January 23

Using the Arts and Technology in the ESOL Classroom
Friday, January 23, 9:00am–1:00pm
Facilitator: Regina Ress

Many funding streams mandate fusing ESL/ literacy instruction with broader content, including technology. This workshop focuses on teaching language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, functions, vocabulary, grammar, etc.) and computer skills (Internet browsing for research, website navigation) through an exploration of the arts. It will show how the arts can enhance foundational skills practice while encouraging cross-cultural awareness and personal expression; engage the "whole learner" and the "multiple intelligences"—and make teaching and learning fun.

January 23

Family Educators Network: Forum on Program Advocacy
Facilitator: Be Jensen

In this session, participants will discuss the value of advocacy for one's self or for others, identify barriers that hinder people from exercising this right, reflect on their own comfort level with advocacy and how it impacts their students and programs, and learn from their colleagues some strategies for effectively advocating for themselves and their programs to various stakeholders.

January 27

Leadership Development Certificate for Emerging Leaders

Tuesday, January 27, 9:30–3:30pm

Facilitators: Barbara Sparks, Be Jensen

The Leadership Development Certificate for emerging leaders is a six-month program that combines skill building workshops with one-on-one leadership coaching. Course sessions address the challenges emerging leaders face will incorporating reflective context-based activities.

Leadership coaches work with the new leaders to assist them in achieving their self-identified goals.

In this initial session, new leaders will identify challenges and first steps to setting their leadership development goals.

Using a four-step development process, participants will identify areas of need, set targeted goals and milestones, design and implement action steps, and track and report results. Each new leader will receive one-on-one coaching to support their professional development.

January 28

Teaching Health Literacy Study Circle: Health Care Access and Navigation

Wednesday, January 28, 9:00am–1:00pm

Facilitators: Winston Lawrence, Estella Natal

Health Literacy is a vital part of adult literacy education. In this foundation series, participants will learn a new approach to the teaching of literacy. The focus will be of identifying the skills needed to navigate the health care system and developing ways to integrate this instruction into the curriculum. Participants will develop lesson plans and try them out in their classrooms.

January 28

Learning to Moodle: An Effective Online Course Management System

Wednesday, January 28, 10:00am–12:00pm

Facilitator: Marilyn J. Rymniak

Moodle is an online course management system that the LAC is using for online discussion groups, materials, and resources in its blended courses.

This workshop will give participants an opportunity to navigate features of Moodle, including uploading and sharing materials, forums and chats, quizzes and surveys, database activities, content managing (resources), and blogs and wikis.

January 29

ALECC Module 4, Cohort 2: The Art and Science of Teaching Reading to Adults

Thursday, January 29, 1:30pm–5:00pm

Facilitator: Marilyn J. Rymniak

This is the fourth module in a new 24-hour core knowledge curriculum for adult educators and practitioners. The workshops explore science-based research, key theories, and best practices.

Module 4 will develop an awareness of the significance of the five major components of reading instruction, as well as the importance of vocabulary and learner knowledge.

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

Building management is now requiring that all visitors have picture ID and sign in. Please leave extra time for this procedure.

LAC Professional Development Center Open Hours

Every Monday, 1–5 pm

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, including books, journals, and audiovisual materials on professional development as well as curricular and reading resources for ESOL, ABE, and GED classes. For information, contact Dr. Winston Lawrence, 212.803.3326 or winstonl@lacnyc.org.

ers return to the classroom, they can find it difficult to implement or experiment with new knowledge or skills. Motivation, level of participation, and consequences are some of the factors we need to consider at each stage if we want to ensure that new learning results in changed behavior. At one stage, for example, we know that limited planning time will become a common concern among participants and that we have to be prepared to deal with it.

If we are working with ESOL teachers, our goal is to create a long term professional development program that will get them to introduce specific teaching innovations that we know can improve student outcomes. Over the course of this program, the participants will typically move from a lack of interest in the latest teaching strategies, through learning how to manage some new strategies, to building collaborative links to what other program teachers are doing. Finally, they will come up with their own ideas that might work even better.

In some instances, prior experience and training may impede motivation and create resistance.

The LAC has found that adoption of new concepts, strategies, and methods in professional development follows the same pattern identified by Everett Rogers in his diffusion of innovations theory. In any representative group, some people are out front, ready to try anything; others will fear change. In some instances, prior experience and training may impede motivation and create resistance. In the past year, for example, our GED instructional coaching program provided teachers with one-on-one assistance and guidance to develop lesson plans and instructional strategies based on what they learned in our hands-on workshops. Our coaches also visited teacher classrooms, observing instruction and teacher-student interactions. What we found was that at the outset, new teachers were eager to try out new strategies, while some veteran instructors believed they already knew the best ways to teach and were resistant to change. However, over time, the coaches found that as they worked with the teachers, a number of them began adapting instructional strategies they had picked up in the workshop sessions to fit their individual settings.

Turning theory into practice

The LAC uses a variety of strategies to support and guide teachers as they move through the phases of acquiring knowledge, assessing how and whether to use the new knowledge, planning implementation, and using the new skills. These strategies, which include coaching, technical assistance, site visits, applied learning, extended learning activities, and communities of practice, are all informed by constructivism. That is, the theory that each of us constructs our understanding and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. When we encounter something new, we have to reconcile it with our previous ideas and experience. We may do that by changing what we believe, or by discarding the new information as irrelevant. Either way, we are active creators of our own knowledge, asking questions, exploring, and assessing what we know.

The foundation of our Leadership Development program is experiential learning—learning by doing—based on constructivism. We believe

encouraging participants to hone skills through their own practice and apply knowledge through critical reflection, honors their diversity of experience and prior understandings. We ask them to explore their programmatic differences and needs and think about them in terms of general concepts. The program couples experiential learning with one-on-one coaching, which gives the participants much appreciated support in the trial and error process of trying out new approaches and building expertise.

Similarly, in health literacy, we create opportunities for using the new knowledge and skills gained through our study circles. Health care practitioners and literacy teachers are encouraged to identify new learning they have acquired and then integrate some aspect of it into lesson plans or new health-related materials they create for low literacy adults. When participants come back together for Teacher Shares, they report their progress in integrating new knowledge and skills after having time to reflect on how best to adapt what they learned to their unique situations. Early adopters discuss how they have implemented specific strategies and the results they got, while those who are more hesitant can come with questions that occurred to them after rereading the study circle materials.

We also pay careful attention to ensuring that participants see the information and activities we introduce as valuable and practical. We designed our Adult Literacy Education Core Curriculum, (ALECC) to give educators a firm foundation in theory and practice in a way that relates it to day-to-day teaching. One participant encapsulated exactly what we were trying to do: “I now have a solid base on which to build and a structured way to evaluate my effectiveness as a teacher.”

What change can accomplish

The LAC has made a commitment to professionalizing the field of adult literacy education. As part of this commitment, our focus is on facilitating the transfer of learning to program managers and teachers in a way that encourages and assists them in bringing about real change. We do this by focusing on professional development outcomes that are practical, broadly applicable, and make a difference in program management, in the classroom, and in student learning. To accomplish this, our professional development activities emphasize active learning and are designed to promote transformational learning—helping practitioners construct new ways of looking at the world.

Thomas Guskey suggests evaluating the success of professional development by assessing several levels of change: participant reaction, participant learning, use of new knowledge and skills, organizational support and change and student learning outcomes. In judging the effectiveness of our professional development, the LAC looks at all of these indicators.

We couldn't have been happier than when Mary Lou Corradino, Program Coordinator at the Shorefront YWHA declared after participating in our family literacy emerging leader program, “At the beginning of the LAC initiative, I looked for answers in my coach. I quickly learned that is not the case. The answers are in me.” She then elaborated on the effect this had on her program: “Participating in the leadership development initiative has transformed my leadership. The workshops have been very helpful. Hearing what other program managers are doing is enlightening. I've been able to turn around a defunded family literacy program I inherited based on what I learned from this program and the coaching support I received.” ●

Massachusetts Licensure *continued*

self-questioning, paraphrasing) to develop and monitor reading comprehension and meaning-making (e.g. the relationship between reader and text); appropriate reading materials at a range of reading levels; the relationship between reading and writing; the range of literacy skills found among adult learners; reading assessment procedures and instruments; and instructional strategies to promote reading skills among adult learners. (More information on the test and test prep materials are available at www.doe.mass.edu.)

If you have the dedication and discipline to meet these high standards and obtain a license, you will have the added satisfaction of knowing that the second time you go through the process it will probably be a lot easier. And you may well go through it a second time, and even a third, since all Massachusetts teaching licenses must be renewed every five years.

Now that you have an idea of what getting a license entails, let's get back to those questions.

The proximate reason for initiating a licensure process was the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, which contained a provision that replaced lifetime licenses for all educators with a five-year renewal cycle. The goal was to ensure that all educators were continuously engaged in a professional development program that would be based on what was needed most to improve student performance. This created a potential dilemma for instructors in the adult education system who held K-12 licenses. For them, it made more sense to do professional development in adult education, rather than what would be required to renew their K-12 license. However unless adult education created an equivalent process, they would have to forgo licensure.

Around the same time, the Massachusetts adult education system was also embracing the concept of continuous improvement and trying to determine the best way to generate it. "We decided that too much of our efforts to improve our work were based on ideas of the month and that standards would give us a focused reference point, something measurable that would help us move forward," explains Bob Bickerton, director of Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) in the Massachusetts Department of Education. "We developed adult education curricular frameworks that basically embody learning and content standards." They also developed performance standards, as their counterparts in many other states were doing around the same time.

Then ACLS took the standards process a step further, creating assessments closely aligned with the learning standards and coupling them with what it calls online adaptive assessment—a customized test, with questions that reflect the student's prior assessment performance. "You can map that question to learning standards," Bickerton explains, "so you can tell, at the individual level, at the program level, and at the state level, how we are doing on our learning standards. That gives us a very powerful foundation, since it enables us to say, 'Well, we're not doing very well on ratio and proportion, but we're doing well on geometry. Students take this test at the beginning of the year, at mid-year, and at the end of the year. Because it's adaptive, it's not a very long test.'

"The missing ingredient," Bickerton continues, "was how we were going to establish a standards foundation for educators." Both state adult education officials and program managers were well aware that many of their instructors had not demonstrated that they had not demonstrated prior to being hired that they had the knowledge and abilities necessary to be effective teachers. This is a major reason why the system devotes such a high level of resources to program and staff development—10 percent of its combined federal and state funding—the state puts in three times what it

gets from Washington federal funding. Every grant the state gives requires the recipient to plough funds equivalent to 3.5 percent of staff hours for program development and another 2.5 percent for professional development. This means that part-time staff members must be paid for at least 15 hours of professional development a year and full time staff members for a minimum of 50 hours. Even so, admits Bickerton, "there's a lot of on the job training going on."

Compulsory licensure could solve that problem, but it would create new ones. Many people who would otherwise be interested in teaching adult education classes, particular on a part-time basis, might be turned off by a rigorous licensure process. In addition, although a large number of Massachusetts programs are run by school systems, even more are offered by community based organizations, community colleges and other institutions of higher education, municipal agencies engaged in various forms of human resource development, and correctional facilities. As Bickerton puts it, "We have a level of diversity where licensure is not the currency, so we made the license available but not required and left the decision on whether they would require licensure to the organizations."

Once ACLS decided to initiate licensure, the next question was what kind. Should the adult education system create a separate license for each subject? That seemed to make sense. "We probably had our least concerns with ESL because a lot of ESL teachers have gone through training programs, though over the years that has become less true," explains Bickerton. "Our greatest concern is math. Most people who decide to become involved in adult education are not people who embrace math; often they are as math phobic as the students they are teaching. And in the middle, we knew we had a lot of teachers with heart who were immediately attracted to whole language approaches to reading but had limited knowledge of or facility with structured approaches to teaching reading. We believe that students need both."

To shape its licensure system, ACLS set up a task force composed of state officials, administrators, and teachers. Over the next two years, they tossed the original concept. "We were convinced by the field that our initial idea of subject-specific licenses wouldn't be practical because of the need, particularly in smaller programs, to move people to different roles," relates Bickerton, "so we came up with the idea of an across-the-board adult education teacher's license." The problem, as he is quick to admit, is that "if you're really honest about the knowledge and skills that you need to teach reading, to teach language arts, to teach math, to teach ESL, it's overwhelming. So the license has what comes close to having overwhelming requirements in knowledge, skills, and abilities." Apparently, Massachusetts adult educators agree. Of the 2000 throughout the state, only 85 have gotten a license in the four years since the test was introduced. Even teachers who already have a K-12 license haven't been willing to go through the grueling ordeal. "It turns out," says Bickerton, "that people in adult ed who have already gotten a K-12 license are as loathe as their peers to take a high-stakes tests that demonstrates where they have the knowledge and don't."

Although additional educators certainly have ambitions of putting a framed copy of the Massachusetts ABE Teacher's License on their wall, it would be fair to say their numbers will remain modest if the test isn't changed. "We are at the point where we need to revisit whether we need to have subject-specific licenses," Bickerton suggests. "The range of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to teach language arts, for example, is

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CUNY professional development *continued*

writers in reading, writing, ESL and math. The range of staff development opportunities includes responding to individual teacher requests for assistance, multi-session seminars, demonstration classes, co-teaching, assistance in writing/adapting curriculum documents, and mini-teaching opportunities with peer review and feedback.

In their work with teachers new to CUNY, the staff developers often start by sharing several of the program's content-based curricula appropriate to the level of their students. They discuss issues such as selecting a theme/context to match the interests of their students, selecting reading materials at the right level, creating oral communication activities, and developing progressively more difficult writing assignments. Initially, teachers are often skeptical that basic skills can be taught through study of a content area, and that this approach is an effective way to teach basic skills and prepare students for the English-speaking workplace, the GED and college. With time, they usually see that it works. Guided by staff developers, they develop new curricula that reflect their own content area interests (and those of their students), select materials, and create and sequence content-based learning activities.

The following principles underlie our staff development work with teachers in a content-based curriculum framework and apply to most language and literacy teaching contexts:

Help students become learning apprentices

- Teachers, as expert readers and writers, convey their expertise to their student “novices” by modeling effective strategies. For example, a teacher presenting a work of fiction might show students how s/he describes a character based on what the character says and does.
- To model effectively, teachers have to be aware of the skills and strategies they use themselves when they read and write, and what the student should know when reading particular texts. For example, the strategies we use when reading a biography differ from the ones we use for reading a science book (e.g., using headings and subheadings as indicators of what is important). Teachers can also extract a few paragraphs of the text and model which key phrases they themselves would underline and why.

Explicitly teach reading strategies

- A teacher's planning time is spent most productively examining the text students are going to read, anticipating which aspects are likely to be difficult, determining which reading strategies will be helpful, and designing activities to support comprehension. For example, the teacher might suggest that students keep track of the main events in a work of fiction and make inferences about the characters by creating a chart that lists the events and links them to the characters and adjectives used to describe them.
- Research shows that proficient readers use a number of strategies to facilitate their understanding: activating background knowledge; predicting, paraphrasing, asking questions of the text; summarizing; making inferences; monitoring comprehension and rereading; and synthesizing information within and across texts. The challenge for teachers is to find ways to introduce and model each of these strategies and help their students develop their own skills in all of them. It will take multiple lessons, practicing a few strategies at a time, for the students to become proficient.

Explicitly teach writing strategies

- Adult learners often do not feel confident about their writing skills. Teachers must maintain and share a conviction that their students can

improve their writing markedly, as well as a belief that all writing, ranging from a simple note to an essay, improves with revision. To develop their skills, students will need to write a great deal, and their teachers (or other students) will need to provide comments that direct the writer in preparing the next draft. One of our more popular staff development offerings is a series on how to respond to student writing. In the initial session, teachers bring in first drafts of student papers and discuss (sometimes online) how to write comments that will help students refine their work. The second and third sessions examine the ways in which the students have incorporated suggested changes in subsequent drafts.

- In the classroom, teachers should draw upon and make students aware of different strategies, depending on the purpose of the piece:
 - >For a personal narrative on a childhood memory, students will need to include visual images and sensory details to convey their story in a way that is vivid and believable. Teachers can model peer feedback techniques that students can use to let the writer know if the details selected conveyed the intended meaning.
 - >For a letter to a child's teacher, students will need to state their concern clearly and support it by providing details that illustrate and expand their point. Other students, taking the role of the letter recipient, then determine whether the argument is effective and persuasive, asking for more details as needed.

>For a formal essay, students will need practice in brainstorming ideas in response to a question, choosing points to cite that are distinct from each other, thinking of examples that support each point, and then writing notes.

When helping students elaborate and develop a persuasive argument at any level, the teacher can encourage a variety of types of support, such as personal anecdotes and references to an authority. Samples of writing models that support-- or fail to support-- the argument are very helpful. CUNY teachers have the opportunity to observe a staff developer teaching a class in essay writing. Over the course of several classes, observing teachers see how students use the staff developer's comments on first drafts to improve clarity and organization. In the process, they learn to reflect on their growth as writers.

Explicitly teach oral communication strategies

- Very often, but particularly in ESL staff development settings, teachers want to discuss how to maximize student oral communication skills—and minimize their own teacher-talk. When teachers set up student conversation pairs, small groups in the classroom, or interview assignments, students have more opportunities to speak and make themselves understood. A teacher can provide useful tools for students through intentional instruction and modeling of ways to indicate misunderstanding, ask for clarification, refer to/build upon/or disagree with another speaker's point of view, and form questions that get to the heart of what they wish to know. These oral communication skills, practiced in the classroom, model everyday conversations in the community, the workplace, and academia.
- The development of oral communication skills is important in every type of class, not just ESL. Assignments such as asking students to listen to the nightly news or a taped story or sample lecture build listening skills. Student presentations in class build speaking confidence and reinforce the skills that underlie good communication, whether written or oral. These

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Massachusetts licensure *continued*

extensive. We should ask people to demonstrate if they can be great reading teachers for native English speakers without also having to demonstrate that they'd be great math teachers."

"It's absolutely too early to say whether our licensure system has demonstrated its effectiveness," Bickerton concludes, "But we're committed to using the standards in a broader way, whether it's via licensure or via making the standards themselves the currency of how we understand where we are with our educator performance. If we have standards for what our field believes an effective ABE teacher needs to know and be able to do, we need

a way to map how well those standards match up with student learning and student retention and success. So, whether teachers get licensed or not, we are looking at applying these standards to all of our grants and contracts. We have tools that have been created not just in adult ed, but in K-12, and some in vocational ed—a competency tracking system, for example—that could allow teachers to do a self-assessment. Their supervisor or director might be able to look at where they stand. Ultimately, what we want is a systematic way to engage in a continuous improvement process—which, despite all our expenditures, we don't have today." ●

CUNY professional development *continued*

include selecting the main points, providing details to support these points, and keeping the "audience," whether listeners or readers, in mind.

Plan math instruction reflecting best practice principles

- Teachers must be aware of significant challenges in teaching math to adults. Many adult students bring with them years of misunderstood concepts, lack of confidence in their mathematical abilities, and even fear. These issues must be addressed as students resume math study. The following set of principles underlies math curriculum work and staff development across the CUNY Adult Literacy/GED Program:

- Teach depth of understanding rather than "coverage." Our goal is for students to develop a deep understanding of all four math content areas (number, geometry, data/graphing, and algebra). To achieve this, we need more than an exercise book or a test preparation book. These are intended as review materials for students who simply need a "refresher." A more careful, strategic teaching approach is essential for overcoming fundamental weaknesses.

Many of our teachers learned math through memorization and following rules. Before they can teach a math class that emphasizes conceptual understanding, they have to be convinced that students learn more when math activities emphasize understanding and not simply the memorization of rules. Once they take this approach, they find that students begin to make sense of the math and their phobias and sense of math helplessness give way to confidence and control.

- Help students think and learn like scientists. When teachers lecture about an idea and put problems on the board for the class to copy, students remain passive. We encourage alternative approaches that compel students to become active learners—looking for patterns, making conjectures, and asking questions the way scientists do.

Encouraging inductive reasoning is one way to do this. Rather than putting a diagram of parallel lines on the board and telling students about the angle relationships formed by a transversal, give students the diagram and some tracing paper. Once the students trace and compare angles, they will be able to recognize the patterns and tell you about those angle relationships. In addition to developing the concept themselves, they get practice thinking like scientists: "What do I notice here?"

A graph that has GED-style questions attached to it will narrow student interest to what is needed to answer the questions. In contrast, teachers can foster a culture of inquisitiveness in the classroom with an engaging data set that can be used with open-ended prompts: "What do you notice?" or "What do you want to know more about?"

- Work in all four math content areas at all levels. A common belief in our field is that students must "know their basics" in numbers before they can do thoughtful math work in other areas. The result is that students at every level below GED can be obliged to work largely on isolated

arithmetic practice.

At CUNY, we believe this "basics first" approach unnecessarily limits students' mathematical development. Even though students may not have mastered their times tables, decimals, or fraction arithmetic, they can still do basic geometric reasoning, graph interpretation, and work with patterns, variables, and functions. We encourage teachers to introduce work in all these areas, using whole numbers while students are improving their number abilities. When students encounter challenging number problems in these contexts, solving them is more interesting, relevant, and will produce better results than an equivalent amount of time spent on basics in isolation.

- Be aware of GED content. Because class time is limited, we have to make some choices about what content we can reasonably teach. As part of this process, we share a basic analysis of the GED Testing Service Official Practice Tests with teachers at all BE and GED levels. These tests indicate that the GED Testing Service is less concerned with operations with fractions than it is with the ability to calculate a percentage increase or decrease, or do basic operations with money decimals. This can be important information for teachers who traditionally spent weeks or months struggling to teach students how to multiply or divide fractions.

The practice tests also indicate that the GED Testing Service places a high value on understanding data and graphing, not only on the math test but also on the social studies and science tests. In addition, data and graph interpretation is important for students as citizens in an information-rich society. Data can also be used to connect math work to what students are doing in their literacy and ESL classrooms. Data sets can be a wonderful way of provoking language when we ask students to "tell the story" of a graph.

A special challenge—bridging the gap between students' GED math skills and college math

As our students earn their GED and move on to college, they face college placement exams in math that emphasize an abstract approach to algebra that differs greatly from the algebra they needed to pass the GED. The vast majority of GED graduates fail these algebra exams and are forced to take one or more remedial math courses as a result. In collaboration with CUNY math faculty, we have begun offering algebra courses that address this math gap in our CUNY College Transition Program. ●

For additional information on the CUNY Adult Literacy/GED and College Transition Program, please contact Leslee Oppenheim, at leslee.oppenheim@mail.cuny.edu.

My Life Change

When I came here my life was different because I didn't speak English, I can get a better job. I started to work in a factory, this job no English was need, but the work was very hard for me, I had to work many long hours, the salary was very little, everything was hard for me.

When I got hired to work into Family Literacy Program, I was very nervous because I only understood the English, but I can not speak it.

My boss believed in me and I began to study in Family Literacy Program, since then my live change, I feel completely comfortable when I speak, and the most

important is when I can help others people, and I have more time for my family, and time to look at my son and daughters homework . Now my children are getting up in their grades because this program helped me to look different form how the kids would build a better future

My dream is obtain my GED diploma and I would like to establish a little " Ecuadorian Boutique" by my neighborhood. I would earn extra money selling Ecuadorian products because in my neighborhood there are many Hispanic people. I am getting step by step thanks Queens Library Family Literacy Program. ●



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