



# LITERACY UPDATE

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Literacy Assistance Center

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Teaching the Formerly Incarcerated 4 Transition to Post-Secondary Education  
6 & 7 Professional Development Opportunities 8 Preparing ABE Students for Jobs  
10 Assisting LD Students in the Workplace

## Education + Work Skills = Jobs

> Tina Bloomer, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

*Things were looking fairly bleak to Lupe. A single mother of four boys, ages 7 to 13, living in a trailer park, she had scraped by for six years working for a janitorial service. The pay was \$10 per hour. The work was sporadic. With no family connections in the community and limited English language mastery, alternatives appeared meager, if not non-existent. Then her English as a second language (ESL) instructor, Kristina Mason, told Lupe about a new one-term Phlebotomist program at Highline Community College, near her home south of Seattle. It seemed to be a perfect opportunity. Like Washington's other Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs, this course put learners in a classroom with both professional-technical instructors and an English as a second language/adult basic education (ESL/ABE) instructor so they could learn basic literacy skills while they acquired workforce skills in a field with many job openings.*

Although I-BEST is a new approach, it

developed out of a longtime commitment of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to enroll more students from underserved populations and improve academic achievement among all students. This commitment became stronger in the early 2000s. Demand for ESL was accelerating; many students wanted to prepare themselves for work and were unable to find the right courses.

Washington was hardly unique. Announcing its national Bridges to Opportunity initiative, the Ford Foundation declared: "In too many cases, traditional academic programs remain structured to serve traditional college-age, full-time students, with fewer supports for the large numbers of older students, many of whom are poor and most of whom may need special academic support to succeed in college-level work. Workforce programs are often inaccessible to non-English speakers and those with limited educational attainment. In too

many institutions, college academic/transfer and workforce/career programs operate under separate divisions that ignore the fact that most community college students are seeking both to advance in their careers and to earn a college degree."

In Washington, the soaring population of minorities, immigrants, and refugees wanted job training, and the state's economy needed them—in part to support the growing numbers of older adults. Some community and technical colleges were taking initial steps to meet their needs, expanding their workforce training programs. SBCTC had been encouraging them to go a step further by combining their workforce programs with adult basic education in variety of ways. From 1997, for example, it had achieved some level of integration in the Customized Jobs Skills Training Program (CJST)

*continued on page 9*

# Trading Up

> Elyse Barbell *Executive Director*

I look out my window onto Broadway. Right below sits a three-ton bronze bull, a testament to the power and glory of Wall Street. I strain to see if any bodies have hit the ground yet. As the financial crisis reaches a new peak without immediate resolution, here at the Literacy Assistance Center we are forging ahead with an optimism that may not quite reach our core.

After a year of strategic planning we are raising the bar on our professional development offerings. This year the LAC will help you be more persistent and systematic in pursuing professional development by offering seasonal catalogues designed to help you build expertise in the areas most important to you—and explore other topics you might be interested in as well. You will find more sustained professional development, more leadership training, and more certificate courses (check out the announcement of the open house for our new Teaching English as a Second Language course on page 5). Our Adult Literacy Education Core Curriculum (ALECC) will assure that new teachers who begin with the Pre-service module and proceed through the intensive year-long course will have the strong, comprehensive foundation of knowledge they need to reach their highest potential.

Another innovation is our leadership development program, which assists new program managers in taking a break from the daily tasks and stress of program management to develop their visionary leadership potential. The feedback from our initial groups has been uniformly enthusiastic. (Please contact Be Jensen at bej@lacnyc.org if you would like to find out how you can participate.)

As things grow bleaker on “The Street,” we are fully conscious that our field’s role is more essential than ever. Our learners could teach Lehman Brothers executives a thing or two about living without credit and making do with less. The skills our learners bring to the table are extraordinary and their commitment to educating themselves humbles us. All they ask from us is a chance to learn. Giving them that chance would cost an infinitesimal fraction of the \$700 billion that may be unloading from trucks a block from our office. I don’t expect any of that cash would get caught in a gust of conscience and fly up to the LAC windows. Instead, the transfer of our taxpayer dollars to those who need it least is likely to be used as a rationale for cutting back on education, health care, and other social services. Over the next several months all of us in the field of adult literacy are going to have to work very hard to make the case for our very existence. Moving forward, constantly improving our services, and celebrating our successes is critical in this time of great change.

This is our last Update before the election. I probably don’t even need to say this, but it can’t be repeated too often: We hope that you will make every effort to impress upon all of your students who are eligible to vote that the result of this presidential election will determine their future—and ours. ●



## LITERACY UPDATE

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## Teaching the Formerly Incarcerated

> Carolyn E. Buser, Education Program Specialist, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, US Department of Education

Some time ago I was part of a group of correctional educators visiting a community-based adult education program in Baltimore. Upon being introduced to us, one of the community teachers remarked that she would feel very uncomfortable if any former prisoners were to join her class. Hearing that, our group exchanged smiles. Among us we had recognized three of our former students, now hers and doing very well.

The presence of formerly incarcerated students in this teacher's class wasn't a surprise to our group. The title of a Pew Charitable Trusts report released last February, "One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008," was actually slightly understated. According to the report, one in every 99.1 persons is in custody, the highest rate in the world. The total number, more than 2.3 million, is double what it was just a decade ago.

Another issue often overlooked is what happens when these prisoners are released. More than 95 percent will be – in excess of 650,000 last year alone, according to a US Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance Report by the Re-entry Policy Council: "Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and Prison Re-entry" ([http://reentrypolicy.org/issue\\_areas/reentry\\_housing](http://reentrypolicy.org/issue_areas/reentry_housing)). Among them were 15,130 in New York State, according to the state's "2007 Crimestat Update," including 9,000 in New York City. Most of the returnees both nationally and in New York State are non-violent, single, minority, or Hispanic males who do not have a high school diploma.

Correctional education can play a vital role in easing re-entry, making it an investment with excellent returns. The "2001 Three State Recidivism Study" sponsored by the Department of Education and the Correctional Education Association provided powerful evidence it can reduce recidivism and costs associated with incarceration and crime. Other studies, such as the 2004 "Correctional Education as a Crime Control Program," by Bazos and Hausman of the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, also underscore the value of correctional education.

"Re-entry" is a current buzzword in the field. In the 1990s, New York was well ahead of the curve; its Re-entry Resource Center ([reentry.net/ny](http://reentry.net/ny)) was one of the first such projects in the country. The US Government has established a Re-entry Initiative and a Re-entry Website from the Department of Justice. The White House held a Roundtable on Prisoner Re-entry in 2007. Last spring The Urban Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and the US Department of Education's Office of Correctional Education sponsored an exciting Re-entry Roundtable in New York City.

In many ways the term "entry" might be more appropriate than "re-entry." Many adult students, especially those returning from prison, have never entered a public library, a mutually respectful relationship with their communities, or a community adult education program. A community adult education class is one place where they are likely to share many characteristics with those around them. The student in the

next chair may well be in transition from a foreign land and culture, from menial to meaningful employment, or from subsistence living to creating a more fulfilling life, alone or for a family. (Of course, transition from incarceration to community life presents other challenges as well. For example, many landlords will not rent to former prisoners, and many employers will not hire them.)

Adult education programs alert to the special needs of this population will probably discover that every student can benefit from the attention paid to them. This is evident when teachers focus on social skills. Familiarizing adult students with social interactions that seem commonplace to most of us can enable adult students to become more comfortable when seeking community services, presenting themselves to a potential employer, or simply having a conversation with a neighbor. These interactions can be learned through rituals embedded within the daily curriculum. They can be appropriate at any level of adult education and repeated in every session.

### Many returnees are not familiar with basic social interactions

Some teachers post expected behavioral practices inside the classroom and around the program site, like the reminder posted on a prison classroom to "Enter with a smile and a friendly greeting!" That may sound simple, but the idea behind it is complex: As when reporting to a worksite, it's best to leave negative attitudes at the classroom door. Another possibility is to open each session by asking students to formally introduce themselves to each peer sitting nearby with their proper name, a firm handshake, and unwavering eye contact. Many returning students are not familiar with even this most basic of social interactions. Other rituals might be asking each student to hold a three-minute conversation with a classmate on an agreed upon topic such as the weather, a news item, a recent class trip or speaker, or simply the previous day's lesson. Once rituals become familiar and automatic for the students, they can be changed or supplemented.

Adult education students often leave a program for family, work, or relocation reasons, and the program loses track of them. This can also happen when correctional students are released from prison. Many correctional education programs prepare for this possibility by asking every student to maintain and keep a portfolio that includes assessment and placement information, examples of work, and comments from teachers or counselors. This basic academic record can then be shown to another program in a different location. Community-based programs can ask to see them; this

*continued on page 11*

# Moving to Post-Secondary Education

## *Transition is not another word for change*

> Ellen Hewitt, Director, National College Transition Network

Last spring, after almost 30 years as a college faculty member and administrator I became the director of the National College Transition Network (NCTN) at World Education. I had made many transitions before. I had worked exclusively with nontraditional learners throughout my career. Yet adjusting to this change plunged me deep in the emotional wilderness at the very core of any major transition, surprising me by the turmoil it aroused: Self-doubt. Misgivings. Sadness over what I had left behind. Fear of the unknown. Disorientation while adjusting to new expectations. What had I done?

### Recognition comes first

Struggling with these distressing feelings, I suddenly heard an echo from an orientation course for adult students that I had taught many years before: Whether the change is as significant as starting a new school year or a new job or something much smaller, transitions call for special skills. Immediately, I felt a tremendous sense of relief. No, I realized, I had not suddenly become a less competent person. I was going through a transition. This moment of recognition, I then remembered, is the first special skill that any transition requires.

William Bridges, author of *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, calls the limbo between an ending and a beginning the neutral zone. It's important not to be surprised by it for several reasons, he advises: "First, if you don't understand and expect it, you're more likely to try to rush through or even bypass the neutral zone – and to be discouraged when you find that doesn't work...Second, you might be frightened in this no-man's land and try to escape...Third, if you escape prematurely... you'll not only compromise the change but also lose a great opportunity."

## In the land of transitions, endings come first; beginnings come last.

### Transition is not just another word for change

Think of a major change in your life: moving to a new town, coming home from the hospital with your first child, being promoted to a more demanding job, earning a college degree. Each such change involved letting go of your old life before adjusting to the new one. That unsettling frontier is where transition grows: the inner process through which we come to terms with change. In the land of transition, endings come first; beginnings come last.

Whether we welcome a transition (starting school) or don't (getting laid off), every change has pluses and minuses. Recognizing and honoring the feelings associated with it is the next special skill required to make the transition successful. Keeping this in mind allowed me to feel less distracted and more focused in my new job. My thinking became clearer in very practical ways. This transformation in my own behavior led me to think about my own experience might be relevant to ABE students making their own transitions.

To succeed as learners, adults who return to school first need to change their self-concept to include "being a student." This requires a more sub-

stantial adjustment than learning algebra or expository writing. The adult education program may tell them that coming back to school was a wonderful decision. Friends and family members might make them feel their choice was a terrible mistake. They probably want the learner to succeed, but might fear the loss of the person they know. As a result, adult learners may doubt and question themselves (as I did) about their choice for change.

As ABE practitioners, we can help new students identify their conflicting feelings, doubts, and fears and acknowledge where they come from while helping them recognize, name, and honor the feelings that accompany this major life transition. Once they do that, they can move forward, as I did. A good way to start is to introduce the three phases of transition (letting go, reorienting, making a new beginning). Captivating literature—short stories, memoirs, and excerpts from longer works such as the Autobiography of Malcolm X—can be very effective. Even a sentence or two from the right work can serve as a catalyst for discussion. Consider the following exchange in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

"Who are you?" said the Caterpillar....

"I – I hardly know, Sir, just at present," Alice replied rather shyly, "at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."

Life-history exercises that help students articulate critical turning points in their lives and explore how they moved forward at those times build confidence in forging ahead. Sharing guided journal writing in class shows students they aren't the only ones struggling.

Although adults with GEDs or other nontraditional diplomas derive substantial benefits from post-secondary education, very few actually enroll, and those that do are rarely successful. A few detailed studies have documented the access and persistence challenges that adult learners, especially those with family and work responsibilities, confront in the area of postsecondary education. Major issues noted by researchers (Zafft, Kallenbach, & Spohn, 2006) include:

- Inadequate academic preparation, particularly limited exposure to college-level reading and algebra, use of computers, writing research papers, and academic vocabulary for ESL students (Santos, 2004; Warburton, Bugarin, & Nunez, 2001);
- Financial constraints due to limited knowledge of and/or access to financial aid for part-time learners; lost wages if full-time workers need to curtail hours;
- Hidden costs of college, such as transportation and childcare (ACE, 2004; Bosworth & Choitz, 2002; Cook, King, Carnevale, & Desrochers, 2004);
- Managing the competing demands of work, family, childcare, and school (Gooden, Matus-Grossman, Wavelet, Diaz, & Seupersad, 2002);
- Difficulty navigating the academic learning environment, college culture, and complex processes (Brickman & Braun, 1999); and
- Personal and psychological barriers, especially lack of confidence in one's ability to succeed as a college student, and a need for significant levels of personal and career counseling (Hill, 2004).

As I move forward in my new beginning at the NCTN, I feel refreshed and ready to greet the opportunities that await me. I know I made the right decision. One of the early benefits has been a deeper understanding of the universality of the transition process. All of us need to notice and honor a major change in our lives by pausing, reflecting, and beginning again. ●

## Open House Literacy Assistance Center Teaching English as a Second Language to Adults Certificate

The Literacy Assistance Center will be holding an open house to introduce its new certificate program on Wednesday, November 12th from 6pm to 8pm in the LAC Clearinghouse. For more information on the TESLA certificate program, go to [www.lacnyc.org/profdev/tesla1ad.pdf](http://www.lacnyc.org/profdev/tesla1ad.pdf).

## US Adult Education Policy

In July, the Interagency Adult Education Working Group of the US Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education published *Bridges to Opportunity: Federal Adult Education Programs for the 21st Century*, containing four recommendations:

1. Strengthen the leadership of the National Institute for Literacy so that it may exercise its coordination responsibility effectively. As a next step, the feasibility of consolidating programs under a single administrative entity should be explored as part of this coordination effort.
2. Broaden the common measures used to evaluate the effectiveness of adult education services to include education gains and transitions to further education and training. Consider extending the use of these measures to all federal agencies administering adult education programs.
3. Coordinate research efforts across federal agencies on issues related to adult education and employment.
4. Expand access to adult education services through improved program linkages, broader dissemination, and more flexible learning opportunities.
5. Improve the basic literacy of Americans who benefit from these programs by continuing to link funding to performance.

A complete copy of the report can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/eo13445.pdf>

## New York College Transition Network

The first meeting of New York College Transition Network will be held on Nov. 13th at 9:00am at the LAC. Non-members are welcome to attend.

## Call for Student Essays

The Literacy Assistance Center would like personal essays from adult education learners for publication in the *LAC Update*. This is a wonderful opportunity for learners to get their work in print in a publication read throughout the literacy community. Essays that have appeared on the back page of the *Update* have been used by teachers to generate class discussions and have inspired many students.

## Student Writing

Bring your students to the acclaimed adult literacy program Selected Shorts: ALL WRITE! at Symphony Space theater. Professional actors will read poems and stories at the first performance and selected, original student work at the second. Texts, study guide, and workshops provided. This free program runs from December through May. There is an evening and a daytime version of the program. Space is limited. For an application, contact Madeline Cohen at (212) 864-1414 x221 or [madeline.cohen@symphonyspace.org](mailto:madeline.cohen@symphonyspace.org).

## Change Agent

The September 2008 issue of *The Change Agent: "Making Sense of Climate Change"* is designed to provide a deeper understanding of global warming, reasons for hope, actions you can take, and opportunities for justice in the ABE or ESOL classroom.

This issue offers 60 pages of short articles, illustrations, cartoons, math lessons, and quizzes to break down the science, economics, and everyday effects of global warming.

Learn about greenhouse gases, energy-saving tricks that also save money, green jobs, justice-based solutions to climate change, and how adult learners are teach-

ing their kids about conservation, saying no to junk mail, and lobbying their mayors to do more for the environment. As one Hurricane Katrina survivor reminds us, hope comes from "learning more about a problem and participating directly in the solution." This idea - that understanding and participation are at the root of hopefulness - is a central theme in this issue's articles, graphics, and lesson plans.

Visit the web site at [www.nelrc.org/changeagent](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent) for information on how to subscribe.

## CONFERENCES

### November

#### American Association for Adult and Continuing Education

*Creating Your Future within Our Future*  
November 11-14, 2008, Denver, Colorado  
<http://www.aaace.org/mc/page.do?sitePageId=66248>

#### NYS TESOL 2008 Conference

*Understanding Language, Cognition and Language Learners*  
November 14, 2008: Teachers' Institute;  
November 15, 2008: Conference,  
Buffalo, New York  
<http://nystesol.org/annualconf.html>

#### Seventh Annual National Health Communication Conference

Co-Sponsored by The American College of Physicians Foundation and the Institute of Medicine  
November 19, 2008, Washington, DC  
<http://foundation.acponline.org/hl/hcc2008.htm>

### March

#### The National Center for Family Literacy National Conference on Family Literacy

March 1 - 3, 2009, Orlando, Florida  
**Deadline for proposals October 20, 2008.**  
[http://www.familit.org/site/c.gtJWJdMQIsE/b.4380819/k.C12D/Call\\_for\\_Proposals.htm](http://www.familit.org/site/c.gtJWJdMQIsE/b.4380819/k.C12D/Call_for_Proposals.htm)

# CALENDAR of events >>

## October 3

### Theme-based Instruction in Critical Content: Exploring Art in Children's Literature

Friday, October 3, 1:00pm–4:00pm

**Facilitators:** Ellen Goldsmith, AnnMarie  
Tevlin

This half-day workshop will feature hands-on activities that focus on the art in children's books. Participants will learn ways to develop children's vocabulary and creative thinking by engaging with artwork as well as with the text. Each participant will receive a 36-page booklet entitled Linking Children's Literature and Art Experiences.

methods which require an individual to select a single correct answer or to fill in the blank. This workshop will focus on types of informal assessment, how to use them, and what they can tell you about the literacy skill levels of your clients.

## October 10

### ALECC Module 2: Digital Literacy

Friday, October 10, 1:30–5:00pm

**Facilitator:** Marilyn J. Rymniak

In this workshop, participants will gain hands-on experience in the computer lab using the Internet to supplement their own learning and professional development. This workshop will focus on introducing participants to the most important online websites, listservs, resources, policy documents, and professional development offerings that support adult education and literacy programs.

## October 8

### Outcomes-based Program Management

Wednesday, October 8, 5:30–7:30pm

**Facilitator:** Darlene Jaris

In this series of workshops, program managers will look at the information they collect and track about students, how it is currently used, potential opportunities to make better use of it, and ways to identify any gaps. Workshops will meet the specific needs of participants and explore how they can utilize information to improve recruitment, retention, and participant success. The series will also look at how analyzing data can assist in program development, reporting to funders, and advocating for participants. **Participants are expected to attend all three sessions.**

## October 10, 31

### Teaching Health Literacy Study Circle: Chronic Disease

Management (p.18)

Friday, October 10, 9:00am–1:00pm

**Facilitators:** Winston Lawrence, Estella Natal

Many of the students in the ESOL/ABE classroom have to deal constantly with chronic illnesses whether for themselves, spouses, parents or their children. This session will focus on integrating the language and literacy skills needed for managing chronic diseases into classroom instruction. Participants are expected to attend all three sessions.

## October 9

### Informal Assessment

Thursday, October 9, 9:30am–3:00pm

**Facilitator:** Barbara Sparks

Informal assessments provide additional ways to identify basic skill levels of clients and can be used in between pre- and post-testing. Informal assessment refers to assessment tasks that resemble reading and writing in the real world and in how people do their work. It relies on an individual's ability to use what he/she has learned in some meaningful way and supports the needs of learners. This differs from traditional testing

## October 10

### ESOL Teacher Share Series

Friday, October 10, 2:00–4:00pm

**Facilitator:** Winston Lawrence

In these sessions, teachers will have an opportunity to hear and discuss promising and innovative practices that colleagues are pursuing. Teachers will explore various aspects of English language teaching, particularly the teaching of the four skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing. Individuals should bring materials to share with the rest of the group.

## October 15

### Women, Literacy, and Participation Wednesday, October 15, 1:00–4:00pm

**Facilitator:** Mev Miller

This interactive workshop explores some of the educational innovations, instructional materials, and pedagogical practices that best support the literacy and educational achievement of women learners in ABE. Participants will discuss the challenges and motivations for women's literacy and basic education and explore the ways in which gender issues and women's concerns get raised (or silenced or ignored) in everyday classroom settings, and discuss ways of handling these situations. The content includes women's learning theory and how educators have used or could use women's centered materials and curriculum.

## October 16

### ALECC Module 1: Preservice

Thursday, October 16, 8:30am–4:00pm

**Facilitator:** Marilyn J. Rymniak

The Pre-Service institute offers an introduction to key concepts, policies, and practices in adult literacy education. Among the issues the Pre-Service Institute explores are: Elements of positive adult learning experiences, and principles of adult learning; The experiences, aspirations, and concerns of students in adult literacy programs; Federal and state adult literacy policy; The connection between intake, goal setting, and instruction; NYS adult education learning standards; Instructional planning; Resources for adult literacy practitioners.

**ALECC participation requires using Moodle , an Internet course management system, but no prior experience is necessary.**

## October 16

### Women Leading Through Reading Discussion Circles

Thursday, October 16, 9:30am–12:30pm

**Facilitator:** Mev Miller

Women Leading Through Reading Discussion Circles™ (WLTR) provide an alternative learning environment using group reading, facilitated discussion, and reflective writing for women needing or using adult basic/literacy education services. Based on the

experiences of “book clubs,” women learners connect their reading and discussion to issues and concerns important for their lives as women. The Circles provide a unique opportunity to address gender-based barriers to women’s lives and learning. This interactive workshop will present how the circles are organized and facilitated, ways to integrate them into current curriculum structures, and how to include writing, civic participation, and assessment components.

## October 17

### Family Literacy Leadership Initiative: Building Networks of Influence

Friday, October 17, 9:30am–3:30pm

Facilitators: Be Jensen, Barbara Sparks

This session will examine key intersections of leadership styles, networking, and strategic planning that can strengthen programs.

## October 17

### Teaching Very Basic Literacy to

### Beginning ESOL Learners

Friday, October 17, 1:30–4:30pm

Facilitator: Susan Dalmas

In this workshop teachers will learn successful techniques, strategies and activities in teaching very basic literacy to beginning ESOL learners who either have zero or very limited literacy not only in English but also in their own first language. In this workshop, the presenter will share insights from the Basic Literacy for ESOL class model that has been developed by the Queens Borough Public Library. Participants will also discuss the screening of students, exit criteria, and the development of curricula and appropriate materials.

## October 21

### BEST Plus Test Administrator Training

Tuesday, October 21, 9:30am–3:30pm

Facilitator: Be Jensen

Practice administering the print- and computer-based versions of the test and familiarize yourself with the scoring rubric. Participants receive a test administrator guide and practice CDs.

## October 22

Wednesday, October 22, 8:30am–1:30pm

### ASISTS Data Entry Training

Facilitator: TBD

For new data entry staff or other staff who utilize ASISTS on a daily basis.

## October 22

### Outcomes-based Program Management

Wednesday, October 22, 5:30–7:30pm

Facilitator: Darlene Jaris

In this series of workshops, program managers will look at the information they collect and track about students, how it is currently used, potential opportunities to make better use of it, and ways to identify any gaps. Workshops will meet the specific needs of participants and explore how they can utilize information to improve recruitment, retention, and participant success. The series will also look at how analyzing data can assist in program development, reporting to funders, and advocating for participants. **Participants are expected to attend all three sessions**

## October 24

### Teaching Health Literacy Study

### Circle: Health Care Access and Navigation

Friday, October 24, 9:00am–1:00pm

Facilitators: Winston Lawrence, Estella Natal

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

## October 24

### Drama and Story Telling in the ESOL Classroom

Friday, October 24, 1:30–4:30pm

Facilitator: Be Jensen

Drama and Storytelling are enjoyable and educationally sound teaching tools. This highly participatory workshop includes a variety of activities that support a creative,

**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.**

communicative ESL classroom. Storytelling and drama enhance the practice of the “four skills” (listening, speaking, reading and writing); and teach vocabulary, functions and grammar while encouraging cross cultural awareness and personal expression. These strategies engage the “whole learner” and the “multiple intelligences,” and they make teaching and learning fun!

## October 30

### Theme-based Instruction in Critical

### Content: Intergenerational Literacy Activities

Thursday, October 30, 10:30am–1:30pm

Facilitator: Be Jensen

After the facilitator presents recent research findings on best practices in intergenerational literacy activities participants will explore ways they can apply these new ideas in their programs.

## 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.

# TEACHERS' corner >> Putting Your Lessons to Work

> Jane Adamo, ABE Teacher, Goodwill/HRA BEGIN Managed Programs

As an adult basic education teacher, I've learned that classroom and worksite have many similarities for my students. Both involve learning new things, dealing with challenges and frustrations, and applying self-discipline. Both are based on the skills and demands of decoding, initiating communication, and task completion. I try to build my students' confidence in their ability to get a job and do it well by making them aware that every time they're in my classroom or doing homework they're already practicing skills they'll need in the workforce; what they're learning from me, and the methods by which they're learning, can help them coast more smoothly into employment.

Most instructional models include learning skills and strategies taught via content. As an instructor, I always try to keep in mind that the lessons in math, reading and writing in the context of social studies and science and the approaches that I demonstrate can help students undertake new tasks, improve performance, and cope with difficulties. With a little bridging, I've found that I can encourage students to reinterpret classroom procedures into strategies and skills useful in preparing, learning, and performing as an employee. Here are a few simple ideas for extending lessons that could help your students get jobs—and keep them.

*Pre-writing and Pre-reading.* You've taught your students to lower stress and boost ideation and comprehension by prepping and warming up for reading and writing assignments. Now, they can try it at work. Students can start preparing for their day by taking a minute to brainstorm or freewrite about upcoming work tasks, then noting questions they may have before they begin, or challenges they may foresee. Emphasize to your students that this needn't be an agonizing process: just a moment or two the night before, or during their commute or lunch. Encourage them to consider what they already know about the work at hand. When they become accustomed to doing this, they're scaffolding for themselves -- building on their own background and activating prior knowledge as you've done with them in the classroom.

## Encourage students to reinterpret classroom procedures into strategies and skills useful in preparing, learning, and performing as an employee.

*Summarizing, predicting and drawing inferences.* These strategies teach your students how to plan their tasks and foresee problems and difficulties before they occur. Imaging possible challenges "down the line" accustoms students to formulating strategies for dealing with them. Determining the information they'll need for the work, questions they should ask, and who best to approach for assistance can help them head off difficulties, or reduce stress if problems do occur. Another technique you can suggest is for students to arm themselves with alternate Plans A and B already in their pockets. If journal writing is one of your classroom activities (it's a

good one), encourage your students to keep a work journal and write in it at least a few times a week to help clarify their progress, difficulties and goals.

*And vice versa.* Just as you can bring the classroom into the workplace, you can bring the workplace back to the classroom. Ask job teachers or worksite coordinators for memos, employee literature, bulletin board notices and forms that you can use as tools for teaching strategies specific to non-fiction texts. Another possibility is to find generic materials and applications online (or from your own educational program.) These are good sources of occupational vocabulary, particularly when they are specific to the kind of jobs your student population participates in.

*I do, we do, you do.* This is a good way for both you and your students to model a useful workplace learning technique: watch your supervisor do something, practice under his/her supervision, try it yourself.

## Suggest students continue their habit of making flash cards, only now of work terminology.

*Joining the 9 to 5ers.* Congratulate all your students joining the Commuting Club (an official membership when their coffee cart vendor knows exactly how they like their caffeine before they ask for it). Encourage them to join fellow travelers in reading the morning newspaper (applying non-fiction reading strategies to do so). Suggest that they continue their class habit of making flashcards, only now of work terminology or routines, and catch a minute or two to look the stack over on a regular basis. Encourage them to locate the library closest to the job and try to visit it once a month.

*Customizing to fit.* Remind students that they may extend their learning into the workplace at their own pace and according to their own style. If they commute with friends, they may not want to whip out their flash cards. If they eat lunch in the cafeteria, they don't have time to visit the library during working hours. Emphasize that the learning skills they have are tools to use when they need them, but encourage them to challenge themselves by keeping them in practice.

*Take your own advice.* Like their students, instructors can always benefit from honing their workplace strategies and learning new ones. Here are two of the many resources that can help:

*Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement: Research on What Works in Schools.* Robert J. Marzano. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2004.

*Strategies That Work.* Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goodvis. Portland: Stenhouse Publishers, 2007. ●

## Work + Education *continued*

of WorkFirst, Washington's welfare program, which required that colleges receiving funding to provide short-term training (8-22 weeks) incorporate ABE. A number of colleges had also begun integrating ESL/ABE into their short-term programs. Others had taken a different approach, providing "bridge" classes in ESL or ABE prior to the CJST training.

SBCTC was convinced that the colleges could accomplish much more with a systemic approach. The Ford Foundation's Bridges to Opportunity Initiative seemed like an ideal springboard. Washington applied for a Bridges grant, and in 2002 was one of six states selected to participate. SBCTC then had to choose a model. In 2003, its Workforce Education and Adult Basic Education departments convened a meeting of its Workforce Education Council and Council for Basic Skills to discuss career pathways and integration of basic education and workforce education programming.

One presenter in particular, Davis Jenkins of the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Teachers College, Columbia University, generated a great deal of enthusiasm with a description of his work on career pathways. Convinced that this was the approach it needed, SBCTC invited CCRC to collaborate on a research study funded by the Bridges grant. Their conclusions, embodied in the "Building Pathways to Success for Low-Skill Adult Students: Lessons for Community College Policy and Practice from a Longitudinal Student Tracking (Tipping Point) Study" ([http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/docs/education/ford\\_bridges/bldg\\_pathways\\_to\\_success\\_for\\_low-skilled\\_adult\\_students-brief.pdf](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/docs/education/ford_bridges/bldg_pathways_to_success_for_low-skilled_adult_students-brief.pdf)), had a profound impact on the framing and direction of Washington's I-BEST model. In large part, the project's influence can be attributed to the inclusion of stakeholders in both the study and subsequent presentations to legislators and their staff.

While the research study was underway, SBCTC had already begun to plan the actual program. It looked for research on combination ABE/ESL-workforce training programs anywhere in the country and discovered that the few studies that had been done looked at programs focused on using ESL to teach workplace vocabulary, not skills training. In Washington, community and technical college faculty and staff had begun to combine workforce education and adult basic education programming in new ways to address the needs of the students. The original I-BEST demonstration projects grew out of these initiatives and studies indicating that adult learners acquire basic education skills most effectively when they are learning them in a practical context, rather than trying to acquire vocabulary or math skills in isolation.

Through a competitive process in 2003-04, SBCTC selected five demonstration projects to challenge the traditional notion that students must first get through ESL/ABE before they could begin workforce training. As they proceeded, SBCTC staff members conducted site visits to provide technical assistance and evaluate their success. The early results were so positive that in 2004-05 SBCTC gave the original five projects funding for an additional year and funded five more. At some of the colleges, the program was expanded to include ABE as well as ESL.

The I-BEST demonstration projects were an immediate success. Not only did they expand access to workforce training for ESL students, participants were many times more likely to complete workforce training and to earn college credits than were traditional ESL students studying the same amount of time. Based on these results, all of the state's 34 community and technical colleges have established I-BEST programs, a total of 117. Six of them are at Highline Community College.

*When Lupe walked into the orientation session full of excitement, she found 24 other adults vying for only 15 slots. She was sure that she would be rejected, as*

*she had been so often before. Not this time. The professional-technical instructor told her that she had excellent speaking skills and the right personality. She was in. Ecstatic, Lupe showed up for the first class hugging a newly purchased textbook, ready to go. That session, and at every subsequent class, she stayed late, determined to learn more. Still, like many other ESL and ABE students, she was convinced that all her effort wouldn't be enough to get her through. "Act confident, even if you are not," Kristina advised her.*

The I-BEST model was designed to give students like Lupe the confidence they frequently lacked initially. Instructors make regular assessments to verify that students are gaining just the right ESL/ABE skills they need to succeed in the workforce training. At the same time, I-BEST takes care to ensure that students acquire the ESL/ABE skills necessary to continue their education immediately or after they go to work. The current SBCTC-approved I-BEST model mandates that the training and ABE/ESL instructors work in the classroom together at least 50 percent of the time.

## A portion of I-BEST credits must be college-level

To be effective, this team approach demands considerable planning and coordination before, during and after students step into the classroom. It requires close collaboration between administrators from basic skills and workforce training, planning discussions involving administrators and faculty, and continuous faculty engagement in curriculum development/revision, student assessment and feedback. This must include planning and coordination to ensure that students are prepared for further education. A portion of I-BEST program credits must be college-level and count toward the next level certificate or degree in the academic pathway. To ensure that the students can achieve these ambitious objectives, the program also provides support services, which include a contact person for every student. This individual follows up regularly and helps with the navigation necessary to obtain external resources that may be needed to stabilize the student's environment.

Bringing a comprehensive program like this to scale across the college and technical school system costs far more than traditional ABE/ESL programming would. To reduce the disparity, SBCTC altered its traditional program funding model by awarding additional credits to I-BEST courses that have two teachers in the classroom at least 50 percent of the instructional time. The course credit equivalency is calculated by multiplying the usual class credit value by 1.75 (1.5 for the instruction and .25 for the increased coordination cost). In 2007 the legislature allocated \$4.9 million to fund 500 enrollments (\$9,800 per student).

This investment pays off. The I-BEST model continues to achieve the extraordinary level of success that the demonstration project showed was possible. According to a new SBCTC study ("Increasing Student Achievement for Basic Skills Students," in 2006-07, adult basic education student participation in college-level programs has jumped 33 percent system-wide.

*continued on page 11*

# RESOURCES >> Learning Disabilities

## Planning for Next Steps

> Aaron Kohring, > Senior Research Associate, University of Tennessee Center for Literacy Studies

Learners going from adult education to the workplace or post-secondary education settings must overcome a variety of challenges. Adults with learning disabilities (LD) find the barriers even higher, but educators and potential employers can play a crucial role in easing the transition. Literacy instructors can draw upon a fairly extensive range of research-based strategies, promising practices, and models that will help students ease the transition to post-secondary education. If they teach adults entering the workplace, the literature is less extensive, but does offer valuable ideas and other resources.

For someone seeking secure work that offers satisfaction and success, the best way to begin is with preparation and planning. This is even more essential for adults with LD. A counselor, friend, or family member can play the role of coach or mentor, but an adult educator is in an ideal position to guide learners in their work preparation in several important areas:

*Understanding themselves.* This includes knowing both their strengths and particular challenges they face in areas such as disability, interests, preferences, aptitudes, and learning and work styles. To elicit this information, the teacher might ask learners to fill out a questionnaire or answer probing questions like, What are your areas of interest? What do you enjoy doing? Any hobbies? What do you do well? What skills would you like to develop? How do you learn best? What kinds of jobs have you enjoyed? Other excellent questions that can help learners understand their areas of disability and the impact of LD on their lives and work can be found in “Building the Bridge Between Community College and Work For Students with Learning Disabilities,” an article by Deborah Stern available at <http://www.ldonline.org/article/6129>.

*Analyzing prior work experiences (if any).* This requires encouraging students to go beyond “I liked that job” or “I didn’t like working there.” The instructor could ask them to discuss what they specifically liked/disliked about the job, their coworkers, the management, and the workplace environment. What areas of the job did they excel in? Where were the challenges? LD learners also need to be clear about whether they had the necessary skills to perform the required job tasks.

*Working from their areas of strength.* In determining what strengths they would bring to a particular kind of work, a good place to start is to identify what skills a particular job requires and what types of accommodations are needed to perform the essential job tasks. The O\*NET Online Skills Search (<http://online.onetcenter.org/>) and the Skills Profiler (<http://www.acinet.org/acinet/skills/default.aspx>) are among the online resources that list the types of skills necessary for doing various kinds of work. The Job Accommodations Network (<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/soar/index.htm>) is a searchable accommodation resource.

It should be kept in mind that although the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehab Act offer adults with disabilities protection from discrimination, employers are only required to offer reasonable accommodations. This means adults with LD have equal opportunity in applying for a job and are permitted modifications to perform essential job functions if they are qualified for that type of work. In some cases, they may require no accommodations or very few.

Strengths and abilities that LD students identify in these career

searches are valuable assets. The instructor can show them how they can highlight these attributes on their resume and make sure that they go into a job interview prepared to discuss their relevant experience and qualifications for the job, and to give examples of how they can contribute to the workplace. The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) provides tips for helping learners with the job search and the interview process at <http://www.nclد.org/content/view/353/345>. The Stern article cited earlier also has useful information on preparing for the interview.

*Understanding the pros and cons of disclosure.* Whether or not to disclose a learning disability is a critical decision for jobseekers, and one that is often difficult. In the workplace setting, if an accommodation is not needed, no disclosure is necessary. If accommodations are necessary, jobseekers should be aware of them. They then have to decide whether the benefits of disclosing outweigh potential negative consequences, such as exposing them to discrimination, or even preventing them from getting hired.

Teachers can help learners list the pros and cons of disclosure, discuss their options, and make a list of job-specific accommodations. Both the Job Accommodations Network database mentioned previously and the NCLD webpage for On the Job Accommodations (<http://www.nclد.org/content/view/349/347/>) have excellent examples of typical accommodations. Instructors can also help learners find accommodations that work for them and don’t require disclosure.

*Documentation.* In many cases, LD adults do not have any documentation of their learning disability. That requires diagnosis by a trained professional and the testing process is often expensive. The factors involved may be physical, academic, and/or behavioral/psychological. An instructor who suspects that a student has a learning disability that has not been identified may want to do a preliminary assessment or screen. “Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities,” a good guide to the instructor’s role in the screening process, can be found at [http://www.cls.utk.edu/pdf/keys\\_ld/appendix\\_A.pdf](http://www.cls.utk.edu/pdf/keys_ld/appendix_A.pdf). Instructors who would rather not purchase a commercially available screening instrument can find some online, such as Dr. Richard Cooper’s Screening of Information Processing (available at <http://www.learningdifferences.com/Main%20Page/C-SIP/C-SIP-CompleteShortForm.htm>).

If the preliminary assessment indicates the learner might benefit from further testing by a professional, “Assessment for Adults with LD and/or ADHD” (<http://www.ldonline.org/article/6021>), an article by Kathleen Ross Kidder, lists several options for reduced-cost testing. These include contacting the learner’s health insurer to see if it will cover part of the cost, checking with Vocational Rehabilitation Services that may have funds for assessment, finding a university program in psychology that may provide testing, and contacting local specialists who may be willing to provide reduced cost services for adult literacy students.

*Developing self-advocacy skills.* Learning how to advocate for one’s self is an essential skill for anyone entering the workforce. It is even more important for someone with a learning disability. Learners who are skilled

*continued on page 12*

## Work + Education *continued*

The patterns were similar for ABE/GED and ESL students. In addition, among adults trying to earn their first 15 and 30 college credits, “I-BEST students in the programs studied were substantially more likely to get to 15 credits than basic skills students attempting college courses in other ways” the study concluded. “ABE/GED I-BEST students were more than twice as likely to earn 30 college credits as any other group.” The full report is available online at [http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/education/resh\\_rpt\\_08\\_1\\_student\\_achieve\\_basic\\_skills.pdf](http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/education/resh_rpt_08_1_student_achieve_basic_skills.pdf).

*Lupe and her classmates are all I-BEST success stories. In just 10 weeks, Lupe learned to be a phlebotomist while improving her English. She has a full time job, making \$16 an hour—a 60% increase over her hourly pay before taking the*

*course. Of the 14 other students in her class, 13 are also working as phlebotomists—the 15th decided to continue her education immediately in the nursing program. Many of Lupe’s other classmates are continuing their education in the Medical Assistant program, applying the 15 credits they earned in the Phlebotomist program towards a Medical Assistant certificate or AAS.*

*Lupe herself found that I-BEST does more than teach skills. When her children saw her in the scrubs uniform for the first time, their mom was a changed woman.*

*For more information on I-BEST, contact Tina Bloomer, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, at [tbloomer@sbctc.edu](mailto:tbloomer@sbctc.edu).* ●

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## Formerly Incarcerated *continued*

could facilitate the transition to a different educational environment.

Comprehensive resource lists and information pamphlets from local service providers in housing, health, money management, civic participation, legal service, social services, parenting, and other necessities of daily life, a standard feature in correctional education programs, could benefit all adult students. A number of groups have created lists of services and pamphlets especially for returning prisoners; similar lists are available for persons with various illnesses, for homeless persons, and for parents. Brochures from providers on these lists can become the basis for class discussion, a vocabulary lesson, math problems, and essays. In addition to providing information that students might find personally valuable, these lists give them a way to help a friend or neighbor locate resources -- a way for them to develop socially responsible self-esteem and gain recognition as a community resource. Teachers and administrators in adult education programs can expand their learners’ knowledge of community services by developing relationships with local service providers. These organizations can be asked to give presentations and host classroom visits to their site.

Some students returning from prison reveal this to the teacher or the program, just as persons with AIDS, homelessness, and family violence may self-identify. Being prepared can ease the discomfort on both sides. (I’m very familiar with this issue. For 30 years my mother expressed fears for my safety and sanity in pursuing a career in correctional education. Finally, when she was 80 years old, I took her inside the maximum security women’s institution where I was working. After looking around, she remarked, “It’s just like the supermarket on a Saturday morning.”)

Educators should never try to impose a solution for any concern unrelated to the educational program. Their role is to be objective listeners equipped to furnish the tools necessary to deal with the problem. An intimate knowledge of the class reference list and personally knowing a real person with a real name at an appropriate service provider can make it easier to arrange an appointment on the spot, or for the student to make an initial phone connection with the provider and set up an appointment for a future date. Both students and teachers benefit from this approach. A rapid referral allows a student to return to the classroom better able to participate in the educational activities that an adult education program is best equipped to handle. For the teacher, maintaining the role of a knowledgeable referral source rather than an involved friend reserves more time and energy, physical and emotional, for facilitating student learning.

So far, it is a rare community adult education program that has fully embraced the challenge of recognizing the needs of the formerly incarcerated.

Many have outreach networks and public relations campaigns to attract students, but few have established outreach networks with local jails and prisons, or transitional housing or employment programs. Just as a real name, face, and phone number can work wonders in getting adult students to needed resources, a real representative from a community adult education program would reduce the terror – this word is not used lightly – many people feel when they walk out of prison, or even enter a community adult education program for the first time.

### Resources

Many resources are available for both returning prisoners and for persons in the community interested in helping their transition process.

The Correctional Education Association website (<http://www.ceanational.org/>) provides information on many aspects of correctional teaching and has links to other useful sites. The Department of Justice (<http://www.usdoj.gov/>) has many sites concerning transitioning issues. The U.S. Department of Education’s Correctional Education Office and John Jay College of Criminal Justice have produced a very useful publication available on-line, *Back to School: Continuing Your Education after Prison* (<http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/centersinstitutes/pri/publications.asp>.)

New York has a premier institution of higher education focusing on justice and correctional issues. John Jay College, part of the City University of New York, provides postsecondary education on criminal justice issues and is a fruitful and generous resource for local and national transition programs and services. The Fortune Society has helped returning prisoners for more than 40 years. Another notable program is Exodus Transitional Community in East Harlem. Finally, The Hudson Center has been working with pre-release programs based in New York’s jails for many years. All of these resources have links to many others.

Small adult education grants are available through philanthropic organizations such as the Annie E. Casey foundation, Public/Private Ventures, and the PEW Charitable Trusts. The federal government has some niche grants. My favorite, as a former English teacher, was a grant called Access to Artistic Excellence, that called for proposals to make the arts more available to underserved populations. It never hurts to check out <http://Grants.gov>. If grant is closed, it could still be useful to contact awardees for ideas and resources. The list of agencies that received three-year Prisoner Re-entry Initiative Training and Technical Assistance Program grants is available at <http://ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/07Re-entry-Awards.pdf>. ●

## Learning Disabilities *continued*

self-advocates understand themselves, can ask for and negotiate for their needs and desires, and draw upon all the services and legal rights available to them. Self-advocacy is also essential to success in the world of work. Pat Boyd offers strategies that teachers can use to develop their learners' self-advocacy skills in "Self-Advocacy: Practical Advice to the Adult with LD," available online at <http://www.ldonline.org/article/5997>.

*Educating employers.* The employer side of the LD transition process is often overlooked; it can play a crucial role in the transition process. Does the employer know what a learning disability is? What the legal issues are? What accommodations are? Even employers who can answer these questions may need some education on how to best encourage and support employees with LD. Key considerations include:

being personally aware of the nature of learning disabilities, knowing the laws, being open to providing accommodations, and helping to focus work assignments that use employee strengths. Literacy programs can play a role in this education process, as well as in assisting the students directly. Much of the literature cited above can be useful in this process.

*Support systems.* Throughout the work preparation and planning process, it is important for adults with LD to develop and maintain systems of support. These systems may be teachers, friends, or family or accommodations and strategies that support long-term success in their daily lives and especially in achieving secure employment. **O**



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