

# The OLRC News

## Does the GED Lead to Economic Benefits?

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Currently about 1 in 7 high school “diplomas” issued each year is a GED. An article in the *Review of Educational Research* (Tyler, 2003) provided a synthesis of recent research (1998—present) about the economic advantages of earning the GED. The overall conclusion, “GED holders have labor market outcomes that are substantially better than those of dropouts without a GED” (p. 375), is a welcomed one for ABL programs. However, the review also uncovered issues related to GED attainment that deserve discussion among ABL professionals. A brief description of a few of these issues, along with suggestions for considering them (prepared by Nancy Padak), follows.

“A focus on the GED as an ‘end product’ is ... misplaced....The credential should instead be viewed as a milestone along a road to acquiring a range of useful skills.... By linking the GED program to other institutions or organizations, GED preparation programs could serve as platforms for providing additional learning opportunities, be they postsecondary academic education or vocational education and training” (p. 376).

**For discussion:** *What do we believe about the role of the GED in students' lives? What do students believe? Is the GED seen as an end to formal education, or as a beginning? How does our program prepare students for additional education? What partnerships can we develop to facilitate additional educational opportunities for our students who attain the GED?*

There are economic payoffs to a GED, particularly for those who leave school with low skills. Moreover, the estimated impact of GED grows over time; we need to look at least 5 years out to find good information about economic payoff. Two explanations are offered for the focus on adults with low skills: 1) “work history” is often an initial screen in employment situations. GED attainment may signal to employers that the individual has adjusted attitudes and behaviors that will make him/ her a more productive employee; or 2) people with low skills have to learn a lot in order to pass the GED, and this learning (not the GED necessarily) may be what has the economic payoff.

**For discussion:** *How can we prepare students to highlight what they have learned and how their attitudes have changed in job application or interview situations? How can we track economic outcomes for students who earn the GED and leave our programs?*

Among the foreign-born and foreign-educated, those holding GEDs earn 8-10% more than those who graduated from high school in their home countries. Tyler speculates that US employers may know little about the value of non-US high school experiences.

**For discussion:** *How can we help employers see the value of high school educations in foreign countries?*

Postsecondary education and training are fruitful but little-used routes to economic success for GED holders. This review looks at the research-based advantages of three types of postsecondary education/ training: 1) colleges/ universities: “Given the proper remedial work, the performance of GED holders in college academic coursework is about on a par with the average college student” (p. 391); 2) on-the-job training, a valuable but little-used option for employed GED holders; and 3) off-the-job training (proprietary schools), which does not lead to higher wages for men, but does for women. The finding for women is associated with an increase in the number of hours worked, not higher wages.

Cont.

**For discussion:** How can we encourage GED students to plan for postsecondary education or training? What do we know about college/ university opportunities in our area? How can we learn about admissions? Expected skill levels? How can we develop partnerships with colleges/ universities so that interested students can enroll and be successful? How can we help students see the value of on-the-job training? What do we know about the proprietary schools in our area? What “hard” evidence can they provide that their education and training pays off for students?

Tyler, J. H. (2003, Fall). Economic benefits of the GED: Lessons from recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 73, 369-403.

**If you are interested in participating in a focus group about these issues. Please call Sandra Golden at 330-672-5351, or email at [sgolden@literacy.kent.edu](mailto:sgolden@literacy.kent.edu).**



The following tips on phonemic awareness came from ideas shared during the roundtable sessions at the Early Childhood Education Conference in the Fall of 2002. If you have ideas you would like to share, please contact Dianna Baycich at [dbaycich@literacy.kent.edu](mailto:dbaycich@literacy.kent.edu).

## **Topic: Phonemic Awareness**

### **What are the goals offor the students?**

- Hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds
- Identify sounds and rhymes

### **What materials are needed?**

- Predictable literature – rhyming words
- Nursery rhyme book (preferably Mother Goose)
- Pieces of paper – words written on each piece; pictures
- Name recognition, Tongue twister book, word sorts (blends or not blends, past tense or not)

### **What is the procedure?**

- Start with something real; work with words and sounds of spoken language
- Begin with song or poem
- Read nursery rhymes. Teacher holds up picture of rhyming words. Kids choose and match them up.
- Word sort – sort by syllables (2-3 piles), plural/singular, etc.

### **For more information on Phonemic Awareness see the following resources:**

Rasinski, T. and Padak, N. (2004). *Effective Reading Strategies* (3rd ed.) NJ: Prentice Hall.

Phonemic/Phonological Awareness

[www.literatureforliterature.ecsd.net/phonemic\\_awareness.htm](http://www.literatureforliterature.ecsd.net/phonemic_awareness.htm)

Phonemic Awareness

<http://www.mlpp-msl.net/assessments/phonemicAwareness/Phonemic-Awareness-A.pdf>

An interactive onset/rime maker

<http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/wordmaker/>

To take part in a study of phonemic awareness in adult new readers contact Dianna Baycich at [dbaycich@literacy.kent.edu](mailto:dbaycich@literacy.kent.edu) or 330.672.7841.

# Celebrate and Promote Diversity

## Cultural Awareness: Making Sense of it in Adult Basic Education ★

Sandra Golden



Intercultural awareness, multicultural education, cultural education, cultural awareness, and cultural competence – what does it all mean? Depending on what lens you are looking through, it could mean cultural education for one particular race, a multicultural education curriculum, or cultural competence for individuals who work overseas. Since Adult Basic Education serves a very diverse population, adult educators must become grounded in understanding cultural differences and learn to create multicultural education classrooms. Multicultural education can lay the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustices (Gorski & Covert, 1996/2000).

Multicultural education is vital because of students' increasingly diverse backgrounds. Yet there is still much public debate on the impact of multicultural education. Some people feel that multicultural education will divide students rather than unite them. For example, a school board in Lake County, Florida voted that children could learn about other cultures but only as a way of seeing that American culture was inherently "superior" (Burnett, 1994). Unfortunately, this belief supports the melting pot or assimilation model that permits the dominant group to continue marginalizing minority groups. Gorski & Covert (1996/2000) stated that our society's views need to change from that of a melting pot metaphor to that of a tossed salad or stew. This salad image allows more focus on recognizing differences and how these differences are vital for growth. Becoming culturally aware is imperative in beginning the process of recognizing differences. *Culture*, derived from the Latin word 'cultus' historically referred only to practices such as cultivating manners and social graces. It now has a much broader meaning – the fabric of people, the shared values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and languages used within a social group (Guy, 1999).

### How Do We Integrate Cultural Awareness In Adult Basic Education Programs?

To gain a better understanding of your students, you must first have a clear awareness of yourself. Recognize and acknowledge your biases, attitudes, values, and bring meaning to how your experiences influence your perspective and your interactions with students in your adult basic literacy classrooms. Classrooms are a social system with variations based on race, gender, age, ethnicity, etc. These differences are often seen in a hierarchical manner, which leads to equality differences such as up/down power structure, good/bad, and better than. To even complicate the social system more, group differences encompasses the cultural significance of individuals' beliefs, attitudes, values, biases, and experiences. Therefore, an open, honest learning environment is imperative for developing a climate that encourages and promotes diversity. To develop a rich, culturally relevant adult education learning environment, the following fundamentals must be addressed (model adapted from Marchisani & Adams, 1992).

1. Instructor cultural self-awareness – As adult educators we must first have an understanding of our own cultural framework and how that shapes the learning process for our students. This means examining our own cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of learning and oftentimes working to understand how our students learn best rather than imposing our way of learning on them.
2. Learner cultural identity – We must know our students and their cultural background and use this information effectively and creatively during instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Recognizing that our students have many strengths and are motivated to learn produces strong student-teacher relationships.
3. Inclusive curricula – Instructional material should be reflective of students' lived experience, hold students' interest, and be devoid of stereotypical messages. Instructional material or activities developed from the use of newspapers, magazines, or trade books are ways to bring authentic material to the learning environment. To learn more about using trade books go to <http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka>
4. Instructional methods and processes – Students must be active participants in their learning. Research shows that sharing power and responsibility are critical in the learning process. However, the use of different learning modalities must be considered. For example, class presentations are not recommended for all students because of varying cultural beliefs; Asian Americans may feel uneasy in class presentations or leading a class discussion.

A primary goal for adult education programs is to provide adult learners with the tools to become productive workers, and community advocates and to enhance their family involvement. Yet, to achieve these goals effectively and efficiently we need to know our students and how to best meet their needs. This means knowing the population being served and how to provide them with the highest quality service possible. Cultural awareness is essential in achieving these goals. Our society is becoming more diverse, and our adult education classrooms reflect society. Promoting cultural awareness in adult basic education programs opens doors for educators to better know and understand their students; provides for a more open, honest learning environment; and facilitates the opportunity to learn about other cultural differences and similarities.

*Cont.*

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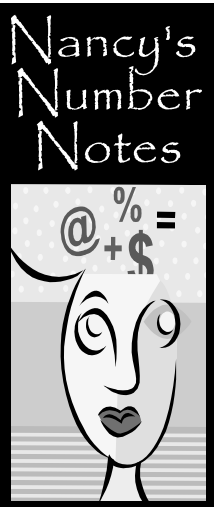
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Burnett, G. (1994). School board will recognize other cultures, but as interior. In *Varieties of multicultural education: An Introduction*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education Digest, 98, 1-4 .



**Question:**

What is an activity that is a quick confidence builder to work with numbers?

**Answer:**

*I like "chain problems." This is a quick activity that can fill a few minutes at the beginning or end of class. I write a problem on the board, such as "5 X 9." Students must try to do the problems in their heads. I continue using that answer to do more problems. My chain might continue with:*

- plus 5 (=50)*
- divided by 10 (=5)*
- square that number (=25)*
- times 5 (=125)*
- subtract 25 (=100)*
- take the square root of the number (=10)*

*(I write the mathematical symbols for each operation.) After we are finished, I go over the "chain" with them to see what the answers should have been as the "chain" grew. Mental percents, powers, roots, and the four basic operations are all areas that can be used and reinforced.*

**Question:**

Should I limit calculator use in my classroom?

**Answer:**

*NO, NO, NO! Calculators are part of the GED test and students need to know how to use them in many different situations. Yes, there are times when a calculator is not necessary, but it is important for each student to decide that for him/herself. Problem solving should be an integral part of an ABL/GED classroom. Having a calculator available while problem solving allows the student to concentrate on problem solving, not number crunching. Will calculators take the place of math thinking? I don't think so. Coupled with estimation and mental math, students will develop number sense, an important mathematical goal.*

*These questions came from the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Math Kick-Off Days. If you have a math question that you would like answered in the OLRC News, contact Nancy Markus at [nmarkus@literacy.kent.edu](mailto:nmarkus@literacy.kent.edu).*

## New Faces at the OLRC

The OLRC has several new employees that it would like to officially welcome and formally introduce. Kelly, Rob, Sharita, Mike, and Liz are all new to the office.

Kelly Most began working in July 2003 as a Research Assistant for the GED Scholars Initiative Program. As a Research Assistant, Kelly is responsible for conducting quantitative and qualitative research. She also provides tutoring and works personally and individually with students who experience academic difficulty. Kelly enjoys working with students and helping the GED students establish their own small community.

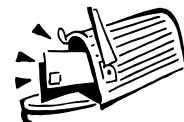
Rob Nitzsche, Graduate Assistant at Kent State, began working at the OLRC in September 2003. Rob is involved with several different activities: grant writing, internal publications, reviewing books for the newsletter, and cataloguing for special collections. These are just a few of the many responsibilities he takes on. Rob appreciates the other staff and employees at the OLRC, and is pleased to be working with them.

In September 2003 Sharita Jordan, a sophomore Criminal Justice major, began working at the OLRC. She is a student worker and does clerical work for the Ohio Literacy Alliance. Sharita is thankful for the flexibility at the OLRC. She is able to work and attend school full-time.

Mike Angyal began working at the OLRC in January 2004. Mike is a lab monitor for the GED Scholars Initiative Program.

Liz Sutera also began working in January 2004. She is doing a writing internship for the OLRC, in connection with the English Department at Kent State. She hopes to write a variety of articles, and maybe even help with some editing and proofreading. Although she has only been here a short while, Liz says that the staff here is very welcoming and enjoys the atmosphere.

**Please check the mailing label on this publication and call, fax or email corrections to:**



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## For Family Literacy Professionals: Children's Conceptions of Literacy

Literacy becomes meaningful for people when it becomes part of their values, practices, routines, and rituals. Is this true for little people—children—as well? Maureen Kendrick, Jim Anderson, and Suzanne Smythe explored this idea in a study of K-2 children's "images" of family literacy.

The method these researchers used holds a great deal of promise as a way to encourage discussion about home literacy practices among parents and children in family literacy programs. The researchers gathered small groups of children (but in a family literacy context, add parents) to talk about:

- what kind of reading and writing they do in school and out of school
- why they read and write in school and out of school
- how in-school and out-of-school reading and writing are the same, and how they are different
- how they think they will use reading and writing in the future

Listening to children's ideas about these issues may help parents see the value of their literacy interactions with their children.

Researchers also asked children to "Draw a picture of reading or writing. It can be a picture of reading or writing that you do at home or at school. It can be a picture of reading or writing that you do now or that you think you might do when you're older" (p. 248). To understand children's "images" of literacy, parents and family literacy professionals may want to determine and then discuss a) who is portrayed in the children's pictures, b) what literacy practices are depicted, and c) where these scenes are set. Is the child doing homework alone at the kitchen table? Reading with mom or dad or a sibling or friend? Writing on a computer?

Everyone may benefit from these explorations. Children will enjoy sharing their ideas. Parents may develop insight into their children's "images" about literacy, which may lead to increased awareness of the critical nature of their own role. And teachers may learn more about how to develop contexts that will support parents' and children's efforts to make literacy a meaningful practice in their lives.

Kendrick, M., Anderson, J., & Smythe, S. (2003). What images of family literacy reveal about family literacy practices and family literacy programs. In C. Fairbanks, J. Worthy, B. Maloch, J. Hoffman, & D. Schallert (Eds.), *52<sup>nd</sup> yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 245-258). Oak Creek, WI: National Reading Conference.

### National Spotlight

The Family Matters Literacy Program, Madison County Even Start in London, Ohio was featured in the Family Literacy Alliance's "Connecting" magazine for their National Family Literacy Day celebration. The celebration, combined with the Ohio Make a Difference Day Promotion, included a visit by Hope Taft, support by over 39 county agencies, 240 family members, and 106 volunteers.



Adult Basic Education and Literacy Professional Development Priorities: Findings from a National Survey Sponsored by World Education, Inc. – Cassandra Drennon, Ph. D., August 2003

In the Spring of 2003, World Education conducted a survey of state directors of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) and of state-level staff developers. The following concerns were included in the survey:

- What are the current and emerging professional development needs?
- Which professional development needs are not being met satisfactorily?
- What are the barriers to providing professional development?
- Would you look outside of your state for models of professional development?

States were randomly chosen from each LINCS\* region with a total of 21 states participating. The director of adult education and/or state-level staff developers for the state were surveyed over the phone. Ten state directors and eleven state level staff developers were the primary respondents to the survey.

The results show that 60% of all professional development priorities identified fell into three categories 1) Accountable Programs, 2) Reading, 3) ESOL. The survey also shows that in many states professional development is being addressed by regional workshops, multilevel core-trainings, and for-credit courses designed in collaboration with colleges.

The main concern respondents identified for accountable programs was accuracy, interpretation, and use of data. The concerns for reading were listed as the gap between theory and practice, the need for better research and corresponding strategies, and the definition of "research based." Concerns for ESOL included the increasing number of immigrants who need to be prepared for the workplace.

Methods the respondents would use to strengthen current PD are technical assistance, the use of mentors, practitioner inquiry, and workshops. Use of a state-wide conference was the least popular method for professional development. And 19 of the 21 respondents have used models developed outside their own states for professional development.

In Ohio, the state-level staff developer responded to the survey and identified Standards and Accountability as an emergent professional development interest.

\*LINCS is the National Institute for Literacy's Literacy Information and Communication System. Please go to <http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/> for more information and to see how the states are divided into regions.

# Resources and Reviews

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**Valmont, W. (2003).** *Technology for Literacy Teaching and Learning.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

*Technology for Literacy Teaching and Learning* was written for prospective and practicing teachers as a guide to introducing, managing, and using technological resources to develop multiple aspects of student literacy. The book shows teachers how to use computers, software, and the Internet in the classroom to help develop students' literacy skills. In it teachers will find a multitude of Tech Tips, Teaching Tips, and Student Projects with notes from teachers who have used the methods in their classrooms as well as notes from some of their students.

*Technology for Literacy Teaching and Learning* is loaded with ideas for using new technologies to develop students' literacy skills in various areas, such as reading and thinking strategies, word recognition, vocabulary; reference and study skills, writing abilities, listening and speaking abilities, and graphic and visual literacy. Each of the topics has an entire chapter devoted to them with Web activities, resources, and comments from students as well as teachers. The chapters are well-illustrated and allow the reader to see examples taken from activities that students have done. They allow teachers to decide quickly and easily whether or not the technology is something they may want to use. Locating resources in the text doesn't require investing a great deal of time because the book is well-organized and guides the reader to whatever aspect of student literacy needs attention.

"Using Technology with Children's Literature" (Chapter 9) includes a section focusing on electronic-based reading material that highlights web access to e-materials. The author suggests that e-books can provide access to literature for those without copies or a library nearby and, when used in conjunction with new technologies, can enhance the reading experience. Website lists provide resources of various types of books like traditional literature, fiction, non-fiction, modern fantasy, contemporary realistic fiction, historic fiction, poetry, and picture books. This chapter is geared towards children's literature but can be used to support adult literacy and GED preparation work. For example, one of the websites listed in Chapter 9 (<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books>) has over 20,000 listings of material covering a wide variety of subjects such as math, science, history, and literacy, as well as many others that can be used to foster competence in various subject areas, or even simply satisfy a curious reader.

*Technology for Literacy Teaching and Learning* is a well-written, easy-to-read book with clear, concise explanations and illustrations that can be used as a guide for teachers to implement new technology for developing their students' literacy. It can be ordered from Houghton Mifflin on the web at <http://education.college.hmco.com/instructors> (Price: \$50.76 + shipping).

**Family Involvement.** *Parent Talk* volume VII – Issue 1. ERIC/REC & The Family Learning Association. Bloomington, IN.

Parents want their children to have the best opportunities and succeed in school. Research done by the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that children with parents who are

involved regularly in their education often have higher reading scores. An article titled "Family Involvement" in a recent issue of *Parent Talk* discusses the meaning of involvement and ways parents can be involved in their children's education. You may want to pass these tips along to parents in your program.

School involvement can be making brownies for a bake sale or volunteering for a dunk tank at a school carnival, but a better way to support a child's learning, and preparation for life, is by being involved in their homework. *Parent Talk* gives suggestions for parents who aren't sure how they should go about tutoring their child. The authors suggest talking to their children's teacher and school for help about the school math program or the kinds of skills that are being developed in reading and writing. The school may have a workshop or online program for parents to attend. Parents shouldn't give their children answers, but rather should teach them how to find answers themselves. The following are questions taken from *Parent Talk* that can foster discussion even when the parent does not know about the subject.

1. What are some of the major themes?
2. Are there some ideas that seem particularly valuable to you?
3. How do you think you can use these ideas?
4. Can you give me a one or two sentence summary of what you have learned here?

It is very important to show children how important their education is, and the more family members that are involved the better. Grandparents can be a valuable resource to help foster growth in children's education. Often they are after-school sitters for working parents or may have some free time that they could spend discussing homework questions or curiosities a child may have. Getting them involved by writing weekly notes back and forth or sitting down and discussing a particular problem while having a snack are a few suggestions from *Parent Talk* on how to get grandparents involved.

For the full article please see *Parent Talk*, "Family Involvement" volume VII issue 1.

**McQuillan, Jeff. (1998).** *The Literacy Crisis: False Claims, Real Solutions.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

McQuillan takes a critical look at popular literacy statistics and much of the reading research to show that the crisis may not be as bad as some think and the solution could be something that has been overlooked. McQuillan begins the book by taking a look at the "7 myths of literacy":

- reading achievement in the US has declined in the past 25 years
- forty percent of US children can't read at a basic level
- twenty percent of our children are dyslexic
- children from the baby boomer generation read better than students today
- students in the US are among the worst readers in the world
- the number of good readers has been declining while the number of poor readers has been increasing
- California's test scores declined dramatically due to whole language instruction.

McQuillan continues by discussing some other aspects of literacy including a general model of language acquisition; the alphabetic principle; early reading and later success; and phonemic awareness for children and adults.

In the last chapters of the book, McQuillan examines the results of several studies on the effects of access to books. The conclusion he reaches based on this research is that access to reading materials is an important factor in reading success, perhaps even more important than teaching method.

Following are some suggestions to improve access to books for your ABLE and family literacy students:

- have a well-stocked class library
- collect used or unwanted books
- shop the library book sales and thrift stores
- set aside time in class for reading for enjoyment
- use authentic materials for reading instruction (see Research to Practice, Dec. 2002 <http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/0200-26.pdf>)
- encourage and model reading aloud for students who have children
- give students books to take home for themselves and their children
- have field trips to the library
- use the Literacy Tips publication available online at [http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/child\\_lit\\_tips.pdf](http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/child_lit_tips.pdf)

Explore these funding sources to help you get books for your students:

Toys R Us <http://www4.toysrus.com/about/guidelines.cfm>

Gives books/funding to programs that work with preschool kids and their parents

The National Book Scholarship Fund through Proliteracy <http://www.nbsf.org/>

Gives literacy materials so folks can improve their literacy skills

Books for Kids <http://www.booksforkidsfoundation.org/index.htm>

Pick books up in the Bronx or the foundation will match donors with recipients in other parts of US

The Libri Foundation <http://www.librifoundation.org/index.html>

The Libri Foundation donates new, quality, hardcover children's books to small, rural public libraries

Scholastic Book Grants <http://www.scholastic.com/aboutscholastic/community/programs/bookgrants.htm#donpol>

Gives books to programs that work with at-risk kids to improve their literacy

First Books <http://www.firstbook.org/get/receivebooks.shtml>

Gives books to programs serving low-income kids. Distributed through local advisory boards

Reading is Fundamental (RIF) <http://www.rif.org/what/default.msp>

Provides funding for a variety of RIF programs for kids and for families

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library <http://www.dollywoodfoundation.com>

Provides one book a month from birth to age five for a low cost.

**Key, Daphne. (1998). *Literacy Shutdown: Stories of Six American Women*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.**

In this highly readable book, Daphne Key describes her study of literacy shutdown in adult women. Daphne interviewed six women from the southern United States about their literacy experiences. All the women reported they had experienced a literacy shutdown in the presence of more literate others. This shutdown was caused by the fear of seeming "incorrect" in reading, writing, or speaking to those whom they perceived as being "correct." The women said they felt shut out of certain literacy activities because of the perceived arrogance of family, friends, and teachers. Even if the women did not perceive someone as arrogant, they still perceived them as knowing the "correct" use of literacy and became fearful of making a mistake in this person's presence. This literacy shut out and shutdown occurred in the contexts of home, school, and church. These experiences were powerful for these women and were remembered long after they had happened.

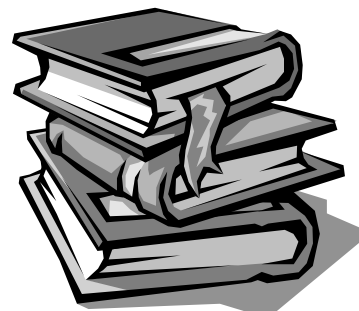
Each of these women dealt with their literacy shutdown in different ways. Some of the women became private, almost secretive with their literacy practices. They read and wrote but didn't show or discuss these activities with anyone else. Some of the women resisted the literacy shutdowns they experienced and continued to practice literacy openly.

At the end of her book, Daphne makes some suggestions for adult literacy classrooms. The first of these suggestions, which are based on her study, is for teachers to ask themselves the following questions:

- How can teachers avoid shutting out students?
- How can teachers become more aware of their role in causing shutdown in their students?
- What causes some people to resist shutting down?
- What are some of the social factors that contribute to shutting down?

Some other suggestions for ABLE teachers:

- Be open to and accepting of the ideas, values, and viewpoints of people from other classes, races, and cultures.
- Be seen as human and fallible. Make classrooms a place where students feel safe, are willing to take risks, and have the freedom to be "incorrect."
- Connect literacy with the students' lives, not just with classroom activities. Help students understand that through literacy they can express themselves.



## Building Expertise by Using Cognitive Strategies



Our knowledge of what strategies are and how they work in the development of expertise comes out of the strand of cognitive research called information processing. This research on how the brain processes information has shown that new content knowledge we acquire is first stored in our short-term memory. However, our short-term memory has only a limited capacity to hold information. We have to process this information in some way or it will fade quickly. Teaching students about strategies and using these tools or methods can accomplish this task of increasing learning.

### What is strategy instruction?

*Learning strategies* are defined as behaviors, thoughts, or actions that allow learners to process information so it can be more efficiently stored in and retrieved from long-term memory. Learning strategies can be divided into two basic types. *Cognitive strategies* help us remember and organize content information. When we read, we might apply a cognitive strategy to skim the title, pictures, and headings of a text to get the gist of what we will read. We might take notes to help us remember the main points. A good reader will also know when it is possible to skip over sections of text and when it is important to read every word carefully. When learning a large number of facts, a good strategic learner may work to understand the big picture and then divide the facts into categories through a diagram or outline.

*Metacognitive strategies* consist of knowledge about strategies and about one's own thinking processes. They are the executive managers of knowledge and include planning, monitoring, evaluating, and revising one's own thinking. Metacognition is not an automatic process but is a result of long-term development of the cognitive system. Good metacognitive strategy users engage in an ongoing process of identifying what their prior knowledge of a topic is, what they don't know, and what they need to learn. Metacognitive strategies enable learners to plan and self-regulate their work and to choose appropriate cognitive strategies.

### What has been learned about the effectiveness of strategy instruction?

Many students' ability to learn has been increased through the deliberate teaching of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This is especially true for students with significant learning problems. For more than three decades there has been an abundance of research regarding strategy instruction for students with learning disabilities. When struggling students are taught strategies and are given encouragement, feedback, and opportunities to use them, they improve their ability to process information and improve learning. Some students will need more scaffolding and individualized, intensive instruction than others.

### What happens to students when they become strategic learners?

The fact that adults use diverse strategies is not a mere quirk of human cognition. Good reasons exist for people to know and use multiple strategies. All of the components of good information processing receive instructional attention.

- Strategies are taught and matched to actual tasks and differ in their accuracy and processing demands across a range of problems. Teach only a few strategies at a time and teach them well. Strategies should not be taught as a separate topic, but in context across the curriculum.
- Develop a repertoire of flexible strategies. A good strategy user possesses a variety of strategies and uses these procedures to meet cognitive challenges. Strategies are rarely used in isolation, but integrated into higher-order sequences to accomplish complex cognitive goals.
- Self-monitoring should be taught to check performance and is aimed at helping students understand how strategies can help them solve problems, recognize when each strategy is likely to be most useful, and transfer strategies to novel situations.
- Metacognition about strategies – knowing when and where to use them – can be explained to students directly. Opportunities to clarify when strategies work is an essential part of instruction.
- Student motivation to use strategies is enhanced when they realize this is what good learners do when they tackle tasks.
- The instructional setting should be comfortable, reflective, and calm rather than anxiety-ridden.

### What are the most essential strategies to teach?

Successful, efficient learners use numerous strategies across subjects and tasks. They know when to use strategies and for what purposes. It would be difficult to identify the most essential strategies because they are dependent on the needs of the learners and the requirements of the content. The following strategies are suggested as a starting place:

- Memory – visualization, verbalization, mnemonics, associations, chunking, writing, or combinations of these
- Computation and problem solving – verbalization, visualization, chunking, associations, cues
- Reading accuracy and fluency – self-questioning, chunking, context clues, repeated readings
- Reading comprehension – visualization, questioning, rereading, predicting
- Writing – planning, revising, questioning, verbalization, visualization, monitoring

*Cont.*



### What are the basic steps in teaching strategy use?

1. Describe the strategy to students. Model use of the strategy, particularly with “think aloud” statements about how to execute the procedure. Present material in small steps as students are constructing and refining their understanding of the strategy. Explain where and when to use strategies, although students will also discover some metacognitive information for themselves as they use the strategies.
2. Give plenty of guided practice once students know the steps. During this time, provide reinforcement and feedback about how to improve. Begin with simple materials and progress to level-appropriate work. Provide models of expert work, monitor student progress, diagnose student difficulties, and adjust instruction accordingly. Practice increases proficient use of the strategy, knowledge of how to adapt it, and knowledge of when to use it.
3. Strategy generalization and adaptation are encouraged by having students practice strategies with different types of materials and prompts during other instructional sessions. Instruction should be explicit and intensive. The goal is for students to use these strategies automatically, skillfully, appropriately and creatively. In the beginning, teach only one strategy at a time, until students are familiar with the idea of strategy use. Strategies should be taught over an extended period of time as part of the curriculum.
4. Increase students’ responsibility and motivation to use strategies by heightening awareness that they are acquiring valuable skills that are at the heart of successful learning. Promote student self-monitoring and evaluation of their use of the strategies. Encourage students to reflect on their learning experiences. Create a positive learning environment to eliminate anxiety in students.

*Teaching of important content is not sacrificed in order to teach strategies, but rather teaching strategies are integrated with teaching of content.*

## Work-Focused Family Literacy Brings Success

This article reports on a study done on NCFL's work-focused Family Independence Initiative (FII). In these programs work-preparation activities are incorporated into the adult education component.

Education, economic, and employment status were studied one year and two years after participants entered the programs. The best results were found in programs that had "robust" four-component family literacy programs and well established, systematic work preparation services. The following selected findings are for all FII programs.

### One year follow-up:

- household incomes for 67% of participants had increased
- employment rate was 65%
- 59% continued to receive educational services after one year of enrollment in FII programs
- 27% of participants who entered without a diploma received their GED
- 38% were working toward a trade or educational credential

### Two year follow-up:

- employment rate was 73%
- 35% were in school and working
- 58% obtained an education credential
- parent involvement with children's schooling increased

*For the complete article go to <http://www.familit.org/Publications/Momentum/index.cfm>*

## OLRC Weight Loss Resolutions

A New Year has begun and new resolutions have been made. Besides making literacy in the state of Ohio a priority, the staff at the Ohio Literacy Resource Center had another goal for the new year: to get in shape. Sixteen members of the staff have got together and decided that, in total, they want to lose 212 pounds by May 7, 2004.

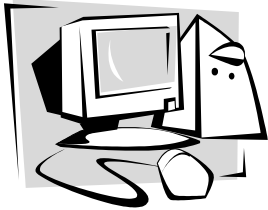
Licensed physical therapist Juli VanAuken Robine came in the office on January 12 and showed the staff weight training and toning techniques. This was to help the staff get motivated for the five-month weight loss campaign. VanAuken Robine told the staff that it is difficult for the average-sized person to lose weight, and that the staff should be concerned with being healthy more than shedding extra pounds. Some of the staff members have decided to set up an exercise regimen on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 4 p.m. to stay in shape and focused.

Losing weight and getting in shape is always difficult to do by yourself. Jackie Peck, OLA Director, says she is “looking forward to some workout time here in the office with colleagues, and with their support.” Doing this program in the work environment allows the staff to encourage each other in obtaining their goals, especially the energetic staff at the OLRC. Penny Graves said, “doing a program at work will make it easier - being surrounded by 16 others is always helpful.”

With nothing yet finalized, and May still several months away, the OLRC staff is still contemplating various reward ideas if they achieve their goal. There has been some talk of bringing in a masseuse, but still nothing is definite. The staff here at the OLRC has also mentioned giving a possible food donation, a pound of food for every pound lost, at the end of the weight loss program.

Nearly a month into the new OLRC weight loss program, things are already shaping up around here.





Winter 2004

## The OLRC News

### Celebrating 10 Years of Enhancing Adult Literacy ...Through Technology

Marty Ropog

*\*Concurrently published in the Literacy Practitioner Vol. 8 No. 1, April, 2004.*

As we celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ohio Literacy Resource Center, it's fascinating to look back on the changes in technology since its inception. Ten years ago, the Internet was in its infancy – there were no local program websites, teachers using the Web to locate instructional materials, or online discussion groups linking a tutor in Washington to a tutor in Florida. The OLRC started with a single email account on a then-revolutionary mainframe system and a Gopher search. In 2003, from January to October alone, our websites have accounted for over 1.3 million page views from 354,000 visitors.

For many valid reasons, adult education often lags a bit behind other educational domains when it comes to technology. Issues such as funding, available time for teachers, student persistence in programs, and a lack of age-appropriate technology-based materials all contribute to the slower integration of technology into adult education classrooms.

It's natural to assume that "integrating technology" means using computer-based educational software. However, the term "technology" includes not only educational software, but also Internet-based sites and applications, video and audio applications, and distance learning. These technological media can be successfully integrated into classrooms, providing teachers and students with a range of teaching and learning modes that can be customized to meet the needs of each.

During its ten years working with programs and developing resources, the OLRC has worked with a number of partners, created materials for ABLÉ teachers, and participated in pilot projects to evaluate the benefits of resources for use in the adult literacy classrooms. Three projects, Ohio's Project IDEAL pilot, Madison Heights pilot, and Eureka! database are three programs which use very different technologies to provide teachers with resources to enhance and augment their teaching.

#### **Distance Learning: Project IDEAL**

Kimberly McCoy, OLRC Distance Learning Coordinator  
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Adult students often find it difficult to attend traditional classes due to work schedules, childcare responsibilities, or childcare difficulties. Distance learning, therefore, could

meet more students' needs. Project IDEAL is a program funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Adult and Vocational Education (OVAE) and managed by the University of Michigan. Fourteen other states are also participating in the pilot study. With "learning outside the traditional classroom" being the delivery method, each state has chosen at least one already-developed curriculum to deliver via distance learning. Ohio chose to use GED Connection as the instructional content for the pilot study. GED Connection, developed jointly by PBS, KET, and NCAL, includes 39 half-hour video programs, 3 full-color workbooks, Web-based learning activities, a teacher's guide, and an online management system.

Fourteen Ohio ABLÉ programs submitted grant proposals for inclusion in the pilot program and seven programs representing a variety of communities were selected. Pilots received \$19,500 in additional funding from the Ohio Department of Education ABLÉ Office for teacher salaries and benefits, supplies purchase, meeting and training expenses, and a limited offset to director/coordinator salary. The grant supplement allowed programs some flexibility with recruiting and retaining students using a distance learning model without having to be concerned with decreasing their enrollment in their regular, non-distance classes. A goal was set to recruit 100 new distance learning students across all seven programs.

Staff from the seven pilot programs attended a three-day training to learn GED Connection, its online management system, and data reporting required by the national Project IDEAL office. Pilot staff also participated in a distance learning course for continuing professional development. Sites began recruiting distance learners in January of 2003 and continued until June, 2003 when the grant year formally ended.

As potential distance learners inquired about the program, Ohio required a face-to-face orientation at an Ohio ABLÉ program, although not necessarily the same program providing the distance learning component. Students were accepted into the program if they met certain requirements for participation, including an entry NRS level of Low or High Adult Secondary Education, computer skills, and Internet access.

Pilot sites used a variety of methods to provide distance learning instruction: a “partial distance program,” in which distance learning was augmented with limited face-to-face interaction between teacher and student; regular classroom supplements to distance education; and “pure distance” education with teachers and students interacting only by phone or online.

While still in pilot phase, Ohio’s seven programs have provided a large amount of technical data and anecdotal information about their distance learning implementations. As of the close of the grant period in June, 2003, 215 students had 12 or more seat hours, excluding orientation time, and 197 students had met their stated goals. Demographic data show that the majority of students were in the 25-to-44-year old age range, white, female, and employed.

Most teachers felt that, due to a number of reasons, the majority of students that participated would not have wanted or been able to attend traditional classes. Distance learning has the very real potential to provide additional instruction to students who would ordinarily not attend in-person classes. Ohio’s pilot program continues this fiscal year with programs increasing their recruitment goals and gathering additional data for the study. Visit the Ohio Project IDEAL website at <[literacy.kent.edu/ideal](http://literacy.kent.edu/ideal)>.

### **Video Supplements for Instruction: Madison Heights/Lifelines**

Connie Sapin, OLRC Project Director ([csapin@literacy.kent.edu](mailto:csapin@literacy.kent.edu))

The Madison Heights and Lifelines series are projects of Intelcom, designed for use in adult literacy programs to promote change in family settings. In 2002, nine states contributed to the design and development of the two series, which include over twenty videotapes and supporting materials. The video series consist of dramatic videos (Madison Heights) and documentaries (Lifelines); teacher resource books and blackline handout masters are available to supplement the video/workbook products.

In the Fall of 2002, Ohio released a request for proposal for participation to programs with Ohio ABLE-approved and funded Family Literacy components. Six programs became pilot sites. The goals of the pilot and curriculum were to provide experiences that help adults improve their literacy and problem solving skills, help adults enhance their self esteem and improve their ability to interact with others, help adults in their roles as parents and caregivers, provide ideas for age-appropriate interactive activities, and provide experience to help adults with their own needs and those of their families.

Programs were awarded \$8,000 grants to offset teacher time for instructional support, purchase of materials, travel expenses, marketing, or other costs associated with the project. Program staff participated in a two-day training in January, 2003 which provided a walk-through of the curriculum, videos, and work texts. Program staff also received an administrative overview of implementation issues, such as student assessment, reporting, and accountability.

Programs began recruiting students after the initial training and continued working with them until the close of the grant and pilot phase in June, 2003. Because of the integrated design of the materials - videos, work texts, handouts – teachers could customize instruction and activities based on students’ needs. Videos could be watched at the program, in a library, or in a student’s home; the paper-based materials could be used in the same way.

The pilot phase for Madison Heights/Lifelines ended in June, 2003 with tapes and materials being distributed to all Ohio programs with approved Family Literacy components. Two teachers who participated in the pilot program, Barb Nourse (Scioto County) and Cindy Smith (Kettering), developed an Implementation Guide which will be distributed along with the tapes and materials.

The Madison Heights/Lifelines materials and content were very well-received by students. Most liked the flexibility that the integrated design provided. The video series deals with emotionally intense subjects and often elicits strong responses from viewers. Teachers reported that the subject matter and students’ responses produced very deep, meaningful discussions and a sense of community within the classroom.

The use of integrated curriculum provides a viable and economically feasible option for programs that want to supplement existing instruction with technology-based materials.

### **Online Database Supplement for Instruction: EUREKA!**

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In 1995, the OLRC began the Recommended Tradebooks for Adult Literacy Programs project, evaluating authentic literature for use in adult literacy classrooms. We convened the Reading Group, a set of educators who read, evaluated, and provided audience and instructional information for inclusion in a print digest. Several years into the project, a hierarchy of keywords was begun in an attempt to classify and categorize the 300+ books that had been added to the collection. The discussion of “keywords” led to a decision to convert the then-print catalog into an online, searchable database.

In 1999, during a project brainstorming session, we decided that the while we were converting the Tradebooks to an online version, we could also enhance both the collection and keyword search results by adding websites, software, and lesson plans to the already extensive set of books available on the database. This collection could be a one-stop, searchable website that would provide a rich set of materials for adult education teachers. And Eureka! was born.

The first step in designing Eureka was the creation of the hierarchical search mechanism, the keyword search that has become the focal point of the system. Existing keywords needed to be standardized, grouped, and evaluated. Existing keywords were arranged into logical groups, eventually resulting in 22 categories and nearly 1,000 keywords with more being added.

This web-based resource allows users to search by keyword, top-level category, audience, and GED descriptor to find reviewed and compiled resources. Available resources include books, websites, software, and lesson plans appropriate for use in adult and family literacy programs. Each type of resource has a specific detail page which includes publication information, web addresses, and file links for lesson plans. Summaries, teaching suggestions, and all relevant keywords for the item are also included. One of the most powerful features of Eureka is the ability to run searches from the keywords on resource detail pages.

The Eureka database search is now our most popular web-based resource, with nearly 50,000 searches conducted between January and October of 2003 alone. Visit the Eureka! website at: <[literacy.kent.edu/eureka](http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka)>.



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