## Technology Integration & Distance Learning

# The Distance Learning Initiative:
## Providing Texas Adult Learners an Alternative Pathway for Educational Success

*by AnneMarie Molinari, Texas LEARNS*

Across the nation and the world, distance education programs are providing an alternative delivery platform for students who are unable to participate in direct, explicit instruction via a regular classroom model (Silver-Pacuilla, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2009). For many Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, life frequently disrupts their ability to attend classes consistently; consequently, distance learning often becomes a valuable option allowing students to persist in the program and not drop out. Students are given an option to achieve their academic goals, make measurable improvement, and hopefully transition to a higher goal.

The global explosion of technology integration, in every aspect of communication, has also reached distance learning (Silver-Pacuilla, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2009). Many adult education programs are asking questions similar to these:

- How can distance learning invigorate models for direct instruction that are currently in place?
- How can we expand our distance learning programs to include pure-online instruction, in which instructors are teaching only in a virtual classroom with no face-to-face interaction, especially in rural communities? (Cytron-Hysom, 2010)
- How can we utilize technology to deliver distance learning professional development training to teachers?

Emerging evidence-based research suggests that distance learning is an educational avenue most adult education students are excited to pursue; moreover, even students with the low levels of literacy and language proficiency are eager and self-motivated to dive into virtual education (Cytron-Hysom, 2010; Silver-Pacuilla, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2009). Finally, the fields of adult literacy and ESOL offer valuable insight about other critical components of successful distance learning programs (Silver-Pacuilla, 2008).

These professionals suggest that beyond the issues of program cost analysis, implementation, student recruitment, and curriculum selection, programs also have to think deeper when developing distance education programs. Issues surrounding the design of online materials, the appropriate alignment of online materials based on students' literacy level, and the comfort level of both the student and teacher with online navigation tools are proving critical (Silver-Pacuilla, 2008). In conclusion, the design and ultimate delivery of distance learning will vary as widely as the different programs which provide it; however, one factor remains constant: appropriate planning and commitment from all stakeholders are essential for distance learning program success (Cytron-Hysom, 2010; Silver-Pacuilla, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2009).

**The Texas Distance Learning Initiative**
Texas Adult Education began its distance learning program in 2006 with the support of Project IDEAL, a consortium of states working together to develop effective distance education programs for adult learners. With all levels of Texas adult education working together, programs have reported statistical gains across several distance learning components from 2009 to 2010:

1) In 2009, 15 Texas adult education programs were offering distance learning classes; in 2010, there are now 27 programs;
2) In 2010, 3,830 students are enrolled in Texas distance learning as compared to 855 in 2009, representing a 350% increase;
3) So far data show that distance students are doing as well as or better than students overall. In 2009, 69% of students for whom distance education was the predominant form of instruction completed a level compared to 53% of all students. In 2010, 54% of the distance students completed a level compared to 54% of all students.

Texas adult education remains committed to supporting innovative and evidence-based professional development opportunities for teachers and other practioners who want to provide distance education. The GREAT centers continue to provide *DL101*, an online course required by state policy, for programs who initiate distance education. This course instructs programs in the essential components of a successful and productive distance education plan. In 2010, The West GREAT Center was the first to offer *DL102*, a course to support teachers who have already been

## In This Issue

# Real Faces…Real Books

*by Harriet Vardiman Smith, TCALL Director*

The last time TCALL featured technology integration in our quarterly publication was in 2004. Technology was being integrated as content and for instructional delivery, but while distance learning (DL) was popular in higher education, it had not emerged as part of the delivery system of adult literacy education in our state.

2004 was also the year that Facebook was launched, becoming the most popular social networking site in the U.S. by 2008. In these pages, you'll find references to both TCALL and TALAE (Texas Association for Literacy & Adult Education) now having Facebook pages. As I thought about technology integration and the ways TCALL can use Facebook to quickly share news, photos, and special events, I realized this is also a good time to remind our readers of the *real faces* … and *real books* … that enrich our work as Texas literacy practitioners.

The photo below features faces of this year's graduates of the Leadership Excellence Academy (LEA), who were recognized at the Adult Education Administrators' Summer Institute in July. The first Texas class in this intensive, national certification and professional development series for local program managers graduated one year ago. Together, the first two cohorts of LEA graduates form a core group of Certified Managers of Program Improvement (CMPI), equipped with the skills and knowledge to do great things for Texas adult education.

An important new face is AnneMarie Molinari, who became Texas LEARNS' first Distance Education Manager in July. AnneMarie brings with her a wealth of experience in DL in California adult education - as a teacher, professional development facilitator, and author. You can read more about AnneMarie in the About the Author section of her page 1 article.

Also new to Texas adult education is Jennifer Jacob, who was promoted in the spring to the position of Adult Basic Education Policy Coordinator in Texas Education Agency's Department of State Initiatives. Jenny comes to this position with extensive workforce and education policy expertise in environments such as the Governor's Office, Texas Workforce Investment Council; Texas Workforce Commission; City of San Antonio; and three Workforce Investment Boards. In her 2-1/2 years at TEA, Jenny has focused primarily on program and policy development related to dropout prevention, college readiness, and most recently, adult basic education.

Those are just some of the important *real faces* in our field. You can read about some of the *real books* (and other resources) available to you in the Clearinghouse Library and Free Materials sections on pages 16-19. Resources featured in this issue fit the theme of technology integration and distance learning. But yes, we can still send them to you by old-fashioned snail mail, with free return postage on library loans!

**Leadership Excellence Academy 2010 Graduates and VIPs**

Silvia Ura-Lugo, Sheryl Jefferson (formerly of Texas LEARNS), Dr. Lennox McLendon (National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium), Mary Ann Juarez, Martina Ady, Dr. William Carmines, Louisa Kessel, Denise Guckert, Nelda Rangel, Melissa Nitu, Aida Martinez, Martin Loa, Dean Ransdell, Joanie Rethlake (State Director, Texas LEARNS)

Other 2010 LEA Graduates not pictured: Laura Hermosillo, Pat Lyons, Douglas Mudd, Nelda Rangel, Belinda Rojas, Anne Spanyers, Lynda Webb

instructing students with distance education and, finally, 16 Texas teachers completed *DL104*, a course designed to address persistence issues for distance students.

Currently, at Texas State University, Denise Guckert, Grant Coordinator, from the Central GREAT Center and Glenda Rose of the Austin Leaning Academy are partnering to complete an extensive project titled the *Adult Education Distance Learning in Texas Research Initiative*. The purpose of the study is to capture best practices in Texas distance learning and incorporate the evidence-based findings into a professional development series including three modules: 1) Exploring Texas Distance Learning Curricula; 2) Best Practices for Texas Learning; and 3) Using Distance Learning as a Tool for Transition.

At the state level, there are a number of activities underway supporting distance education. The distance education committee is in the final stage of approving USA Learns for ESL. Texas Education Agency has purchased state licenses for Pre-GED (General Educational Development) Online and GED Online. Several reports specific to distance education students are now available in TEAMS (Texas Educating Adults Management System) and Texas LEARNS plans to develop new and better reports, based on input from programs that are now delivering distance education courses. Anchored in distance learning data collected thus far, it appears that distance learning is most beneficial when it is used to enhance and/or intensify instruction, as opposed to replacing direct, explicit instruction, especially with low literacy ABE and ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. During the 2011 year, Texas LEARNS will begin to explore how technology integration can be used to supplement and enhance how professional development training in Texas, and the Texas LEARNS team looks forward to enlisting the wisdom and support of programs as we begin to explore the different ways to deliver distance education across the state.

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### About the Author

AnneMarie Molinari is the new Distance Learning Manager at Texas LEARNS. She has a special interest in and passion for integrating technology and distance learning in traditional classroom settings with the goal of increasing literacy gains for adults with learning disabilities. She received her master's degree in Special Education from California State University, Sacramento. AnneMarie has spent the last 11 years teaching in the trenches as an ABE Instructor. She was a consultant, trainer and author for California's two state-wide leadership projects: the Outreach Technical Assistant Network (OTAN) and the California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project (CALPRO).

# Distance Learning Best Practices Initiative:
# A GREAT Collaboration

*by Denise Guckert*

**What is it?**
The Distance Learning Best Practices Initiative is a multi-GREAT collaborative research-based professional development effort to capture best practices in distance learning throughout the state of Texas and incorporate these findings into a standardized professional development series. The three 3-hour modules that are being developed include:

- Exploring Texas Distance Learning Curricula
- Best Practices for Texas Distance Learning
- Using Distance Learning as a Tool for Transition

**Why was it developed?**
Distance learning is fairly new to adult education in Texas. The current Distance Learning 101 six-week course is very useful for programs as they develop their required Distance Learning Plans. However, programs still need assistance as they select their distance learning curricula. Many times programs want specific information on what is working best in Texas adult education programs. In fact, many programs have spent time talking to and even visiting flourishing distance learning programs such as Victoria College. Student transitions are a major area of concentration for our state, so we really need to know if and how distance learning can assist us.

**How it will be used?**
This training series is meant to augment and not replace the Distance Learning 101 (DL101) now in place. Any of the training sessions will be useful to programs new to distance learning or existing programs that are looking to expand their curricula, improve current practices, and strengthen student transitions into workforce or college. Furthermore, the training sessions are appropriate to be offered before, during or after DL101.

**Who is involved?**
The Central GREAT Center is spearheading the efforts of this initiative. However, many thanks go to the Coastal, East, and North GREAT Centers for their financial support and to all GREAT Centers and Texas LEARNS for their logistical support. To date, 21 of the 23 programs who implemented distance learning during the 2009-2010 program year have had input into the research by completing detailed questionnaires and/or participating in interviews. Finally, a special thank you is in order for Dr. Glenda Rose, the Central GREAT Research Consultant and to Texas LEARNS Managers John Stevenson and AnneMarie Molinari.

**When will it be completed?**
All research and training session development will be completed by September 30, 2010. We hope to have the training series reviewed by Texas LEARNS and disseminated to all GREAT Centers soon after in order to have this research-based professional development available to all Texas Adult Education programs.

**About the Author**
Denise Guckert, M.A., serves as Coordinator for Central GREAT at The Education Institute, Texas State University-San Marcos and is a member of the Texas LEARNS Distance Learning Committee. She can be reached via email at *dg21@txstate.edu.*

**Are you active on Facebook?**

**So is TCALL!**

Check out TCALL's new page on Facebook for news, photos, and links related to TCALL's projects, staff, and Barbara Bush Fellows.

Search on Facebook for either TCALL or Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy & Learning - or look for the "Find us on Facebook" badge on TCALL's home page.

www-tcall.tamu.edu

# Combining Technology and Project-Based Learning

*by Glenda Rose*

Ever since I began teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) back in the mid-80s, I have incorporated computer technology. Back then, we had computers that required a 5¼" boot disk and programs that were not easy to use. One of the first programs I used was one that I actually wrote in BASIC to present the alphabet in random order and colors.

Well, we've come a long way, baby. The opportunities now available in instructional technology are practically endless. Many ESL textbooks come ready with technology components. The problem, however, is many of our ESL students have never used a computer. Some even have a fear of touching the keyboard or mouse, thinking that with one wrong stroke they will destroy the computer world as we know it.

One effective means to helping students overcome their fears is incorporating project-based learning that depends on a computer-generated product. Because the students are focusing on the project, the computer becomes a means to an ends, rather than something else they have to learn. As they complete their projects, they become more comfortable with using the computer for other purposes as well. They are likely to invest in purchasing their own computer the more proficient they become. At the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year, only one of my students had a computer at home. By the end of the school year, over half had purchased a new or used computer.

Group projects tend to work best in the beginning. Generally speaking, a handful of people in each class will have at least some computer experience. Mixing novice and experienced computer users reduces the stress for novice users, but the teacher must ensure that everyone has at least one part of a project that they are required to do themselves if gaining confidence in computer use is part of the goal. Another advantage to group technology projects is that it does not require a computer lab. With good planning, a one-computer classroom will work, although ideally you would have at least one computer per group.

One example of a group project that has worked well in my classroom is creating a Photo Story. Photo Story is a free downloadable program from Microsoft that allows you to take digital photos, edit and organize them, focus and transition them, and finally narrate, add subtitles, and music. The advantage to this process is that the pictures can come from various sources. Novices can find pictures in books and bring them to the teacher or group leader to be scanned. Others take their own photos on their digital cameras and bring in the memory card to be added to the group folder. Still others take photos with their cell phones and email them to the group leader. And some students simply download pictures from the Internet.

One class in which we did this was when we covered the theme "Texas." One group elected to present the flowers of Texas, one chose the animals of Texas, and a third chose events in Texas. Each person in the group had to find pictures and create the subtitles and narration for their part of the project. At the end of the unit, we watched all three Photo Stories and I gave a DVD with all three projects to each student. The project was not only successful as a learning activity, but it also was deemed worthwhile by the students themselves. Several students made their own Photo Story DVDs (on their newly purchased computers) and sent them to family over the summer break.

Publication is an important component in the project process. When students know their work will be viewed by others, they put more effort into the process and product. For example, when my students had to produce a cooking video, they were forewarned that the videos would be posted on *www.youtube.com*. Although the setting was made private, knowing that other students could access the video at any time seemed to encourage excellence in their video productions. (For the video project, we used Windows Movie Maker, which comes free with every PC.)

Once students are comfortable doing projects in a group, individual projects can be introduced. One project that beginning computer users like is a hybrid project. They take information they find on the Internet, print it out and arrange it on construction paper (usually multiple pieces taped together), adding titles and comments by hand. I've had lower level, beginning students do projects on something as simple

as "My favorite _____ is" for potential vacation spots, interesting places to visit around town, and the house of their dreams.

Many of my more advanced students like to make PowerPoint presentations. I have had students present projects comparing grocery prices, presenting survey results (including Excel tables and graphs), and even summarizing parenting information.

The use of technology in our society is almost unavoidable. Employees at every level have to have some computer skills, and consumers have to know how to find information in the digital age. Incorporating project-based learning with computer-generated products is one way to help our students learn computers in a way that is non-threatening and personally satisfying, with possibilities that are limited only by the students' own imaginations.

**About the Author**
Glenda Rose teaches EL Civics for Austin Learning Academy. She holds her master's degree in Linguistics from Old Dominion University and her doctorate in Foreign Language Education from the University of Texas at Austin.

# Silence Please, Creating Instructional Jing

## by Maxx Wageman

Technology in the classroom can improve the learning experience for both the student and the teacher. Creating a Jing is an easy way to use technology to provide information to those who need it, when they need it. Jing is an online screen capture program that allows you to record a narrative into a slide presentation or add a visual aid to a conversation. When you are done creating your Jing, you can email it or attach it as a link to your webpage.

Providing professional development opportunities is not difficult; however, getting teachers to attend can be a scheduling nightmare. Many of our teachers are part-time and work varied schedules, so attending a single day or even multiple-day event may not be possible. I use instructional Jings for our teachers, because I am able to show and explain how to log on to TEAMS (Texas Education Adults Management System), run reports, and explain each report. One of the conveniences of a Jing is the ability for teachers to view it for reference at a later time, instead of having to rely on their notes or memory.

A Jing is also a record of information given to teachers for professional development. This is something to consider when you have a large number of teachers who require specific or individual training. You can assign them an instructional Jing to view and write a reflection on what they learned and how they will use it.

You can create instructional Jings for your distance learning students' orientation explaining how the program will work and illustrating some of the computer skills they will need to be successful. You can also create a Jing that shows and explains to your students how to log on to ITTS or USA Learns, create an email account, or troubleshoot technology. All the Jings you create can be linked to your webpage or e-mailed. Imagine creating Jings that explain math concepts, writing sentences, learning strategies, etc. A Jing allows you to create mini-lessons for students that they can view at their leisure wherever they can access the Internet.

Jing is free to use and with budgets being tight, this is an opportunity to be creative with technology that can help both teacher and student learn. My advice for a creating a Jing is that you must have a clear idea of what you want the viewer to see, hear, and learn. Write yourself some notes or a script and read it through with the program or materials on the screen. You have a five-minute limit on each instructional Jing, so you need to consider the length of the materials you want to create. I have found it easier for the viewer to see short Jings rather than longer ones. Remember, because Jings are specific, the teacher knows exactly what the student will be seeing, hearing, and learning. To learn more about using Jing, check out their webpage and watch their Jing about Jing. *http://jingproject.com/*

**About the Author**
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# Adult Computer-Assisted Language Learning

*by Joellen Coryell*

Learning one's first language evolves through participation in a community of expert language speakers who engage the young child in diverse communication opportunities. But how adults learn a second or foreign language may differ due to educational settings and backgrounds, individual motivations, and goals for their lives, for their careers, and for their uses and abilities in the language. Over the past two decades, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) technologies have been infused into language teaching practices. These technologies include, but are not limited to, software, hardware, multimedia, Internet-based applications and websites, and online course management systems. CALL has been touted as providing opportunities for remote learners, busy and self-directed adults, and anxious language students to gain enhanced access to the target language. However, there are concerns that distance education and CALL technologies do not always provide the communicative interaction necessary in successful language learning processes. Consequently, there have been considerable efforts in recent years to investigate CALL's viability, instructional practices, and efficacy.

Unfortunately, however, research and actual practice in CALL environments do not always inform each other. This article, therefore, is offered to those who are interested in bridging the gap between what we know in research and what we experience in practice. Below is a summary of best practice suggestions from researchers, program administrators, instructors, and adult students. I start with a discussion of the best practice recommendations for facilitating communication-focused language learning in CALL settings. I then offer some important considerations for implementation of language learning technologies in adult English language learning programs.

**Best Practice Recommendations**
Educators need to assist adult language learners in CALL settings in identifying and improving their self-directed learning capacities and in developing approaches to meet their individual learning needs (Grosjean & Sork, 2007). Many software programs provide students with activities and assessments to interact with the language at their own pace. However, while computer-mediated objective assignments,

quizzes, and exams (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, true-false) may be appropriate in assessing the acquisition of specific language tools, if they comprise the majority of the instructional and evaluation design, the focus of the learning is not participative nor communicative in nature (Coryell & Clark, 2009). Programs and instructors must be careful with instructional practices which require the student to be "perfect" in their "objective" responses in order to demonstrate learning. Accordingly, CALL instructional settings must also include collaborative approaches to facilitate socially-constructed and negotiated meaning making (Harris, 2005; Hellerman, 2005). Instructors should therefore supplement these software programs with activities and assessments that engage language learners in authentic interactions with each other as well as with other target language users in the local and work communities (Coryell & Clark, 2008). Best practices suggest these social target language activities can be designed using e-mail, e-chat, discussion boards, student blogs, social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter), and simulated environments and virtual discussion spaces (i.e., Second Life). These activities merge the concepts of written and oral discourse, provide opportunities for learners to engage in authentic communicative contexts, enhance learner confidence, and improve oral and written communication proficiencies (Roed, 2003; Shang, 2005). Finally, microphones and webcams come standard on many laptop and desktop computers. These technologies provide opportunities for additional communicative interactions between instructor and students, among classmates, and among native speakers and learners.

**Fostering a Community of Engagement and Support**
Successful implementation and effective use of technology in adult language learning and literacy environments is a shared endeavor among administrators, instructors, students, and staff. It is essential that reasonable instructional outcome goals are established in the integration of technology in ELL (English Language Learner) programs, as well as in ABE (adult basic education) (Dillon-Marable & Valentine, 2006; Gopalakrishnan, 2006). Best practices of U.S. adult ELL programs that have implemented CALL technologies can be categorized into four general themes: preparation, individualized student-centered

instruction, support, and collaboration. (Coryell & Chlup, 2007). First, administrators and instructors need to engage in careful preparation and research into instructional methodologies, hardware and software procurement, initial instructor and student preparation, and program marketing and funding. Second, administrators and instructors must connect CALL program and instructional design with student language learning and technology needs, with student personal relevance, and with individualized assessment and evaluation methods. Third, programs must build and maintain systems and resources that support CALL for students, instructors, technological maintenance, and funding support. Finally, programs must develop collaboration and reciprocal learning opportunities surrounding teaching and learning with CALL among students, between students and instructors, and among instructors and administration/staff.

## Discussion

As new technologies emerge and become more accessible to adult language and literacy programs and students, more research in instruction and programmatic support must be conducted. Essential to this emerging body of research are practitioner-research studies which offer instructors a two-way link between theory and practice through action research inquiries in an instructor's own classroom (online or off). My hope is that Texas adult language educators will engage in future studies of learning and teaching in CALL settings in order to continue to inform best practice strategies and strengthen the essential bridge between research and practice.

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## Spelling City: A Technology Tool You Don't Want to Miss
### by Denise Guckert

Use the power of Spelling City, a free online technology tool, to create customized spelling, word meaning, and writing activities! The site can be used by classes with or without access to the Internet, and for students from Beginning Literacy ESL to High ASE. All you need is a word list that you take from your teaching materials, an Internet-enabled computer, a printer (optional), and a little bit of time.

To begin, go to *www.spellingcity.com*. Teachers can take full advantage of this web site by completing a free registration and setting up word lists. By registering and signing in, teachers can even create custom sentences to use instead of the website's automatically created sentences. Students with Internet access at school or home can go to the website and search for the word list by the teacher name OR by the exact name of the word list. They do not even need to register or sign-in.

Once the students locate the teacher's word list, they can take a pre-test by choosing the "Test Me" button. If they miss any words, they choose the "Teach Me" button. The words are pronounced, spelled out loud, and then used in a sentence. Students continue by clicking on the "Play a Game" button. In this section of the website, students choose to play up to twelve interactive online games that reinforce the words through spelling, word meaning, and writing activities. Finally, students can again click on the "Test Me" button and take a final spelling test. They are even able to print out a score report with their name, final score, and corrections to words they spelled incorrectly.

What if your students don't have access to technology in your school or at their homes? Spelling City is still a fantastic resource. First, the teacher can save and print out the word list to give to their students. Teachers can even create handwriting worksheets for beginning literacy students which lets them trace the letters in lower case, upper case or even cursive. Next, the teacher

# Hybrid Learning Pilot: Top 10 Lessons Learned

*by Susan Gusler*

Some things you have to learn the hard way. If you are lucky, you can learn from other people's experiences. We wanted to share the top ten "lessons learned" from our hybrid-learning pilot.

At Austin Community College, we decided to leverage limited classroom space by adding an online distance learning component to a Saturday ABE (adult basic education) class. Students were required to attend four hours each Saturday AND complete four hours of independent online work during the week. During the semester, we added the distance learning component to two other classes. We also piloted an "appointment-based hybrid" where students scheduled a 15-minute appointment each week with an instructor and completed a minimum of four hours on their own. The appointments were in a computer-equipped classroom, so students could use computers before or after their appointments.

1. Don't assume that learners under the age of 30 are "computer savvy."  Many students of all ages have little or no experience with computers. We expected this with older ESL (English as a Second Language) students, but were surprised when native Texans as young as 19 confessed that they didn't know how to use the Internet.

2. Motivation matters more than level. During the Distance Learning 101 program offered by the GREAT Centers, we discussed what level was "ideal" for student participation and success. We found that students at ALL levels were able to succeed, IF they were motivated. We had recent immigrants with low literacy and high ASE (adult secondary education) students logging in over 60 hours a month, well exceeding the 16 hour per month requirement. We also had students who appeared to be excellent candidates who didn't log a single hour.  Allowing students to "opt in" yielded better results than trying to make all students in a specific class or level participate.

3. Do NOT count on vendor technical support on evenings or weekends. Sometimes vendors make changes to products that impact how logins are setup without communicating these changes. We often conduct orientation on evenings and weekends, during times when technical support is unavailable. Discovering these changes when you are trying to setup logins for a room full of students without technical support is stressful. For future sessions, we will be sure that all students are pre-registered, and that logins are setup and tested in advance. We'll also try to have a good local resource available.

4. Think through how you will handle reporting of hours BEFORE you start. This may seem obvious, but as your program expands, a simple system can become complex quickly. Try out different options in TEAMS (Texas Educating Adults Management System). If a student's total hours for the month is less than 24, it can be entered for the date of the report. If the total is more than 24, then you will have to run reports more frequently. We co-enrolled our students in TEAMS, so each hybrid student was enrolled in two different classes. Each class was setup separately in each curriculum. This worked well until we expanded the number of classes and gave students multiple content levels (ITTS, Pre-GED (General Educational Development), or GED). Soon we had to run 18 reports per month for just three classes.

5. Take advantage of free vendor training and be very careful about removing students. The curriculum we used seemed very user-friendly, until I tried to change a class and accidentally removed all the student data for an entire class. Students couldn't login. Thankfully, the vendor recovered it for us and asked me why I hadn't taken advantage of their free webinar. We have since scheduled the webinar.

6. Some students won't go to libraries or learning labs if their teacher isn't there. We found students who had access to a computer at home loved the program and logged in for the required hours. Those who didn't have access at home, rarely went to use the free computers available at the libraries or learning labs. Even when the instructor got special approval for students to use the lab in the same building

as the class and took a field trip there, very few students took advantage of it.

7. Just because students have email addresses, it doesn't mean they know how to use their accounts. When we asked a room of 21 students "Who has an email address?" almost all hands went up. When we asked them "Who knows how to send messages with their email?" a majority of the students shook their heads no. We found that having the students, during the hands-on orientation, send an email to their instructor and open one that they have received greatly increased their chances of using their email accounts.

8. Don't rely on one communication channel. ITTS includes a basic email system that is quick to use, but students can only use that if they are able to login. Providing a regular email address and phone number helped.

9. Build in instructor time for "nagging." Just mak-

ing distance learning available to students and providing the training didn't make the students all use it. More students persisted when they received frequent feedback, got reminders, and had to check in with their teacher twice each week – once in class and once by email. Yes, you may have to pay teachers for their extra time doing this.

10. Don't wait until the end of the pilot to evaluate. We got valuable feedback and evaluation information, but would have had a much bigger pool of responses had we surveyed students a couple of weeks in, before several of them had gotten their GEDs and/or left for the summer.

**About the Author**
Susan Gusler, *sgusler@austincc.edu,* is the Data Management Coordinator for Adult Education at Austin Community College and coordinated the pilot. She has an M.B.A. from the University of Texas.

# Thinkfinity.Org

## *by David O. Russell*

*Free professional development and instructional materials available to teachers on-line with Thinkfinity.0rg*

Wouldn't it be great if teachers could find professional development and teaching resources for free on the Internet that were safe and reliable? And wouldn't it be even better if those resources were developed to comply with individual state accountability measures? Well, such resources do exist on a website called *Thinkfinity.org*. This is a site filled with free online resources and professional development designed to enhance teacher effectiveness and improve student achievement.

*Thinkfinity.org* provides free, high-quality educational resources and professional development; easy-to-navigate K-12 content that is grade specific and aligned with state standards; and, content developed by the *Thinkfinity.org* Consortium Partners, the most respected organizations in each academic subject and literacy.

This is a resource provided by Verizon, one of the nation's leading communications companies, as part

of its corporate philanthropy. *Thinkfinity.org* is the Verizon Foundation's nationally recognized signature initiative for education and literacy.

The Verizon Foundation makes all the resources on *Thinkfinity.org* available free of charge, and there is no membership fee. This website has thousands of relevant, timely, and engaging educational resources for teachers, students, parents, and afterschool programs, ranging from lesson plans, activities, worksheets, and reference materials, to interactives, podcasts, videos, audio clips and much more. Subjects include: reading and language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, history, economics, geography, family literacy, literature, arts integration, and philosophy for grades K-12 and beyond.

To provide the content on the site, the Verizon Foundation has established relationships with the nation's leading organizations in the academic disciplines for K-12 education and literacy. These organizations are funded by the Verizon Foundation to produce content exclusively for *Thinkfinity.org*. These organizations

also provide peer review for content authored by other organizations, which when approved, resides on *Thinkfinity.org* as "partner-reviewed content."

Content resources are created or approved by the following *Thinkfinity.org* Consortium Partners:

- American Association for the Advancement of Science
- Council for Economic Education
- International Reading Association
- The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- National Center for Family Literacy
- National Council of Teachers of English
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- National Geographic Society
- ProLiteracy
- Smithsonian National Museum of American History

In addition to providing these on-line resources, Verizon partners with state education departments and statewide education organizations in many states to ensure that *Thinkfinity.org* resources and professional development opportunities reach as many educators as possible. In Texas, the Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA) is Verizon's Thinkfinity partner. With additional funding from the Verizon Foundation, TCEA is able to provide free training on *Thinkfinity.org* to teachers throughout the state.

*Thinkfinity.org* attracted nearly 25 million visitors last year, including five million repeat visitors who are frequent users of *Thinkfinity.org*. There are currently more than 29,000 *Thinkfinity.org*-trained educators working in over 2,600 schools across the country. There are *Thinkfinity.org* trained educators in nearly 1,100 Title 1 schools nationally.

All that training seems to be paying off. For the third year in a row, the readers of *Edutopia* magazine ranked *Thinkfinity.org* one of the two best sites to download free lesson plans.

Student and teacher materials are embedded within *Thinkfinity.org* lesson plans, and these also can be accessed and used independently as learning activities that enrich existing lesson plans. Teachers report that they most often use *Thinkfinity.org* to:

- Find lesson plans and supporting activities and interactives to use in their teaching;
- Identify activities and interactives that their students can do in class; and
- Create comprehensive topic-based learning experiences integrating technology to use as one component of classroom learning.

*Thinkfinity.org*'s free, comprehensive professional development program shows educators how to use *Thinkfinity.org* resources to enhance their effectiveness and improve student achievement. There are several ways teachers can learn more about the valuable resources available for free at *Thinkfinity.org*. First, they can take a tour right on the Website. It only takes about ten minutes and provides a solid foundation to get someone started.

They can also sign up for an online webinar with a *Thinkfinity.org* instructor. Or, they can take part in face-to-face training. More information on training options can be found at *http://www.thinkfinity.org/pd/request_training.aspx*. Teachers will also be pleased to know that *Thinkfinity.org*'s professional development program is an affiliate of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and has earned the NETS-T Seal of Alignment from the International Society for Technology in Education.

**About the Author**
David Russell is vice president - External Affairs for Verizon Communications. He is responsible for directing all external communications, charitable contributions, community involvement and economic development activities by Verizon for 11 states in the central U.S. Before joining Verizon, Russell was a daily newspaper editor and is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists, the International Association of Business Communicators and the Texas Public Relations Association. He is also a past-president of the Press Club of Dallas.

Russell is the Chairman of the North Texas Literacy Partnership and was named a 2009 "Champion of Literacy" by Literacy Instruction for Texas, the region's largest literacy provider. Also in 2009 he was appointed to serve on the Texas Literacy Council to help develop a statewide action plan for the improvement of literacy in Texas. He has chaired a number of community organizations in north Texas and serves on the board of directors for several today. He and his wife Debbie have two grown sons and live in Keller, Texas.

# Walking the Walk and Talking the Talk:
## Integrating Technology into Professional Development and the Texas Adult Education Teacher Credential

*by D. Michelle Janysek*

On September 1, 2010 the Texas Adult Education Teacher Credential will release an online version of the Professional Development Planning Workshop (PDPW). For teachers who wish to earn the Credential, the PDPW is the first step in the process. To date, access to a PDPW has been limited to face-to-face workshops offered in each of the Eight GREAT Regions annually. The addition of an online option provides access to the PDPW virtually upon demand.

To earn a Credential, teachers complete professional development (PD), implement what they learned and produce a written reflection detailing the outcomes of implementation. The PD selected must focus on the six core content areas of the Credential. The core content areas specify the knowledge and skills that teachers of adults should possess and are aligned with the Texas Adult Education Instructor Proficiencies and Indicators of Program Quality as well as adult education research. They are:

1. Principles of Adult Learning
2. The Teaching/Learning Transaction
3. Diverse Learning Styles, Abilities and Cultures
4. Integrating Technology into Adult Learning
5. Accountability and Assessment
6. Contextual Learning

The development of an online PDPW aligns with the fourth core content area as detailed below:

*Integrating Technology into Adult Learning* - In addition to helping learners utilize technology in their learning and to prepare them for the workforce, adult educators must also be prepared to utilize technology themselves in their own professional development.

The availability of an online PDPW does more than simply increase accessibility to the Credential; it provides a means for the Credential Project to model one of the primary practices that the Credential advocates-the integration of technology into adult learning.

In essence the Credential does not just talk the talk; it practices what it preaches.

The development and design of effective online instruction is a complex and time intensive process, often taking up to a year to develop one hour of training consisting of highly interactive content (Defelice & Kapp, 2009). It took 11 months to develop the online PDPW. Effective online instruction is dynamic and allows for a variety of user interactions making learners active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information. A common error in the development of online instruction is to focus primarily on the information that needs to be conveyed. While the content of an online course is important, it is only one aspect of the process. Developers must also consider issues related to learning theory, technology, design, instructional outcomes, interactivity, and usability.

There are two theoretical perspectives most often utilized in the development of online instruction: social constructivism and cognitive perspective (Romiszowski, 2008). In constructivism, knowledge is built upon previous knowledge and experience is self-directed by the learner. Constantly evolving, it does not seek to identify any one answer or solution to a problem (Boling, 2003). Cognitive instruction also purports that knowledge is built on existing knowledge structures. However, learning is not self-directed as purposeful strategies are taught to ensure that students efficiently reach solutions and acquire information (Mishra, 2002). Both theoretical perspectives were considered; ultimately, the online PDPW was developed from a cognitive perspective.

In addition to grounding the development of PDPW in theory, consideration was given to the selection of technology and software applications that would allow for the development of an interactive learning opportunity that would take advantage of a variety of multimedia capabilities. Additionally, developers considered the lifespan of the tools selected. Technology is

constantly changing; while it is impossible to predict the future, choices were made based upon the likelihood that the technological tools and software applications that were used would not become obsolete in the near future.

Online instruction is most often designed using an electronic Learning Management System (LMS). LMS may also be referred to as Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) or Course Management Systems (CMS). An LMS is a software application that tracks, documents, administers, and hosts online instruction. LMS fall into one of two categories: custom designed and off-the-shelf. Custom designed LMS are expensive, but allow greater flexibility and control than an off-the-shelf LMS. Texas State University-San Marcos hosts the online PDPW on their LMS called the Teaching, Research and Collaboration System (TRACS). TRACS is a custom designed LMS; however, it was developed based upon an open source LMS called Sakai©. The primary benefit of using Sakai© as a basis for a customized LMS is that Sakai© uses free and open source software and standards thus development costs are minimal and end users have more control to customize and maintain the LMS.

Most developers of online instruction only utilize the design and technological features that are available in the LMS thus limiting their creative design choices and the potential for increased interactivity. The developers of the online PDPW utilized two guiding criteria: 1) create a dynamic, learner-centered course that allows for user participation, and 2) use a variety of multimedia so that participants remain attentive and engaged. To meet these criteria, the developers chose to also use an authoring tool called Articulate Rapid E-Learning Studio to develop the PDPW rather than designing the course using only the tools available in TRACS. This allowed for the creation of a robust and highly interactive course that gives participants an active role in the learning process. The online PDPW utilizes audio, video, graphics, text, animation, games and assessment instruments to communicate content to participants in a creative and engaging manner.

Additional information about the online PDPW is available on the Credential Project website *http://www.tei.education.txstate.edu/credential/*.

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## About the Author

D. Michelle Janysek holds a Ph.D. in Adult, Professional, and Community Education. Her background is in educational assessment, educator training, teacher quality, novice educator induction and mentoring, adult education and postsecondary transitions.

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can save and print out nine of the twelve online activities and provide copies of these for their students. Currently, the Crossword Puzzle, Hangmouse and Matching Audio Cards are available online only. The nine activities which can be generated, saved and printed out for offline use include:

(Easier)
- Alphabetize: Put the words into alphabetical order.
- Missing Letter: Find the missing letter in the word.
- Word Search: Find each word in a table made of letters.
- Unscramble: Put the word back together from a scrambled set of letters.

(More Challenging)
- Match It: Match each word with the best corresponding sentence.
- Which Word? A multiple choice activity in which the selected word correctly completes the sentence.
- Sentence Unscramble: Place the words in the correct order to form the completed sentence.
- Sentence Writing: Practice writing original sentences with the spelling words.
- Paragraph Writing: Practice writing an original paragraph using all of the spelling word.

If you are really rushed for time and don't want to register for the site, you can simply copy and paste a word list (use the "batch entry" option for up to 25 words) and immediately save and/or print out the word list, handwriting worksheet, and nine spelling, word meaning and writing exercises. In fact, you can even use a Spelling City created sample word lists, which include topics such as colors, numbers to ten, states, sight words, possessives, homophones, and more.

Finally, try using Spelling City to help students to become more active learners and "learn how to learn." If students have Internet technology at home or in a computer lab at your site, teach them how to enter their personal word lists into Spelling City and to navigate through the "Teach Me," "Test Me," and "Play a Game" learner-centered spelling and vocabulary activities.

In short, Spelling City is a wonderful instructional tool that is well worth your time. In just a few minutes, you will find yourself creating multiple activities in multiple formats, customized to any language level for any topic. This web resource is decidedly one of the most useful and versatile free tools available online today.

# Professional Development in the Integration of Technology: Lessons from Teacher Needs Assessment

*by San Juanita García, Mattyna L. Stephens, and Donna S. Mancuso*

The use of technology to enhance instruction and professional development has gained greater attention within conversations about curriculum and instruction. But just how skilled are teachers in their use of technology to enhance instruction and their own professional development?

In an attempt to answer this question, we examined the data from the 2008 Professional Development Needs Assessment, which was designed collaboratively and administered by the eight regional GREAT Centers, with statewide data collection and analysis by the research staff at TCALL. Based upon 1,147 survey responses, we found that although 83% of the responding instructors had home Internet access, most of them felt they "need improvement" in the area of technology integration. This finding was consistent across the eight GREAT Center Regions and the instructors' years of experience. In particular, the areas these instructors indicated the greatest need for improvement were in the following:

- Assigning learner projects or activities that require technology skills (such as using spreadsheets to analyze data or creating multimedia presentations) as a means of enhancing classroom instruction.
- Using a variety of software applications or other technologies for teaching learners at a distance or for learner self-study.
- Integrating the most current research on teaching and learning when using computers in the classroom.
- Using the online resources such as online courses, email discussion lists, and webinars to enhance one's own professional development.

By contrast, instructors indicated they were at least moderately skilled in their use of basic computer applications, such as word-processing, spreadsheets, email, and presentation programs, to prepare their classroom materials. They also indicated they were at least moderately skilled in their ability to use Internet searches to find a wide variety of appropriate educational resources and activities for learners.

Our findings suggest that technology is an area that adult education teachers feel they need the most improvement, regardless of years of teaching experience in the field. Perhaps the rapid pace of change contributes to instructors' perceptions that they need ongoing improvement in technology. Nevertheless, given that today's society is globalized and technologically advanced, our findings point to the importance of improved teacher support in using technology as a form of enhancing instruction and teacher professional development.

So what are the next steps?

We need to continue to understand teachers' needs in the use of technology for instruction. Determining which instructors have high-speed Internet access versus those who have dial-up access can further our understanding of the teaching environments of adult education instructors. Particularly with regard to enhancing one's own professional development, participation in online courses (where web-modules and videos are common) can be greatly hindered when high speed Internet is unavailable. We can also learn more about instructors' Internet usage habits. For example, how often do teachers use their computers and how often they use the Internet? This information might inform our understanding of instructor's comfort and skill to use online resources for their classroom as well as their own professional development.

In addition, it is critical to note that instructors need to be mindful of the perceptions they may have of their students, particularly those that are considered low-income. Teachers' perceptions may impact how technology is integrated in adult learning programs. Therefore, understanding teachers' perceptions of their students can help shed light on some of the challenges teachers encounter in their ability to integrate technology with their instruction.

We have learned valuable information through our findings from the 2008 Professional Development Needs Assessment. However, in order to properly assess instructors' needs in an area such as technology, we must continue to assess their needs on an ongoing basis.

### About the Authors

All three authors are Graduate Assistants at TCALL and doctoral students at Texas A&M University. San Juanita García is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology. Mattyna L. Stephens and Donna S. Mancuso are doctoral students in Adult Education and Human Resources Development.

# Welcome to Our Library. . .

TCALL Student Worker Ashley Matus, Librarian Susan Morris, and Student Worker Emily Webb (not pictured) are ready to fill your order for Clearinghouse Library resources. Call them at 800-441-READ (7323) or email *tcall@tamu.edu* to request materials by mail or information on the Library's services.

***10 Easy Ways to Use Technology in the English Classroom.*** Firek, Hilve (2003). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Learn how to integrate both familiar technologies and newer (as of 2003) technological innovations in the classroom. Features include rubrics for assessing student learning, margin links to online resources, chapters on creating presentations and creating a class website, and interviews with teachers who use technology to enhance instruction.

***Creating a Sense of Presence in Online Teaching: How to "Be There" for Distance Learners .*** Lehman, Rosemary M. and Conceição, Simone C. O. (2010). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass*.* How can faculty create a strong e presence for their online classes? This volume highlights the need for creating a presence in the online environment. The authors explore the emotional, psychological, and social aspects from both the instructor and student perspective. It provides an instructional design framework and shows how a strong presence contributes to effective teaching and learning. Filled with illustrative examples and based on research and experience, the book contains methods, case scenarios, and activities for creating, maintaining, and evaluating presence throughout the cycle of an online course.

***Crossing the Digital Divide: Race, Writing, and Technology in the Classroom.*** Monroe, Barbara (2004). New York, NY: Teachers College Press. From the editorial description: "As poor, non-white communities on the other side of the digital divide become immersed in electronic media, how can we evaluate their experiences to transform the teaching of writing and literature and improve student learning?" This book includes the following features for English educators at all levels working in all types of schools: case studies of high-poverty secondary schools as they come online, offering an examination of the literacy practices of some of the country's most underserved students on Indian reservations and in central cities; an approach to teaching writing and literature at both high school and middle school levels; and discussion of the public policy debate on access to technology, arguing that high-poverty schools do not have student access and, when they do, computers are used "to reform, rather than transform schooling".

***Dare to Dream: A Collection of Papers from a Resource Group of 102 Education and Literacy Professionals.*** National Commission on Adult Literacy (May 2007). Washington, DC: Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy. **Technology/Media/Distance Learning** is one of the major topics addressed by the papers in this collection, which was prepared to help inform the deliberations of the National Commission on Adult Literacy. They reflect the ideas, insights, cautions, and recommendations of a group of 102 education and literacy leaders, all indicated by name and affiliation. The broad challenge was to "think outside the box" and imagine systemic changes that would be required to expand adult education and literacy service beyond the 3 million or so presently served in publicly funded programs to many times that number. In addition to Technology/Media/Distance Learning, other topics of papers in this collection include: Role of Federal and State Policy; Postsecondary Readiness; Student Perspectives; Job/Occupational Readiness; Learning Communities; and English as a Second Language.

***Distance Education: The Complete Guide to Design, Delivery, and Improvement.*** Johnson, Judith L. (2003). New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Johnson combines her extensive research and case studies to provide a comprehensive picture of the evolution and current status of distance learning in higher education. Topics include: Pedagogy, student support services, and case studies that illustrate real-life examples of how this new way of educating students is working; design and delivery of programs, including the role of instructional designers and essential ingredients for an effective course; issues of assessment, evaluation, accreditation, and emerging technology standards; lessons learned by institutions and faculty already successfully using distance learning; and the latest research and what the future may hold.

***Distance Education: What Works Well.*** Corry, Michael, editor and Tu, Chih-Hsiung, editor (2003). New York, NY: Haworth Press, Inc. This compilation presents practical advice on how to set up distance learning programs that effectively serve the needs of students who don't have access to the campus. The book examines issues surrounding development, implementation, teacher training, time management, and other important aspects of distance education. The authors offer lessons garnered from real-life experiences at several institutions to help educators explore the pros and cons of distance education – and what it takes to implement a distance program that really works.

***Emerging Technologies in Distance Education.*** Veletsianos, George (2010). Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: UBC Press. Written by an assistant professor of instructional technology at the University of Texas, this book showcases the international work of research scholars and innovative distance education practitioners who use emerging interactive technologies for teaching and learning at a distance. This book assembles the knowledge of international experts on pedagogical, organizational, cultural, social, and economic factors that influence the adoption and integration of emerging technologies in distance education and provides expert advice on how educators can launch effective and engaging distance education initiatives. The author goes beyond the hype surrounding Web 2.0 technologies and highlights the important issues that researchers and educators need to consider to enhance educational practice.

***Facilitating Learning in Online Environments.*** Aragon, Steven R., Editor (Winter 2003). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. This volume presents models, methods, and strategies that facilitate and promote learning within online environments. Contributors demonstrate how quality online programs are made up of a 'blend' of technology, pedagogy, organization, strategy, and vision; explore the concept of online social presence as a significant factor in improving instructional effectiveness and contributing to a feeling of community among learners; and offer strategies for instructors facing the new challenges and opportunities of the online educational experience. Aragon joins his colleagues to make the case that instructional designers need ways to support quality teaching and learning within online environments that take into account the variability in student learning styles, provide external motivation for the isolated students, and build community, collaboration, and communications among learners.

***Getting Online: Distance Education Promising Practices for Canadian Literacy Practitioners.*** Best, Lynn, et al (2008). Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada: National Adult Literacy Database. This resource reports the findings from the *Getting Online: Distance Education Promising Practices for Canadian Literacy Practitioners* (the GO Project).  The GO Project was a two-year national project designed to research trends, technologies, and promising practices in online and distance learning taking place in and outside of the literacy field in Canada. Researchers found that practitioners utilized a variety of technologies and methods of delivery for training and informing professional development

activities. However, there is a gap between the potential of current technologies and the comfort level and knowledge of practitioners. Therefore, researchers note that there is a need for additional training to support learning in the field so that capacity of technology, as a learning and teaching tool, can be realized. Furthermore, the literature review identified a lack of information on how the learning and professional development needs of practitioners are being met via online or distance learning tools.

***Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education, 2010 Edition.*** Kasworm, Carol E. and Rose, Amy D. and Ross-Gordon, Jovita M., Editors (2010). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE. **Technology and distance learning** are among the topics addressed in this collection of writings on the best practices, programs, and institutions in the field. In this edition, over sixty leading authorities share their diverse perspectives in a single volume--exploring a wealth of topics, including: learning from experience, adult learning for self-development, race and culture in adult learning, learning in the workplace, adult education for community action and development, and much more. **Loan Item for Texas Educators ONLY**.

***Handbook of Research on Teaching Literacy Through the Communicative and Visual Arts.*** Flood, James and Heath, Shirley Brice and Lapp, Diane, Editors (2005). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers. Contributors to this volume argue that broadening the educational uses of media, formats, and genres opens up multiple ways for learners to gain access to knowledge and skills, enabling more students to be motivated to see themselves as learners. In this volume, the editors have compiled a resource for conceptualizing literacy in much broader contexts than ever before and for planning more effective literacy programs for all students. This book extends conceptualizations of literacy to include all of the communicative arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing) and the visual arts of drama, dance, film, art, video, and computer technology. **Loan Item for Preferred Borrowers ONLY**.

***Language Learning in Distance Education.*** White, Cynthia (2003). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Distance learning presents language teachers and learners with a new set of challenges, opportunities and practical realities. Taking a learner-centered approach to issues and developments in the field, this book provides an overview of important issues within the field and explores the ways in which all participants are adapting their practices in response to the new learning environment. Topics include: the idea of distance language learning; related concepts; issues and trends; the learner-context interface; developing awareness of distance language learners; the initial experience of distance language learning; learner autonomy; learner support; learning sources; new learning spaces; and the way ahead.

***Learning Computers, Speaking English: Cooperative Activities for Learning English and Basic Word Processing.*** Quann, Steve and Satin, Diana (2000). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press. Eight instructional units lead high-beginning and intermediate ESL students through cooperative computer-based activities that combine language learning with training in basic computer skills and word processing. Each unit concentrates on a basic concept of word processing while also focusing on a grammar topic. Skills are built cumulatively; students will begin by learning to use the mouse and will advance to understanding the features of a basic word processing system. Many activities involve a job readiness component. After completing the book, students will be able to compose business and cover letters on the computer. The textbook can be used with any computer that has Windows 95 or higher as an operating system. Teachers working in other PC or Macintosh applications can use this book as a resource and adapt the lessons. This loan copy does not come with a disk, but can be purchased from The University of Michigan Press along with a disk containing instructional files that allows students to save their work to their own disk.

***Literacy in the Digital Age: Reading, Writing, Viewing, and Computing.*** Withrow, Frank B. (2004). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education. Book examines the effect on education of the transition from a book and library world to a digital world of electronic text, television, and the Internet. Withrow redefines literacy in that new world and addresses the questions: What does a digital world mean for schools? Can we provide a model of education that allows the learner access to learning at anytime and anyplace? A chapter on "Multiple Literacies" discusses the need for critical literacy for decision making in a world of multimedia digital information sources. Of interest to family literacy practitioners is a chapter on how infants and children learn.

***Literacy in the Information Age: Inquiries into Meaning Making With New Technologies.*** Bruce, Bertram C., Editor (2003). Newark, DE: International Reading Association. Collection of articles from the Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy examines critical aspects of literacy in the new information age and the complex issues surrounding the use of new technologies. The pieces build on specific examples from classrooms, Web use, and other experiences with new digital information and communication environments. Articles also addresses issues such as credibility, access, and privacy, and most centrally an understanding of what new media mean for teaching, learning, and literacy development. Some chapter titles include: "Why Free Software Matters for Literacy Educators"; "Opportunities for Teenagers to Share Their Writing Online"; "Using the Web to Support Inquiry-Based Literacy Development"; and "Education Online: Learning Anywhere, Any Time".

***New Technologies for Literacy and Adult Education: A Global Perspective*** Wagner, Daniel A. and Kozma, Robert (2005). Paris: Unesco Publishing. This short book explores ways in which technology can support adult literacy and adult education, with an emphasis on those living in poverty. The book takes two approaches to utilize Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in teaching literacy. One approach stresses teaching the traditionally conceived of aspects of literacy (e.g., decoding text, text comprehension) using technology as a delivery and instructional tool, the other, builds on literacy as a skill base to incorporate comprehension and application of knowledge to problem solve and create new knowledge. In the latter, technology becomes not just a delivery method but a skill learned by the adult literacy learner, thereby linking technology and literacy. Wagner and Kozma outline new skills that should be incorporated into the definition of literacy and, therefore, literacy curricula.

***Online and Social Networking Communities: A Best Practice Guide for Educators*** . Kear, Karen Lesley (2010). New York, NY: Routledge. This guide is written for educational practitioners and trainers who wish to use online communication tools effectively in their teaching. Focusing on the student experience of learning in online communities, it addresses 'web 2.0' and other 'social software' tools and considers the role these technologies play in supporting student learning and building learning communities. The guide offers: real-world case studies; a list of useful resources; guidance on building and supporting online learning communities; information on how collaborative learning assessment differs from assessment of individual learning; coverage of wikis, forums, blogging and micro-blogging, instant messaging, YouTube, Facebook, Second Life, Twitter, Flicker, desktop audio, videoconferencing, and social networking sites.

# Free Things to Send For . . .

***Andragogy and Technology: Integrating Adult Learning Theory as we Teach with Technology***. Fidishun, Dolores (2002). Malvern, PA: Penn State Great Valley School of Graduate Professional Studies. This resource discusses the importance of adult learning theory when planning lessons that incorporate technology into the classroom. Fidishun succinctly explains andragogy (assumptions about the way adults learn as opposed to children) and its importance to adult education. She then goes on to utilize six assumptions underlying andragogy. Fidishun asks practitioners to utilize theory to guide practice so that lessons that incorporate technology meet both the learning needs (content) and the learners' needs as adult learners. The author also provides activities and strategies as examples of how to do this.

***Blending Face-to-Face and Distance Learning Methods in Adult and Career-Technical Education.*** Wonacott, Michael E. (2002). Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. Both face-to-face and distance learning methods are used today in adult education and career and technical education (CTE), and both methods have their individual strengths and limitations. With the increase in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) for distance learning, adult and CTE programs use a blend of both methods in order to maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of each. This ERIC Practice Application Brief reviews the literature on combining traditional classroom instruction with distance learning via ICT and offers suggestions on how the two methods can be effectively blended in adult and CTE programs.

***Closed Captioned TV: A Resource for ESL Literacy Education.*** Parks, Carolyn (July 1994). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. In the four years since the publication of "Closed Captioned Television for Adult ESL Literacy Learners" (Spanos & Smith, 1990), interest in the subject has been growing among teachers, students, and researchers. What is new in closed captioned television (CCTV)? Recent technological, pedagogical, and regulatory developments have heightened awareness and appreciation of the medium's educational potential. This Digest reports on new captioning legislation that increases access to captioned programs and on new research, technology, and uses of closed captions in the field of adult ESL.

***Developing Discipline-Based Critical Thinking Skills via Use of Interactive Technologies***. Kok, Ayse (2008). Thousand Oaks CA: International Journal of Instructive Technology & Distance Learning. This article provides a rationale for incorporating the development of critical thinking skills into the online learning environment. The author also presents possibilities for building these cognitive skills into online classes. She maintains that incorporating critical thinking skills is a necessary component of learning; these skills assist learners to evaluate and link the abundance of information and ideas that is available via information communication technologies (ICTs). Kok starts by reviewing research on critical thinking and learning principles that apply to the teaching of these skills (accompanied by tables that delineate the information). She ends by offering activities that would be suitable to the online learning setting. It should be noted that this article is written for a college setting, however, the content and principles, with adaptations, can be applied to a variety of adult learning settings. The reader will need to adjust suggestions to fit the context of Adult Basic Education.

***Distance Learning: The Challenge and Opportunity of Online Technology***. Layng, Jacqueline M. (2008). Toledo, OH: University of Toledo. This literature review explores the abundance of technologies that have sprung up over the last two decades and how they are being used in the classroom. The author particularly examines how they are being applied to on-line learning. She also considers effectiveness, content, and relationships among students and teachers.

***Expanding Access to Adult Literacy with Online Distance Education.*** Askov, Eunice N and et al (February 2003). Cambridge, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Report examines the potential of online learning to meet the educational needs of adult learners. It identifies a number of issues central to making distance education succceed in adult education. One chapter explores the state of Pennsylvania's experiment with the use of distance education for adult basic education students. An appendix introduces Project IDEAL, an effort to create resources for a consortium of states to help them implement and assess a variety of distance education models. Clearinghouse Library disseminates free copies to Texas educators ONLY; publication is also available on the NCSALL website (*www.ncsall.net*).

***Exploring Distance Education Curricula for Adult Learners: Working Paper #8.*** Young, Shannon (2005). Ann Arbor, MI: Project IDEAL Support Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Project IDEAL is a consortium of states working together to develop effective distance education programs for adult learners. Determining which curriculum to use is one of the most challenging and important decisions states make in developing a distance education program. In this Working Paper, Project IDEAL provides guidance on Instructional Models and Delivery Systems; computer-assisted instruction; teacher-facilitated multimedia products; purchasing curricula; issues of media, licensing, training, and technical support; and product descriptions.

***Getting Started with Assistive Technology.*** Silver-Pacuilla, Heidi (2007). Cambridge, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. This article gives an overview of the most common categories of assistive technology (AT) that support literacy and language development. It also gives examples of the applications and advantages to integrating assistive technology into the classroom. Although the article tends to refer to adults with disabilities in a more general sense, it applies directly to adults with learning disabilities and to use of technology with all adult students.

***Handbook of Distance Education for Adult Learners, Third Edition.*** Petty, Leslie I., Johnston, Jerome, and Shafer, Dehra (2004). Ann Arbor, MI: Project IDEAL Support Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Project IDEAL is a consortium of states working together to develop effective distance education programs for adult learners. In this third edition of the Handbook of Distance Education for Adult Learners, the five

primary chapters have been revised to reflect additional lessons learned from participating states. Expanded information on teaching with different curricula is included as well. Key topics include: Recruitment; Orientation; Teaching at a Distance; Tracking Students and Assessing Their Performance; and Administrative Issues.

*Investigating the Language and Literacy Skills Required for Independent Online Learning.* Silver-Pacuilla, Heidi (September 2008). Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. Written by Heidi Silver-Pacuilla from Stephen Reder's original analysis, this resource reports on a study undertaken to investigate the levels of literacy and language proficiency needed for adult learners to undertake independent online learning. Researchers identified that no concrete threshold exists; rather, the relationship among the learner's skills, the opportunities afforded to the learner, and available supports determines what is needed for the learner to be successful. Learners at all levels of language and literacy proficiency were found to be both eager and able to successfully engage in online learning if the above three elements were present. Furthermore, adult learners are strongly motivated to gain these skills as they perceive them as being related to job improvement. This report offers information on how to balance the elements to optimize adult learning. The authors address creating opportunities for learning, instruction, program planning, and content development. Clearinghouse Library disseminates free copies to Texas educators ONLY; publication is also available on the National Institute for Literacy website.

*Learning with Computers: The Theory Behind the Practice.* Cromley, Jennifer G. (2000). Cambridge, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. This resource addresses why technology use in the adult basic education (ABE) classroom does not always make an impact on learning or effective instructional practice. In doing so the author considers the following issues: the limited research available on effective computer integration into the classroom; effective uses of technology for teaching ABE students; the impact of increased interest in technology; blending human interactions into settings that rely on technology as the primary teaching tool (e.g., distance learning); how technology can increase collaboration among students; the use of technology to increase memorization; technology to assist students with special considerations for learning; and using technology to assist and develop thinking skills. The author in each concise section offers a brief review of the literature, a rationale, and practical ideas for utilizing technology to support each of these aspects of learning. She ends the article with general tips to keep in mind when incorporating technology, and particularly computers, in the classroom.

*Measuring the Motivation and Strategy Use of GED Students in Distance Education Programs.* Wolters, Christopher, et al (2005). Ann Arbor, MI: Project IDEAL Support Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. This report summarizes a pilot study in which 94 adults working on their GED in distance education programs completed a survey that measured their motivational beliefs, strategy use, and self-regulation with regard to the distance education course they were taking. Findings in this non-representative sample indicate that participants pursuing their GED in these programs were highly motivated. They consider their GED preparation program valuable in terms of its utility and importance to them as persons, and consider themselves efficacious, while indicating that being in the program required a moderate level of sacrifice. Quite important for program evaluation is the fact that virtually all the students reported being strongly supported by their instructors. They would recommend the program to others and have little regret about having chosen to work on obtaining their GED.

*Second Language Acquisition and Technology: A Review of the Research.* LeLoup, Jean W. and Ponterio, Robert (December 2003). Wash-

ington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistics. Foreign language teachers have always been ahead of the curve in integrating technology into instruction and learning, seeing the benefits of technology even without an extant research database to confirm their judgment. The number of computer applications, communications technologies, and sheer volume of offerings on the Internet has grown at an amazing rate over the past 15 years, and many foreign language educators have embraced these new technologies as useful instructional tools. This ERIC Digest describes a conceptual framework through which to view the research; problems with the research base; what the research does indicate; and additional thoughts on second language acquisition and technology.

*Technology Competencies: Meeting the Challenge.* Kansas Board of Regents Adult Education Division (2004). Topeka, KS: Kansas Board of Regents. As computers become more and more prevalent, technology competencies are becoming a standard in adult basic education. The Kansas Board of Regents – Adult Education Division has developed this resource to meet the challenge. This resource (on CD) includes technology competencies aligned with level descriptors from the National Reporting System (NRS), detailed lesson plans with worksheets for each competency, and a method for verifying competency mastery.

*Under Construction: Building Web Sites as a Project-Based Learning Activity for ABE/ESOL Classes: Tips for Teachers.* Carter, Jeff and Quann, Steve (2003). Boston, MA: World Education. This book is designed to provide adult literacy and ESOL staff developers and teachers with some simple, user-friendly guidance on using project based instruction and technology to build a web site with students. Under Construction is a useful tool for instructors who want to introduce their students to some basic technology skills and/or use the World Wide Web to publish student products. The book not only provides step-by-step guide to building a web site with students, but also introduces the rationale for using project-based instruction and using technology as a tool. This resource guide not only encourages adult students to be technology learners, but also guides the teacher in promoting the use of technology while encouraging authentic learning. Clearinghouse Library disseminates free copies to Texas educators ONLY; publication is also available on the World Education website (*http://tech.worlded.org/wei_under.pdf*).

*Uses of Technology in the Instruction of Adult English Language Learners.* Moore, Sarah Catherine K. (February 2009). Washington, DC: Center for Adult English Language Acquisition. This brief discusses three ways of using technology with adults learning English—onsite, blended, and online—and briefly describes examples of specific technologies and programs for adults learning English. The brief concludes by identifying issues to consider when using technology and by offering suggestions for further research.

*Video-Based Distance Education for Adult English Language Learners* Ramirez, See Sylvia and Savage, K. Lynn (July 2003). Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. To meet the needs of English language learners, adult ESL programs are implementing a variety of educational opportunities including distance education. Today a variety of technologies are used to deliver content at a distance. Video-based distance education is a popular form of distance education. It utilizes pre-produced videos, requires minimal technological skills on the part of the teacher and the learner, and can be structured to facilitate independent home study and periodic one-on-one or group instruction. This ERIC Q&A identifies advantages and challenges with using video-based distance education for adult English language learners, describes implementation alternatives, and suggests practical implementation strategies.