



TEXAS Adult Education & Literacy QUARTERLY

Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy & Learning

ACCOMMODATING ADULT ESL LEARNERS IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

by Dr. Alicia Holland

In the 21st century, online courses are at the heart of education (Draves, 2013, p.1). It has become evident that at some point adult English as a Second Language (ESL) educators and learners, respectively, will experience teaching an online course or taking an online course as part of their academic journey. Therefore, ESL educators should prepare for the virtual classroom and future online teaching assignments by learning and incorporating strategies in their online teaching portfolio.

This article provides a few strategies that can be used to help accommodate adult ESL learners in the virtual classroom. In doing so, four key learning modalities are necessary: (a) Visual; (b) Auditory; (c) Kinesthetic; and (d) Tactile (*Teach Make a Difference*, 2014). Focusing on these four modalities will ensure that learners have a positive and rich learning experience.

Offering Visual Support

The first strategy is to offer visual support. Visual support is important for learners because it allows the content come to life and makes mental connections that increase their chances of retaining the information. Additionally, visual support helps to resolve technical issues quickly through usage of screenshots, which allows the visual sharing of onscreen documentation.

Similarly, screencasts can also offer visual support by incorporating audio into PowerPoint Presentations. There are free programs, such as Screenr (<http://www.screenr.com/>), which are designed to help users build screencasts. When selecting this strategy, you will need to plan ahead and make sure that you pro-



**TCALL Welcomes
Dr. Glenda L. Rose
and Tracy Hendrix**

vide the correct URL to your learners.

Offering Additional Voice Support

Another strategy is to offer additional voice support. Free services, such as Skype (<http://www.skype.com/>), can be used to offer voice or chat support. Often, adult ESL learners like to have their online facilitators available via Skype. Since many of them already use Skype to communicate with others, the platform is easy and familiar to them.

Another free service that can be used to provide support is WebEx (<http://www.webex.com/>). WebEx offers both voice and computer support, which allows both online facilitators and adult ESL learners to engage with more of the four learning modalities. Best of all, each learning session can be recorded and used for quality purposes, and referenced at a later time to aid in further academic support.

The third free service that can be used to provide additional voice support is FreeConferenceCall (<https://www.freeconferencecall.com/>). You can use FreeConferenceCall to speak with your adult ESL learners, but the call must be scheduled. This subscription-based service has features that can support online meetings, but the use of this service would depend upon the learner's academic needs and your availability preferences.

Providing Discussion Stem Starters

Depending upon how the online course is designed, it will be important to give learners an idea as to how to draft their own responses to weekly class discussions. Adult ESL learners need help getting their ideas to materialize on paper, and they may find it useful to plan their participation in class discussions. In order to ensure that learners know exactly what the discussion question entails, one suggestion is to repost the class discussion question(s), as in the following example:

Week 1 Class Discussion

Imagine that you have been employed at a new job for the past three months. Although you enjoy your new job, you really want to apply for a job that caters to your interest in working in a different industry.

Think critically about this real world situation and respond to all of the following prompts in our class discussion:

1. *Describe how you would handle the situation.*
2. *Describe how you would explain your decision to change jobs to a future employer.*

Another suggestion is to repost the response guidelines in order to ensure that learners understand what is expected of them, both in terms of their contributions to their peers and in terms of how many peers they should respond to each week. Supporting the Class Discussion example, here are the response guidelines to help learners participate effectively in the class discussion:

Response Guidelines

Respond to at least two classmates. In your responses, you can add value to the class discussion by doing one of the following:

- a. *Agree or disagree with your classmate and explain why.*
- b. *Share your own personal or work experiences regarding how to handle such a situation.*
- c. *Recommend additional strategies that would help to resolve such a situation.*

Both of these suggestions will ensure that learners are able to actively participate and use their own critical and creative thinking skills.

It is important to understand that not all online learning platforms are equal, but these accommodation strategies will definitely ensure that adult ESL learners have the types of instructional support they need to actively engage in the learning process in the virtual classroom.

References

- Draves, W. A. (2013). *Advanced teaching online* (4th ed.). River Falls, WI: LERN.
- Teach Make a Difference. (2014). *Learning styles: All students are created equally (and differently)*. Retrieved from <http://teach.com/what/teachers-teach/learning-styles>

About the Author

Dr. Alicia Holland is an online professor and tutoring consultant who has been teaching diverse learners, including adult ESL learners, for 10 years.

TCALL Welcomes Dr. Glenda L. Rose and Tracy Hendrix

Dr. Glenda Lynn Rose and Tracy Hendrix are the newest members of TCALL's staff, joining the TRAIN PD Consortium Team as Professional Development (PD) Center Specialists.

With doctoral and master's degrees in Foreign Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics and leadership roles in state professional associations, Dr. Rose brings extensive experience developing and delivering professional development training for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), with a training portfolio including numerous topics. Glenda's specialty within TRAIN PD Consortium will be supporting the development of PD curricula.

Ms. Hendrix has a B.S. in human and social sciences and almost two decades of experience in AEL; includ-

ing work as an Adult Education Career Counselor, Chief GED Examiner, Operations Coordinator, and ten years as a Grant Service Manager for Texas LEARNS. In addition to experience training and supervising AEL program coordinators, support staff, and outreach sites, she has coached and trained local program staff and leaders on data-driven program improvement, which will be Tracy's area of specialty within TRAIN PD.

Read more about Glenda and Tracy on their staff pages, found under the About Us menu link from TCALL's home page. Rose and Hendrix will be joined by seven additional PD Center Specialists, to be hired in the coming weeks at seven community colleges around the state that are working under TCALL's leadership in the TRAIN PD Consortium.

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Updates from TWC

Adult Education and Literacy

Transition of TEAMS System

Over the past year, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has worked to transition the Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The movement of the database is the final piece in the transition of the adult education and literacy program from TEA to TWC which began on September 1, 2014 as a result of Senate Bill 307, passed in the 83rd legislative session.

On Monday, August 11, TEAMS was successfully opened at TWC. Over the past few weeks, TWC staff have been working to add users into the system as well as provide “one-on-one” sessions to all PY’14-’15 grant recipients. The goal of these sessions is to address changes in the system, inform users of TWC data entry expectations, and allow the opportunity and forum to address questions related to performance and data entry.

Access to TEAMS

Information on accessing TEAMS is available on the TWC Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) webpage under the TEAMS section: texasworkforce.org/ael

More information

All questions related to TEAMS can be directed to TWC at teams.technicalassistance@twc.state.tx.us

Our Commitment

The TWC AEL team believes they can provide the best for adult education students when we are all working and communicating well. The AEL team is committed to customer service and satisfaction. Please let them know how they are doing by responding to this anonymous satisfaction survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TXAEL>

Meet the Texas Workforce Commission Adult Education and Literacy Team

To deliver excellent program support and service to the AEL community, TWC has assembled a skilled and diverse team of education and workforce development professionals. Team members working under State Director Anson Green include the following contract and program specialists. Mr. Green will be adding three additional members in the coming months.

STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

Audrey Allen’s knowledge in the field of Adult Education in Texas is both diverse and extensive as she has played various roles within the field since returning to the central Texas area in 1995 with a Master of Arts degree in Adult Education from San Francisco State University.

She has had leadership roles including adult educator; center coordinator in Kyle, Texas; trainer with the Texas A&M Kingsville team; first year coordinator of the Adult Education Credential Project; and Even Start Director of the San Marcos CISD program. Ms. Allen also has experience managing contracts (\$60 million) for the City of San Antonio as Administrator of one of the largest Head Start Programs in the nation.

Cassie Baker began working in contracts while at the Department of Family and Protective Services. Ms. Baker moved to the Procurement Division of the Health and Human Services Commission shortly thereafter where she became a Certified Texas Purchaser. Her enthusiasm for contracts, budgets and accounting recently brought her to the Adult Education and Literacy department at TWC. Ms. Baker has a certificate in Sign Language Studies from Austin Community College and will graduate in spring 2015 from Texas A&M Commerce with a Bachelor’s in Applied Arts and Sciences (BAAS).

Diana Lomas has experience providing administrative support, coordinating events, and monitoring grant budgets for programs that serve high school and college students. As Administrative Assistant for the TRIO Upward Bound Math and Science Program at the Alamo Colleges in San Antonio, TX, Ms. Lomas’ responsibilities included coordination of its intensive summer program. Ms. Lomas was most recently part of the Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) initiative; the VAST (Vocational Advancement for South Texas) Consortium project and Welcome Back Center program at the Alamo Colleges. Ms. Lomas earned an Associate of Arts in Spanish from Palo Alto College in San Antonio and a Bachelor’s in Sociology from Texas A&M San Antonio.

Irene E. Ramos has over 20 years of experience in

Adult Education and the Workforce Development in Texas. Mrs. Ramos has held various positions in Adult Education, including, GED® Instructor, TANF Instructor, Supervisor and Trainer for ESC Region 20. Mrs. Ramos also performed as Career Counselor, Center Manager, and Youth Program Coordinator for Alamo Area Council of Governments at Workforce Centers in the rural Alamo area. Mrs. Ramos' recent endeavors include developing and facilitating Professional Learning as an Education Consultant. Mrs. Ramos holds a B.A. from Our Lady of the Lake and a Doctorate in Jurisprudence from St. Mary's. She also served her community as a City Council member and was Mayor from 2009 to 2011 in her hometown of Poteet, Texas.

Gloria Rodriguez has extensive experience working with state and federally funded programs. Ms. Rodriguez was most recently part of the Alamo Colleges' Integrated Basic Education Skills Training (I-BEST) Initiative and the Welcome Back Center program for internationally trained health professionals. Ms. Rodriguez also taught at-risk high school students (San Antonio ISD) while working for a local non-profit agency and has held various positions at the Texas Workforce Solutions Centers in San Antonio. Ms. Rodriguez holds a Bachelor's in Psychology with a certificate in Pre-Counseling from Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU), where she was a Ronald E. McNair Scholar. Ms. Rodriguez earned a Master's in Education with a certificate in Adult Education from the University of the Incarnate Word and most recently obtained a Career and Advising Education Certification from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning Career from the University of Indiana.

Lori Slayton has over 22 years of State service in varying capacities. Ms. Slayton's contract experience includes the implementation of the Statewide Xerox leasing contract and the writing and management of the Hurricane Rita Crisis Counseling Grant. Ms. Slayton is an advocate of adult education, having begun her post-secondary education in her 30's and subsequently graduating Cum Laude from Schreiner University in Kerrville, TX in 2005. Ms. Slayton has a degree in English with an emphasis on Philosophy.

Ann Savino has been working in adult education, literacy, and workforce development for the El Paso Community College for 20 years with a focus on integrated basic skills and job training. Ms. Savino's experience ranges from co-developing a 300-hour video-based curriculum under the National Workplace Literacy Grant that was disseminated across the U.S. by a major manufacturer and the AFL-CIO to manag-

ing an Accelerate Texas project through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Ms. Savino has focused her work on career pathways, integrated job training/basic skills, and vocational ESL.

Carrie Tupa, Assistant Director of Adult Education and Literacy, works with leadership to ensure the alignment of practice to state and national strategic policy and best practices. Ms. Tupa oversees processes for statewide collection and analysis of program performance data and directs local program technical assistance efforts.

Prior to joining TWC, Ms. Tupa was a principle developer and implementer of the I-BEST initiative at the Alamo Colleges, one of a network of programs funded under the Accelerate Texas initiative. As part of the I-BEST leadership team, Ms. Tupa developed innovative approaches to strategic initiatives for under skilled students. In addition to program coordination, Ms. Tupa provided leadership in evaluation, resource development, and contract management. Ms. Tupa also provided technical assistance to new I-BEST programs in the VAST (Vocational Advancement for South Texas) consortium, helping programs to develop assessment, integrated education and training, and program evaluation processes.

Ms. Tupa holds a Bachelor's in Communication Arts from Marymount Manhattan, a Master's degree in Mathematics Education from St. John's University, and will be completing her doctorate in Education from the University of Texas at Austin in the coming year.

Mahalia Webb has a decade of experience in working with low-income families in Texas through the state's many employment programs. She has provided technical assistance to numerous Workforce Development Boards across Texas with program guidance and implementation strategies for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Assistance Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Non-Custodial Parent Choices initiative. She has extensive experience in aligning state programs with federal policy by providing technical assistance to the local level. Ms. Webb's experience in workforce development and oversight will bring insight to the new direction of Adult Education and Literacy under the Texas Workforce Commission. Ms. Webb holds a Bachelor's in Journalism from the University of Kentucky and is currently pursuing a Master's of Secondary Education (MEd) at Texas State University. Ms. Webb will graduate from Texas State University fall of 2014.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM

Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning at Texas A&M University
Serving TWC-funded Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Programs



TIER 1 Training is the responsibility of the local program. TWC-funded local AEL programs use local funds to provide Tier 1 training on topics such as:

- Assessment
- Goal Setting
- Basic TEAMS
- Student intake, enrollment, and orientation
- Career awareness such as ICA
- Other training in topics where local staff have subject matter expertise

You will be able to access the PD Contract Trainer Database online to find available experts to meet your needs. Programs retain local control. Using local PD funds programs can contract with trainers or experts who are not in the database or use local expertise. The database is just a resource for programs to use. Programs may recommend trainers to add to the database.

TrainPD@tam.u.edu
1-800-441-7323
www-tcall.tamu.edu

Responsibilities of the TRAIN PD Consortium to TWC-funded local AEL programs

- To support programs during the “ramp-up” transition period
- To provide Train the Trainer events to increase local capacity
- To populate and make available a database of Contract Trainers for Tier 1 PD
- To provide or contract training for Tiers 2 and 3 PD
- To help programs statewide with their PD Plans for continuous improvement
- To make recommendations for continuous program improvement based on data analysis and needs assessments and the local and state levels
- To provide Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) instructional resources for PD

During the Ramp-up period, the TRAIN PD Consortium will

- Prioritize the needs of new TWC-funded AEL grantees
- Populate and disseminate the new contract trainer database so programs can find Tier 1 trainers
- Create an online discussion list for PD Coordinators and other means of communication among PD coordinators and specialists
- Provide DL training of trainers
- Assign a PD Specialist to work with local programs. The PD Specialists will get to
 - Know the programs
 - Assist program in assessment of needs
 - Assist program in data analysis for continuous improvement

To request training, send a message to TrainPD@tam.u.edu
Call 1-800-441-7323

or contact (*)

Harriet Smith
Managing Director
hsmith@tam.u.edu
for Access to TCALL's Resources

Debra Hargrove
Director PD Instructional Design
dhargrove@cehd.tamu.edu
for Distance Learning

Federico Salas-Isnardi
Director, PD Consortium
fsalas-isnardi@tam.u.edu
for General PD Questions (*)



(*) When the TRAIN PD Consortium Partners hire their PD Specialists, local programs will be able to contact their assigned PD Specialist for all PD services.

Ideas for Teachers of Adults

TCALL Bits & Bytes

Short, yet purposeful introductions to topics related to the integration of Technology in Adult Education, ESL and Literacy.

Contributed by Debra L. Hargrove, Ed. D., TCALL



Whose Responsibility IS it?

Something sad happened to me the other day. I had to “unfriend” a family member on Facebook because of a posting I thought was inappropriate. I sure didn’t want my friends and co-workers to see that floating around my page. It was quite embarrassing, to be honest. I shared my concern with my family member (who is a teen, by the way) and they just wouldn’t believe that using certain words like that was not appropriate. They said I was “living in the 60’s” and didn’t really understand the cultures now. Well, for the record... I DID live in the 60’s, but I was about 10 in 1969, and we didn’t have social media then.

I’ve noticed lately, too, that some people think that having a Facebook account gives them the right to share anything they want. It doesn’t matter if it’s a prayer request, what they’ve had for dinner, who they voted for in the last election, or more importantly, how they feel about different ethnicities. Good or bad. And I guess, according to our rights as United States citizens, we have the right of free speech.

But does that make it right? I mean, over the past few years, I’ve had two of my friends lose their jobs because of something they posted on social media. What were they thinking? Do they not realize how irresponsible they were? And then it hit me! There are no preset rules for behaving responsibly in an online world! Duh!

We have to study and practice and take a driving test in order to get a state Drivers License. The girl that cuts and colors my hair even has to have a license. Nowhere have I found, however, that we must all pass a “Digital Responsibility” test before we engage in any digital literacy activity.

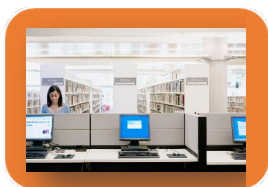
So, I thought I would use this opportunity to share with you a concept that’s been around for many years in K-12 education, but lacking somewhat in finding purpose in Adult Education and Literacy. It’s called Digital Citizenship.



Digital Citizenship revolves around responsible behavior in a digital world. The concept includes nine major elements:

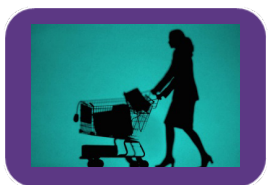
Dr. Mike Ribble created the concept of Digital Citizenship while working on his Dissertation a few years ago. It was the culmination of a 3 year project. I contacted Dr. Ribble to ask permission to use some of his material in the D-Learning Course I'm developing. He granted me permission to use the material, with the proper citations, and was excited to hear that Adult Education recognizes the need for teachers and students to know the value of being responsible in this digital world. Below are Dr. Ribble's short definitions of what each of the Nine Elements mean. I've also included two important links that you can visit for more information. Isn't it time we become responsible?

The Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship, Dr. Mike Ribble, http://www.digitalcitizenship.net/Nine_Elements.html



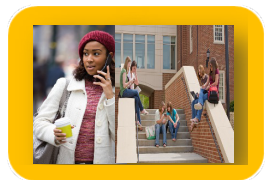
Digital Access: full electronic participation in society.

Technology users need to be aware that not everyone has the same opportunities when it comes to technology.



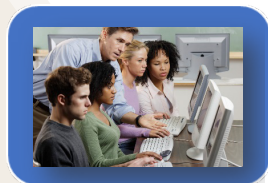
Digital Commerce: electronic buying and selling of goods.

Technology users need to understand that a large share of market economy is being done electronically. Users need to learn about how to be effective consumers in a new digital economy.



Digital Communication: electronic exchange of information.

One of the significant changes within the digital revolution is a person's ability to communicate with other people. Unfortunately, many users have not been taught how to make appropriate decisions when faced with so many different digital communication options.



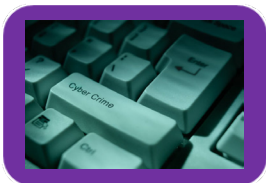
Digital Literacy: process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology.

New technologies are finding their way into the work place that are not being used in schools (e.g., Videoconferencing, online sharing spaces such as wikis). As new technologies emerge, learners need to learn how to use that technology quickly and appropriately.



Digital Etiquette: electronic standards of conduct or procedure.

Technology users often see this area as one of the most pressing problems when dealing with Digital Citizenship. We recognize inappropriate behavior when we see it, but before people use technology they do not learn digital etiquette (i.e., appropriate conduct). It is not enough to create rules and policy, we must teach everyone to become responsible digital citizens in this new society.



Digital Law: electronic responsibility for actions and deeds.

Digital law deals with the ethics of technology within a society. Unethical use manifests itself in form of theft and/or crime. Users need to understand that stealing or causing damage to other people's work, identity, or property online is a crime. Hacking into others information, downloading illegal music, plagiarizing, creating destructive worms, viruses or creating Trojan Horses, sending spam, or stealing anyone's identify or property is unethical.



Digital Rights & Responsibilities: those freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world.

Just as in the American Constitution where there is a Bill of Rights, there is a basic set of rights extended to every digital citizen. Digital citizens have the right to privacy, free speech, etc. Basic digital rights must be addressed, discussed, and understood in the digital world.



Digital Health & Wellness: physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world.

Eye safety, repetitive stress syndrome, and sound ergonomic practices are issues that need to be addressed in a new technological world.



Digital Security (self-protection): electronic precautions to guarantee safety.

It is not enough to trust other members in the community for our own safety. In our own homes, we put locks on our doors and fire alarms in our houses to provide some level of protection. The same must be true for the Digital security. We need to have virus protection, backups of data, and surge control of our equipment.

Used with permission.

http://www.digitalcitizenship.net/Nine_Elements.html

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Want to learn more? Try visiting these websites:

Today'sMeet

Tech Tip: Were you hoping to see a new recommended APP in this issue?

Try Today'sMeet. It's a great app for setting up instant chat rooms. You can find it at:

<https://todaysmeet.com/>

I stumbled upon it through an email list I have joined: Tech Tips for Teachers. It's an adult education blog from World Education. Subscribe here:

<http://techtipsforteachers.weebly.com/tech-tips>

Bereavement Literacy

by Dr. Clarena Larrotta and José Luis Moreno

Reviewing the literature about the use of literacy practices in counseling and therapy services for the bereaved, we have been unable to locate a source that defines the concept of “bereavement literacy.” Therefore, based on our fields of expertise, adult education and literacy, counseling, and mortuary science, we decided to write this article to establish a definition that fits the literacy practices of families, adults, and children, during the grieving process while attempting to maintain the communication channels. Bereavement literacy refers to all types of literacy activities and practices that children and adults engage in for meaning making purposes and that include one or more components of verbal, non-verbal, and written text to communicate ideas and feelings about grief. These activities and practices include but are not limited to: reading, writing, dialogue, drawing, storytelling, visual narratives, painting, art, art crafts (e.g., glass work, pottery), drama therapy, sand therapy, or any kind of creative intervention focusing on meaning making and communication.

Creative interventions, the use of the arts in its different forms, serve as a platform for adults to communicate their feelings and assist their children in labeling and naming their own feelings. The dialogic approach between child-adult aims to clarify misconceptions; the dialogue process helps to reduce feelings of isolation, creates an informal and safe learning environment, and helps to normalize the grief experience among family members. The use of creative activities such as the ones illustrated in Figures 1 to 4, have potential for adults to gain confidence to talk with children about death and dying issues in a safe and familiar setting. Grollman (as cited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education, 2009, p. 123) recommends keeping in mind that “joy expressed is joy increased while grief expressed is grief diminished.” In other words, it is necessary to provide the means for children to talk about their feelings, allowing them to develop healthy coping skills after the death of a loved one.

Figures 1, 3, 5, and 6, present drawing, sand, and paint creations as bereavement literacy activities which allow children to express thoughts in a pleasant manner and that permit them to express meaning through using text, drawing, color, and symbols.

They describe verbally what each of their drawings and creations represent while telling their side of the story. These types of activities create an opportunity for adults and children to learn new vocabulary words together. Additionally, the activities help them to recall already existent but passive vocabulary words that are related to a difficult and personal topic, which are needed for meaning making and communication during the bereaved experience. The adult could use these occasions to practice verbal communication with the child by taking advantage of dialogic reading practices. As a result, listening and conversation skills are employed as children and adults express and listen to each other’s grief experience. This dialogue conveys a positive message about sharing feelings and removing taboos from death and dying matters.

It is important to highlight that bereavement literacy practices promote incidental language learning since writing, talking, and expressing the grief story requires the use of (explicit) verbal language and/or nonverbal (silent) language. Listening and conversation skills are employed as the bereaved child and caregiver express and listen to each other’s grief experiences. In fact, recalling, reflecting, and sharing memories about the person who died validates the importance of a relationship between the surviving relatives and the deceased, allowing them to interact using the many forms of language and communication.

The use of narrative, dialogue, and storytelling actualizes knowledge, such as the parts of the story (beginning, middle, and end) and strengthens the language and literacy skills of the participants. Children are able to practice spelling, writing, representation of ideas, and more. The incorporation of creative interventions produces a variety of ways for children and adults to express emotions and discover how to share their grief experience (Buser, Buser, & Gladding, 2005). Bereavement literacy creates a path to explore the benefits of learning about death and dying affairs and to accept these matters as part of life. The reflecting and sharing about the family’s grief situation reinforces language, promotes literacy skills, and creates mutual learning among the bereaved. Bereavement literacy does not intend to make grief

matters easier, just less difficult for all surviving relatives including children.

The photographs shared in this article come from a large sample of data collected through a written invitation to document this work and with permission from *The Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas*. We also followed Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines for ethical research and obtained IRB approval # EXP2013U6613 to implement this research.

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American Board of Funeral Service Education-ABFSE (2009). *Funeral directing course outline*. St. Jo-

seph, MO.

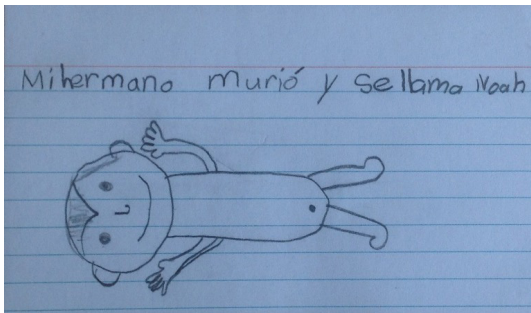
Buser, T. J., Buser, J. K., & Gladding, S. T. (2005). Good grief: The part of arts in healing loss and grief. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 1(3/4), 173-183. doi:10.1300/J456v01n03_1

About the Authors

Clarena Larrotta is associate professor of Adult Education at Texas State University.

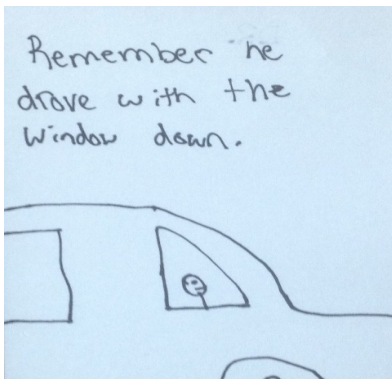
José Luis Moreno is a licensed funeral director/embalmer and professional counselor. He is assistant professor of Mortuary Science at San Antonio College and a doctoral student at Texas State University.

Figure 1



My brother dies and his name was Noah.

Figure 3



He drove with the window down.

Figure 5



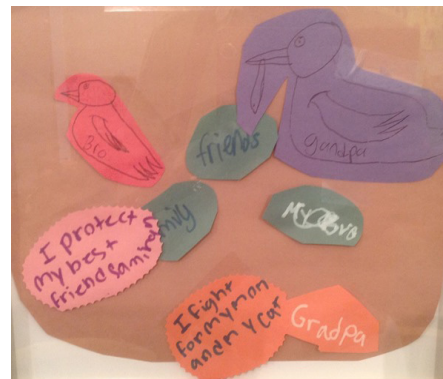
Hope

Figure 2



Metaphor of the broken pot

Figure 4



Narrative Creation

Figure 6



Love

Researchers Develop Free Library of Texts for Adult Literacy Learners to Read

by Daphne Greenberg

The Center for the Study of Adult Literacy (csal.gsu.edu) is a federally funded national research center focusing on adults who read between the 3.0-7.9 grade levels. We are specifically looking at our participants' reading related strengths and weaknesses, and developing/modifying a hybrid 100-hour reading curriculum.*

Are you looking for an online library of texts to use with adult literacy learners? If so, the Center for the Study of Adult Literacy (CSAL), a federally funded research and development center*, has created just such a tool. This library includes over 1,500 different materials for learners to read. You can access the library and find out more about it at: <http://csal.gsu.edu/content/library>.

Library content

Currently, our library consists of the following topics: health, food, babies, children ages 2-12, teenagers, families, advice, non-fiction (real life stories), fiction (made-up stories), jobs and work, money, history, science and other. Stories can appear in several categories. For example, a story about healthy food to take on a family picnic might appear in the following categories: health, food, children, families, advice. Some of our non-fiction (real life stories) and fiction (made-up stories) were written by adult learners. Stories come from a variety of sources including parenting organizations, the CDC and other governmental agencies, adult learner programs, and news websites; all of the story titles have footnotes indicating their source. You can click on a link at the bottom of the page to get to the main website of any of our non-federal sources.

How to use the library

We designed the library so that different groups could access it in a way that better suits their needs. For example, we have a specific web page for learners: <http://csal.gsu.edu/content/are-you-learner>. This web page includes instructions on how to access the stories as well as how to use the library. There are other web pages for teachers and researchers (they can be accessed at: <http://csal.gsu.edu/content/library-resources>). Our library is also grouped according to levels – easier, medium, and harder – so that readers can find stories to read by both topic and level.



As with all readability tools, it is essential to remember that they do not capture the background information that an adult learner brings to the text. Therefore, an article about prostate cancer that is labeled “harder” may actually be easy to read for an adult male who has experienced prostate cancer. Similarly, an “easier” text may be difficult for an adult learner who has very little background knowledge about a specified topic. Texts written in simple language about landing an airplane may be quite challenging for someone who has never landed an airplane! Even a cookie recipe in simple list form can seem complex to an individual who has never made a cookie. It is our hope that teachers of adult learners will advise and encourage their students to read many different stories at different levels in the library.

The science behind the library

To aid us in selecting and grouping appropriate levels of texts, we rely on a computer system called [Coh-Metrix](#) (Graesser & McNamara, 2011; Graesser, McNamara, & Kulikowich, 2011). Graesser (a co-principal investigator in CSAL) and his colleagues developed Coh-Metrix so that researchers and teachers have a way to scale texts on dozens of aspects of language and discourse.

Coh-Metrix is a tool that allows one to input text of fewer than 1000 words and view a summary of the text. The text summary has several categories that covers many aspects that influence readability of a text. These include but are not limited to the number of paragraphs, sentences and words in the text, information about syntactic complexity, embedded structures, load on working memory, types of grammar categories of the words used in the text, how co-

hesive the text is, as well as the types of connectives used in the text. The program also provides comparisons with well-known readability formulas such as the Flesch-Kincaid. If you want to learn more about Coh-Metrix, go to: <http://csal.gsu.edu/content/readability>

The library's future

We would love to get feedback from you about our library. If you are a teacher or researcher, we hope to hear from you as you use the library. The library is not considered a final product, and is constantly evolving as we find or receive recommendations of texts to include in the library. We consider it a living, breathing repository of resources for adult learners, teachers and researchers. We would especially love to hear if you have other texts that you recommend (they need to be accessible for free on the Web). We hope that you will help us improve our library, and look forward to partnering with you in this important effort. You can contact us by accessing the contact form at: <http://csal.gsu.edu/content/contact> or

emailing Daphne Greenberg directly at: dgreenberg@gsu.edu.

About the Authors

Daphne Greenberg is a Professor in Educational Psychology at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia. She is currently the Principal Investigator in the IES funded Center for the Study of Adult Literacy (csal.gsu.edu).

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Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education (TALAE)

Save the date! TALAE 2015: Exploring the Future

February 5-7, 2015

Westin Galleria, Houston, TX



TALAE

Save the date! COABE/TALAE

Joint National & State Conference 2016

April 11-14, 2016

Dallas, Texas



Become a member of TALAE this new program year as we transition into new ventures! TALAE provides members opportunities for networking and staff development by convening an annual state conference featuring best practices in the field of adult education. In addition, TALAE provides student academic awards for both GED and ESL students as well as program staff awards during the conference. Texas has won the bid to host the national Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) in 2016. As a TALAE member, you automatically become a COABE member with benefits such as discounted registration fees to the national conference.

TALAE has a new slate of officers for 2014-2015: President: Mary Helen Martinez, President-elect & Conference Chair: Martin Loa, Vice-President: Debbie Klepper, Treasurer: Tammy Alexander, Secretary: Tiffany Johnson and Past President: Dr. Olga Escamilla.

Regional representatives include At-Large: Dr. LaShondia McNeal, Central: Dr. Glenda Rose, Coastal: Kay Vaccaro, East: Fredia Thomas, Far West: Michelle Aube-Barton, North: Octaviano Garza, South: Dr. Rebecca Davis, South Central: Joe Belk, North: and Brittney Haas, West.

Contact your local representative and/or officers for any suggestions in meeting the needs of adult educators in Texas.

Visit our web page for membership forms and for more information:

<http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/talae>

<http://coabe.org>

Translating Research into Literacy Practice

Building a Case for Investing in Adult Literacy

by Sheri Foreman Elder and Molly Beck

A capstone team from the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University delivered its final presentation to Houston Center for Literacy on April 30, 2014. The collaboration began when Houston Center for Literacy requested a gap analysis and return-on-investment (ROI) study for adult literacy programs in the City of Houston. The goals of the project were to identify literacy needs, gaps in literacy provision, and improvements for literacy services and capacity. The project produced useful city-level data concerning the literacy levels in Houston, identified service provision gaps and highlighted the need to collect consistent data.

Literacy in Houston

The capstone team, advised by Dr. Lori Taylor, first identified the low-literacy population as working-age adults (18 – 65) who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent. For the purposes of the study, the team used high school graduation/GED attainment as a proxy measure for low literacy rates. Data from the 2011 and 2012 American Communities Survey (ACS) indicated 24.8% of Houston’s 1.4 million – or 340,000 – working-age adults comprised the low literacy population (Fette et al., 2014, p. 2). They also found 78% of the low-literacy population do not speak English in the home, indicating a large need for English as a Second Language (ESL) services in Houston (Fette et al., 2014, p. 4). Using ACS data, the team also identified where in Houston large low literacy populations live. A majority of Houston’s 96 zip codes – 57 – have more than 5,000 low-literacy adults and two have over 25,000 low literacy adults (Fette et al., 2014, p. 5).

Gaps in Coverage

To determine the gap in service provision, the capstone team divided low literacy population num-

ber by the number of contact hours reported by each provider member of the Mayor’s Coalition for Literacy, an association of more than 60 organizations offering adult education classes in Houston. The team identified 23 zip codes in the greater Houston area that had no providers offering literacy services. Layering the provision map over the low literacy map, the team identified 27 zip codes that are “severely underserved”, whose current capacity allows them to provide less than one contact hour per year to their low literate population. “Highly underserved” zip codes, by comparison, are able to provide one to five hours of literacy services to their low literate population, and “underserved” zip codes are able to provide more than five hours per person per year (Fette et al., 2014, p. 8). As the capstone explained, “it is unlikely that all low-literate adults would simultaneously seek literacy services, but the index describes the capacity for provider response. Even if only 10% of the adult low literacy population in the 27 severely underserved zip codes sought service in their respective zip codes, they could receive no more than 10 hours per year” (Fette et al., 2014, p. 8).

Importance of Adult Education

In addition to the gap analysis, the capstone also performed a cost-benefit analysis of adult education in Houston. The team chose to concentrate on the benefits of literacy that can be monetized, including lifetime earnings and increased tax revenue (Fette et al., 2014, p. 12). The 2011 and 2012 ACS data reveal an 18 year-old Houston woman with a GED/high school equivalency will earn \$2,645 more in a year than an 18 year-old woman without a GED/high school equivalency (Fette et al., 2014, 13). Her male counterpart will earn \$2,514 more per year (Fette et al., 2014, 13). These wage gaps increase as a per-

son ages until age 50, where the wage gap decreases (Fette et al., 2014, 13). Obtaining a GED/high school equivalency increases both the wages per year and the probability of employment, so the state can expect increased tax revenue as well (Fette et al., 2014, 16); an 18 year-old male will pay an estimated \$17,000 more in taxes (Fette et al., 2014, 2). Citing both individual and social benefits from improved literacy levels, the capstone recommends continued investment in adult education with a special focus on young adults, as the individual and social benefits accrue over the course of a lifetime. For example, over his lifetime, an 18 year-old male with a GED/high school equivalency can expect to earn \$230,000 more than his counterpart who has no high school diploma (Fette et al., 2014, 19).

Next Steps for Houston Center for Literacy

The capstone team's report provided several recommendations to Houston Center for Literacy for the path forward for the city, addressing both service provision and data collection. Houston Center for Literacy will use the capstone information to:

- Increase capacity at existing providers and reach out to potential partners to build capacity in high-needs areas,
- Increase outreach to young adult learners, and
- Identify and collect strong and consistent data, including financial information, volunteer hours and contact hours to inform policy discussions and ROI.

The partnership between the Bush School of Government and Public Service and Houston Center for Literacy proved mutually beneficial. The students gained experience working on a project that has the potential to affect thousands, and Houston Center for Literacy gained important information about the literacy landscape of Houston and a framework for collecting consistent data to accurately address the literacy needs in Houston. A similar partnership between literacy providers and institutions of higher education across the state may produce similar results – a more accurate literacy landscape and recommendations to improve literacy provision.

Resource

Fette, N., Jahedkar, S., Riley, M. C., Shafiezadeh, H., Sun, L., Yan, S. (2014). *The Case for Investing in Adult Literacy: A Report on Needs,*

Benefits and Costs. Bush School of Government and Public Service, College Station, TX.

About the Authors

Sheri Foreman Elder is the President and Chief Executive Officer of Houston Center for Literacy.

Molly Beck is a graduate student at the Bush School for Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. She is the advocacy intern for Houston Center for Literacy.

Effective Transitions in Adult Education Conference 2014

The National College Transition Network at World Education, Inc. will hold its eighth annual national conference on Effective Transitions in Adult Education on **November 12 - 14, 2014** at the Crowne Plaza at the Crossings, Providence, RI.

The Effective Transitions Conference is held every year and is geared towards adult and postsecondary educators and administrators. Workshop topics include promising practices for career pathways and ESOL/ESL programs, preparing students for college-level reading, writing, and math, building student self-efficacy, and more.

Last year over 550 adult and postsecondary administrators and educators from 42 states, representing postsecondary institutions, school districts, community based organizations and at least 200,000 adult learners, participated in our annual conference.

Learn more or register here:
<http://www.collegetransition.org/conferences.national2014.html>



Career Pathways & College Transitions for Adults

Assessing for Fit: Screening and Selecting Students for College Transitions Programs

by Charlene Gill

Ensuring a student's fitness for and dedication to a college transitions program is an art. When I meet colleagues at conferences and they learn I have a transitions program, one of the questions I am asked perhaps more than any other is, "How do you select your students?" Students themselves often ask this question too, and indeed this is *the* question for anyone working in a transitions program: How will you assess which students are the best fit for your program?

Though there is admittedly a great deal of intuition or "gut" involved in selecting students, there are also specific processes that a program leader can implement to attract the best students. We have discovered three simple but powerful processes that have helped us to successfully answer this question: an admission application, submission deadline, and interview.

1) APPLICATION

Students must submit an application to be considered for admission. Students access this application electronically via our webpage. The application requests basic information (such as name, address, D.O.B., etc.), but it also includes short essay questions that assess the student's interest in the program and their ability to complete college-level work. Students who do not answer these questions or who give a haphazard, lackadaisical answer are eliminated. We also wanted to assess the students' ability to participate in a 20-hour per week program. Thus, we include questions on the application regarding other academic experiences, such as participation in GED classes or other certification programs.

The Value

The applications reveal a great deal about the applicants. Students who sloppily enter information,

misspell many words, omit questions, or fail to punctuate sentences illustrate that they did not take the application seriously. Spelling and grammar errors will obviously occur, but it is easy to discern a serious student who simply made errors from a sloppy, hurried student who could not be bothered to take the time to check his/her work. Conversely, students who take the time to write thorough, honest, intelligent responses distinguish themselves from their peers. The electronic application (particularly if you devise it as a Google form downloadable into an Excel spreadsheet) also makes data entry infinitely faster; the students complete the data entry themselves.

2) SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Students must submit the admission application before the deadline each semester. We typically set our deadline for 3-4 weeks before the next program starts. Although we prefer to have several months for interviews, we have found that this particular group of students responds better to quicker turn-around times; thus, later deadlines have worked better for us.

The Value

- Provides students with a sense of urgency to apply NOW.
- Teaches students the importance of following instructions and heeding deadlines—crucial skills to attain, both for the college classroom and the work environment.
- Ensures program staff has adequate time to interview selected students before the program begins.
- Reminds students that the program is a serious, prestigious one for which they must compete for the honor of a seat. (Virtually all prestigious programs have deadlines, so your program should, too.)

3) INTERVIEW

Once students apply for the program, we must determine whom to interview. We use the following criteria:

- Submitted on time?
- Answered all questions thoughtfully and completely?
- Demonstrated his/her ability to attend the program for 15 hours per week for 12 weeks?
- Illustrated high level of motivation in and dedication to higher education?
- Raised no red flags? (Working 60 hours per week, living three cities away without access to transportation, sent five emails demanding to know when they will be accepted, etc.)

During the interview, we pose a list of pre-written questions to engage the student in a dialogue about themselves and their experiences and interest in the program.

The Value

The interview is undoubtedly the most valuable of the three processes. It reveals who each student truly is and what actually motivates them—above and beyond their mere representation on paper. It will tell you much about their ability to be successful in your program, such as:

- If he/she values punctuality.
- If he/she can follow instructions (such as bringing any required paperwork).
- If he/she will be a positive example for your program. (Students will share with others with-

in the college and community that they were a student in your program. This could either help or hurt you later...)

- If he/she balks at the time commitment required.
- If the student is personable and friendly. (If the student is demanding, rude, ungrateful, or disagreeable while interviewing, they won't likely become kind and agreeable *all semester* as they interact with teachers, staff, and students.)

Implementing these processes admittedly required time and effort on our part, but it has proven well worth the investment. When we first began our program in 2010, we had only a few more applicants than seats; now, we get 3-4 times as many applicants as seats every semester. This increase in the applicant pool makes it more difficult to decide whom to accept, but we've found this is a good "problem" to have.

About the Author

Charlene Gill is the College and Career Readiness Coordinator for Austin Community College's Transitions Program. She has presented at local, regional, and national conferences on Adult and Developmental Education and College Transitions Program; she was a trainer for the Central GREAT Center and has taught university and community college writing and literature classes as well as developmental and GED courses.

Get in the Loop for Information and Networking on the TEXAS ADULT CAREER PATHWAYS Discussion List

This TCALL-sponsored discussion list is supported by Texas Workforce Commission and is open to all educators, local workforce development board professionals, and stakeholders involved or interested in workplace literacy, integrated education and training, and general adult learner transitions.

The purpose of this listserv is to share information about relevant professional development opportunities, free resources available through TCALL and other sources, funding opportunities, and trends in Adult Career Pathways around the state and nation.

For more information or to subscribe to this discussion list, visit the TCALL website at tcall.tamu.edu

Success Stories

Job-Training Programs Make Remediation Relevant

by Katherine Mangan, The Chronicle of Higher Education

A few years ago, Sheila Ortega was scrubbing floors at a local grocery store, a high-school dropout with no clear path out of poverty. Today Ms. Ortega, 23, has four certificates in manufacturing skills and big plans for the future.

Designed to solve two problems, the model was developed in Washington State as Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training, or I-BEST, and is now being adapted and tested at more than 150 community colleges nationwide. It challenges the traditional



Sheila Ortega, at work in a retail market in San Antonio, hopes to earn a degree after completing courses in the I-BEST program at the Alamo Colleges, which combines job training with remedial instruction.

What turned her around, she says, was a program here at the Alamo Colleges that caught her up on fundamentals while she worked toward her credentials. It combines developmental, or remedial, education with job training and intensive advising, so that even the least prepared students can quickly get certified for jobs that employers are trying to fill.

approach to developmental education, in which students must pass a series of courses in math, reading, and writing before moving on to credit-bearing work. The problem there, say educators who are pushing to streamline remediation, is that many students get discouraged and drop out before cracking their first college textbook.

I-BEST and its spinoffs let students jump right into job training by teaching academic skills, in practical terms, at the same time. For example, an aspiring pharmacy technician whose eyes glazed over in middle-school math might see the point when learning how to measure the correct dosage of an antibiotic for a 50-pound child. Same with the welding student calculating how many quarter-inch steel plates, at 10 pounds per square foot, he can safely load into a one-ton truck.

The nonprofit advocacy group Jobs for the Future coordinates a network of similar programs at 78 community colleges in seven states, and the results are encouraging. Students in Washington's highly structured program are three times as likely to earn college credit and nine times as likely to earn a work-force credential as their peers in traditional basic-skills programs, according to multiyear studies by the Community College Research Center at Columbia University's Teachers College.

Focusing on job-related skills in math and reading is more effective than "running students through a gantlet" of remedial coursework, says Davis Jenkins, a senior research associate there. "Many students, when challenged and supported, can succeed" in credit-bearing programs, he says.

The dual programs, however, are expensive and time-consuming to run—and may not attract enough students, the research center found. Another finding: When I-BEST serves as a bridge to a degree program, the compressed, embedded remediation isn't always enough for a successful leap to the more rigorous coursework required for, say, a certified nursing assistant to become a registered nurse.

While some associate- and bachelor's-degree programs have long incorporated subject-specific remedial work, the approach can be especially helpful, advocates say, for students who might otherwise start out in English as a Second Language programs or adult basic education. They tend to struggle most with traditional approaches to remediation.

It was a good fit for Ms. Ortega, who learned English after coming to San Antonio from Mexico in the fifth grade. She passed all but one of the exit tests—math—required to graduate from high school in Texas.

Demoralized, she dropped out and started working as a cleaner at the grocery store. She got a high-school-equivalency diploma and temporary work authoriza-

tion under President Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals plan, but her mother kept encouraging her to go to college. "I was like, 'No way, it's not for me,'" says Ms. Ortega. "Even the word 'college' terrified me."

Her mother, undeterred, drove her to the Alamo Colleges' work-force-training center to check out a traditional pharmacy-technician program. When counselors there described the I-BEST alternative, including the academic support she badly needed, she signed up.

Fast Track, High Touch

Ms. Ortega enrolled in April, and this month she donned a cap and gown to collect certificates for an introductory course in logistics, as well as courses in supply-chain, transportation, and warehouse management. If her application for financial aid is successful, she'll start building on those skills this fall in an associate-degree program in logistics—followed, she hopes, by a bachelor's degree.

"I can move up quickly and be a manager by the time I'm 27," she says. "With a degree, I could become a CEO."

A typical work-force sequence in Alamo's five-college system involves three semesters of noncredit developmental classes followed by two semesters of technical training. The I-BEST route cuts that to two semesters, after an "on ramp" of up to seven weeks of intensive remedial instruction.

To qualify, students generally have to score below eighth-grade level on a basic skills assessment. They go from the remedial courses to about two months of integrated technical training and basic-skills instruction, during which they can earn a GED as well as credentials in such skills as forklift operating or phlebotomy. The result, educators at Alamo hope, is a quicker, less slippery path to a decent-paying entry-level job.

Alamo is one of 21 college districts in Texas that get support for similar programs from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Accelerate Texas program. And people here are optimistic. Among students who start out in adult basic education in Texas, fewer than 6 percent enroll the next year in college-level classes, says Linda Muñoz, who directs Accelerate Texas. An exact comparison isn't available, but those who complete certificates through I-BEST, many of whom would otherwise have gone through traditional

basic-skills courses, have better odds of success. The following semester, about three-quarters of them are either employed or still in college.

During a recent introductory-logistics class at Alamo's Palo Alto campus, Ms. Ortega gives a spirited PowerPoint presentation assessing shipping options for Amazon.com. Listening in are her two instructors: I-BEST courses are designed and taught by duos, with one person focused on job training and the other on basic skills. For this course, Nonie Cabana, an adjunct instructor of logistics, and Jennifer J. Osborn, a college- and career-readiness instructor, meet for 30 minutes before or after each class, reviewing slides and coming up with vocabulary and math exercises to support the technical training.

Later in the class, students take turns guessing, based on their classmates' clues, the meaning of terms like "procurement," "eminent domain," and "dunnage." Math lessons for future warehouse clerks and transportation coordinators include metric conversions and calculations of the time it takes to travel various distances at different speeds.

Between lessons, Ms. Osborn talks with students about stress and burnout at home, at school, and on the job. The mother of five, who is enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of the Incarnate Word, freely shares anecdotes of being fired from a job, sleeping in her car, and bartending to make ends meet. "I look now at wow, how I've changed," she tells the students. "You can have that same feeling."

The Alamo program's student-success coordinator, Stephanie Coats, frequently stops by to offer encouragement and hugs. When a homeless student showed up exhausted and filthy, she found him a bed at a local shelter. To reassure another student convinced that he'd never find work, she tracked down an employer willing to hire ex-offenders.

"I try to be a cheerleader for them and let them know they're not alone," says Ms. Coats. "I remind them that everyone's struggling, and that we're going to hook you up with the help you need so you can stay in school."

The personal touch that the program relies on doesn't come cheap. At Alamo Colleges, the general student-to-adviser ratio is more than 350 to 1. For the 200 or so students in I-BEST during a given semester, it's 66 to 1. That, along with paying two instructors for a single course, can be an obstacle for community col-

leges at a time when state appropriations are down and enrollment in the sector is shrinking.

Concerns About Tracking

Such programs are cost-effective, declares Louisa Erickson. They take people who would pay a nominal fee for adult-basic education or English as a Second Language and convert them into regular, tuition-paying students. As the lead staff member for I-BEST at the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Ms. Erickson helped develop the model, working with officials at two-year colleges. She and her team have since advised educators in more than 20 states seeking to create their own versions.

One challenge: getting basic-skills and technical instructors to collaborate. That involves not only bridging a cultural divide, she says, but also convincing the technical instructors that students are capable of the work.

Some developmental educators also have doubts about a model that's being widely but loosely copied.

While Washington's I-BEST has produced impressive results, colleges that cut corners could perpetuate class divisions in higher education, says Hunter R. Boylan, a professor of higher education and director of the National Center for Developmental Education at Appalachian State University.

He doesn't want to see spinoff programs become a "dumping ground for students who traditionally have difficulty in college—minorities and the poor," he wrote in an email to *The Chronicle*. "Low-scoring students might be tracked into vocational/technical/career programs," he said, while others would have more opportunities to earn bachelor's degrees.

But some students don't see it as an either-or. Pablo Aguilar, 36, finished Alamo's I-BEST program this month with a handful of industry certifications as well as credits toward an associate degree in business management, which he plans to start in the fall.

Mr. Aguilar tried college at 19 but wasn't ready for it, he says. Now a father of two working a warehouse job, he realized he'd never make more than \$10 an hour unless he educated himself. He also wants to give employers a reason to overlook the three years he spent behind bars for drunk driving.

"This program has given me a second chance," he says, "and I'm going to run with it."

Impact Profile of Lacey Bowman: Accelerating to College and Career Success

Reprint permission from Jobs for the Future

Accelerate TEXAS programs integrate education in basic skills with career and technical pathways to help adult students acquire skills and certificates in high-demand occupations. Here is a success story of a woman who earned a GED and learned welding at Victoria College's Accelerate TEXAS program, then continued her education to pursue an advanced welding certificate at the community college.

All Lacey Bowman wanted at age 29 was a cashier job at a convenience store to help support her family, but not a single store was interested. After months of rejections, Lacey visited a workforce training center in South Texas and quickly learned what was wrong—she had little work experience and no high school diploma.

But Lacey resolved to fix the problem and set her sights even higher. A year later, Lacey has earned a GED and become a trained welder. She continues to attend college and is only a semester away from completing an advanced welding certificate. Now she faces much sunnier prospects—a starting hourly wage of \$15 to \$20 that typically rises to \$30 to \$50 in the region's booming oil and natural gas industry.

Lacey came to see brighter possibilities for her future through Accelerate TEXAS, a statewide initiative that helps adults jump-start careers through free basic skills courses integrated with practical job training and guidance into career pathways. Accelerate TEXAS works to achieve the state's Closing the Gap goals by delivering integrated adult education and career training; the initiative has already engaged over 3,800 adults in programs leading to certificates in key industry sectors. Jobs for the Future supports the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in running Accelerate TEXAS by providing teaching and capacity-building assistance.

"I knew it was something I had to do no matter how hard it was," says Lacey, who lives in Victoria, Texas, with her boyfriend and two children, ages 7 and 10. "The only way I was going to be able to get a job was if I got some work experience under my belt. But I couldn't get hired and gain experience because I

didn't even have a GED."

Lacey qualified for the SAIL (Students Accelerating through Integrated Learning) program at Victoria College where students can choose to become a certified nurse aide, electrician, truck driver, or welder—at no cost.

"The SAIL courses help students improve their reading, writing, math, and/or English-language skills to succeed on the GED," says Tiffany Johnson, director of Victoria College's Adult Education Center. "But the program goes a step further by offering training matched with local labor market needs. Having these skills opens doors for our students and generates momentum for pursuing higher career opportunities."

Victoria College is one of 13 community colleges and 8 college districts offering Accelerate TEXAS programs in response to growing demand for adult education and career services. JFF has expanded op-



portunities by using an innovative institutional mentor system. Rather than singularly constructing the program at each participating college, Accelerate TEXAS recognized the superior efforts and strong results of a group of “5-Star” colleges, and leveraged their work to mentor a new round of grantees. Victoria College, for example, receives peer coaching from Alamo Colleges, which are based in San Antonio. This mentorship model helps drive and scale the program’s adoption throughout the state. In turn, JFF provides technical assistance, policy support, and strategic advice and communications. Through Accelerate TEXAS, 2,300 adults earned occupational certificates, and about 350 students have earned a GED between 2010 and 2013.

Though Lacey did well on a practice GED exam in spring 2013, she wanted to brush up on math to pass the real exam. With SAIL’s support and resources, Lacey turned out to be the top GED scorer in the south region of Texas and she won \$3,200 in scholarship funds from the Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education to help pay for her college classes in advanced welding.

Growing up, Lacey had always envisioned attending college but ended up leaving high school due to peer-related problems. She became a mother of two shortly after, leaving her with limited time and resources to pursue her education. It wasn’t until the SAIL program presented her with the opportunity to obtain a professional certificate that she decided to fulfill her dreams of going to college.

“Within one year, Accelerate TEXAS helped me get

from zero job prospects, to a college education and a family-supporting career,” Lacey said. “It created pathways for me that I didn’t even know were possible.”

Today, Lacey has a straight-A college average and feels confident enrolling in blueprint reading and machine shop math classes. Director Johnson says she is a role model to many. Lacey frequently visits the SAIL program to share her experiences and inspires adults who are struggling the way she was.

Lacey is also determined to keep her children motivated to complete high school and beyond. “A year ago, I didn’t have anything going for me at all,” Lacey says. “Now looking back at what I’ve accomplished, it’s mind boggling.... I feel very accomplished. And I feel myself holding my head higher now.”

Accelerate TEXAS addresses a critical workforce issue: At least 60 percent of Texas jobs will require a career certificate or college degree by 2020, according to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. And 44 percent of Texans over age 25 have never been to college, let alone earned a credential. Most Accelerate TEXAS students are pursuing credentials in health care, manufacturing, construction, and transportation.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board funds and coordinates Accelerate TEXAS. Jobs for the Future provides technical assistance, policy, and communication support. The Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University provides evaluation and peer-learning support.

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Building Collaboration & Program Improvement

Breaking the Code: Making Collaboration Work

by Barbara Tondre-El Zorkani

Adult education and its workforce partners in Texas are on the cusp of enhancing their relationships for the greater good: Texas workers. However, workforce development never occurs in a vacuum. It requires educators, trainers, employers, and funders to travel outside their comfort zones and organizations. Collaboration can be an exciting experience, or a collaborative failure. What is key to making alliances succeed? How do we plan for collaborative success?

With more than 25 years of experience in strategic planning, workforce development policy, and public/private partnerships, Mary Crabbe Gershwin, former director of System Planning and Strategic Initiatives at the Colorado Community College and Occupational Education System, has done extensive study of exemplary collaborations. She provides us with some key insights and preliminary questions as we venture further into new and in-depth relationships between adult education and our workforce partners. Collaborators who deal with these questions early on may be able to break the code to making collaboration succeed.

#1: Collaboration is a Relationship

We know that people in adult education, workforce development, community colleges, and the business world have different perspectives on the value of collaboration. Oftentimes, organizations carry with them reputations that impact collaborative activity. Is your organization known for always following through for its successful partnerships, or are you the new kid on the block? Is another organization known for being too controlling, unfocused, or for always grabbing credit for work done? Reputations follow organizations, so it is important to know how you are viewed and how those with whom you collaborate are viewed as well. To avoid sabotage, be prepared to address early on a variety of attitudes and perceptions that must be acknowledged.

#2: Collaborators are Negotiators

During wartime, collaboration was often viewed as “working with the enemy.” However, as funds diminish and alliances are a must, we have learned to embrace a positive process of partnering to assess needs and design solutions. A partnering approach empowers us to serve both learners and employers. Equally important is the fact that partnerships, negotiations, and collaboration must serve both the other and our own organization in order to succeed. Enduring collaboratives should not be sacrificial for one party and opportunistic to another. Be honest about your organization’s needs. Get them on the table as early as possible.

The best collaborators understand the tension between their organization’s interests and agenda and those of their partners. Choosing good partners is a challenge, in addition to understanding that the reputation of our own organization is at risk when we come to the collaborative table. We want to make certain our commitments and reputations remain positive.

Finally, be prepared for some resistance.

Collaboration and partnerships can have multiple meanings within each organization. Rather than becoming frustrated, work to build organizational support for each collaborative effort. Commit to breaking the code and moving forward in effective, collaborative partnerships.

About the Author

Barbara Tondre-El Zorkani is an educational consultant for adult education and workforce development. Her work promotes promising practices and highlights issues and concerns related to meeting the needs of Texas’ emerging, incumbent, and displaced workers. btondre@earthlink.net

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Handbook for Sustaining Standards-Based Education in Adult Education. Pimentel, Susan (2014). Washington, DC: Literacy Information and Communication System. The purpose of this handbook is to help state leaders improve the odds of generating sustained organizational support for standards-based reforms, so that leaders can develop long-lasting roots for promising reforms and propagate them system-wide. The handbook presents a strategic framework, based on significant research, to assist with the full implementation of effective reforms in adult education programs that may otherwise be resistant to instructional and curricular transformations. The framework identifies four over-lapping and interconnected stages for innovation advocates to move through to achieve long-term sustainability for their standards-based reform. The handbook is organized around the four stages of the sustainability framework and includes completed sustainability materials.

Invitation to a Roundtable: A Discussion of Return on Investment in Adult Education. Parker, James and Spangenberg, Gail (March 2014). New York, NY: Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy. This paper is a report on an invitational Roundtable of state and national leaders held by CAAL in New York City on November 8th. The report uses a format that gives readers a close-up look at the contents of the day's conversation and the next-step recommendations that flowed from the discussion. The main body of the report is 23 pages long. Appendices include a participant listing, a collection of ROI resources, and selected materials presented at the Roundtable. Invitation to a Roundtable is a companion publication to a report published last September by CAAL, *Stepping Up to ROI in Adult Education: A Survey of State Activity* (cataloged as a separate title in TCALL's library).

Measuring Alternative Educational Credentials: 2012. Ewert, Stephanie and Kominski, Robert (January 2014). Washington, DC: U. S. Census Bureau. The U.S. Census Bureau released this report stating that, as of fall 2012, more than 50 million U.S.

adults (about 25 percent of the adult population) had received a professional certification, license, or educational certificate that was not a degree awarded by a college or university. Of the awardees, some 34 million had a professional certification or license, 7 million had an educational certificate, and 12 million had received both a professional certification or license and an educational certificate. The report lists the content areas of the certificates and the comparison of employment of certificate holders vs. college degrees.

Media Library of Teaching Skills for Adult Learning and Literacy. Rosen, David J. and Hartford, Owen (2007). Unknown: Online. The Media Library of Teaching Skills for adult learning and literacy project is a free, online, digital library of short videos of adult education teachers and their classes or tutorials, intended for use in professional development. Each video is an example of a state-approved content standard, research-based practice, preferred approach, or specific teaching method or skill. In some cases these are examples in practice of a particular state's approved curriculum frameworks or content standards. The videos are best viewed in Safari, Firefox, or Chrome browsers. There is a problem when viewing in Internet Explorer.

Net Annual Fiscal Contributions of US Adults Aged 18-64 by Education Attainment, 2009-2012. Center for Labor Market Studies (January 2014). New York, NY: Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy. This report analyzes the fiscal gains to the nation and to individuals of high school and college graduation for adults aged 18-64. It also presents aggregated and state-by-state data for 15 states : CA, CO, FL, IL, KY, MD, MI, MN, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, TX, and VA.

Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012: U.S. Main Study Technical Report. Hogan, Jacque and et.al

HOW DOES THIS MAIL ORDER LENDING LIBRARY WORK?

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(April 2014). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012: U.S. Main Study Technical Report is a technical manual that describes how the U.S. data were collected and processed as well as how to use the data files to conduct statistical analyses. The appendices of the Technical Report include background questionnaire, data collection materials, analysis tables, response rates, technical notes, and data user guidance.

Program Monitoring: The Role of Leadership in Planning, Assessment, and Communication.

Malone, Nolan and Mark, Lauren and Miller, Kirsten and Kekahio, Wendy (May 2014). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. This guide, one in a four-part series on logic models, examines three components of program monitoring—planning, assessment, and communication—and identifies key measures of successful leadership for each component.

Readiness Matters: The Impact of College Readiness on College Persistence and Degree Completion. ACT Research and Policy (February 2013). Iowa City, IA: ACT Research and Policy. This study examines the impact of college readiness on success from four perspectives: (1) academic preparation in high school, (2) using multiple measures to determine readiness, (3) college readiness as a means of reducing gaps between ethnic and racial groups and across income levels, and (4) the effects of early mentoring on college- and career-readiness.

Teachers' Ability to Use Data to Inform Instruction: Challenges and Supports. Means, Barbara and Chen, Eva and DeBarger, Angela and Padilla, Christine (February 2011). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. A study of Education Data Systems and Decision Making found

that teachers' likelihood of using data in decision making is affected by how confident they feel about their knowledge and skills in data analysis and data interpretation (U.S. Department of Education 2008). Unfortunately, teacher training programs generally have not addressed data skills and data-informed decision-making processes. Understanding the nature of teachers' proficiencies and difficulties in data use is important for providing appropriate training and support to teachers, because they are expected to use student data as a basis for improving the effectiveness of their practice.

Unlocking the Gate: What We Know about Improving Developmental Education. Rutschow, Elizabeth Zachry and Schneider, Emily (June 2011). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. This report provides a critical review of the research literature on developmental education (DE). The authors look at the research and studies and provide an extended discussion of their rationale for the focus of the studies. They discuss interventions in teaching and other activities that could affect developmental education.

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The Change Agent Issue 38: Immigration.

Peters, Cynthia, Editor (March 2014). Boston, MA: New England Literacy Resource Center. This issue explores immigration. Immigrants share inspiring, courageous, and sometimes heartbreaking stories of their journeys to the U.S. Non-immigrants provide their perspective as people in "receiving" communities, who are affected by new waves of immigrants. Political refugees, economic refugees, and immigrants "following their heart" detail what "pushed" and what "pulled" them to come to the U.S. The struggles of parents and children who get separated due to migration will resonate with readers, as will the stories of parents raising bicultural children. Articles, cartoons, charts and graphs explore U.S. immigration policy, citizenship statistics, the rise of immigrant entrepreneurs, and current global migration patterns. This issue also explores micro and macro issues related to immigrants in the workplace. Analytical articles and side bars on everything from labor law to free trade policies provide a larger context. Online availability: <http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent/>

Financial Literacy and Adult Education. Forte, Karin Sprow and Taylor, Edward W. and Tisdell, Elizabeth J., Editors (2014). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. Number 141 in the New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education series. From the Editor: Financial knowledge and experience influence our decisions all day, every day. Your choice of a 99-cent cup of coffee, a five-dollar espresso drink, or nothing at all is based on any number of external factors, but also on your knowledge of your financial situation, available cash or fund, and planned expenditures. Many adults attend financial education classes to help them better understand this kind of decision making, and to give these classes the attention they deserve, we are bringing together scholars from the fields of adult education and financial literacy. The authors present a series of

chapters on topics that reveal the interrelatedness of the two fields. They show how concepts and knowledge about adult education can be utilized in and illuminate financial education, and they offer insights about how financial education, as an eminently practical subject, shows adults learning and putting their new knowledge into action.

Financial Literacy: Timeless Concepts to Turn Financial Chaos into Clarity. Kunkler, Duke (2013). USA: Lawrence Kunkler. From this book, the teacher will learn how to teach their students about financial concepts, investing concepts, stock investing mechanics, and financial mechanics.

Foundations of Education Research: Understanding Theoretical Components. Egbert, Joy and Sanden, Sherry (2014). New York, NY: Routledge. Beginning each chapter with perspectives from both novice and experienced researchers, this book is designed to help students achieve a deeper understanding of what is expected of them and ideas about how to achieve it. Guiding questions from both perspectives can assist researchers who are engaging with theory for the first time and those looking to improve their understanding of the fundamentals. Practice exercises and suggested reading lists at the end of each chapter offer students resources they can apply to their own research and thinking in concrete ways.

Leading the e-Learning Transformation of Higher Education: Meeting the Challenges of Technology and Distance Education. Miller, Gary and Benke, Meg and Chaloux, Bruce and et al (2014). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC. This book is a professional text that offers insights and guidance to the rising generation of leaders in the field of higher education. It explains how to integrate online learning into an

institution during a period of rapid social and institutional change.

Never Underestimate your Teachers: Instructional Leadership for Excellence in Every Classroom. Jackson, Robyn R. (2013). ASCD: Alexandria, VA. In this book for school leaders, the author presents a new model for understanding teaching as a combination of skill and will and explains the best ways to support individual teachers ongoing professional development. You'll learn how to meet your teachers where they are and help every one of them from the novice to the veteran. Real-life examples, practical tools, and strategies for managing time and energy demands will help you build your leadership capacity as you raise the level of instructional excellence throughout your school.

New GED® Test Strategies, Practice, and Review, Eleventh Edition. Van Slyke, Caren (2014). New York, NY: Kaplan Publishing. This all-in-one guide provides comprehensive content review, strategies, and practice for all question types, topics and sections of the 2014 GED® test. The book includes over 1,000 practice questions with detailed answer explanations, a full length practice test, and review of all content areas with test tips in every lesson. An online practice test is available for purchase.

Planning Programs for Adult Learners: A Practical Guide, Third Edition. Caffarella, Rosemary S. and Daffron, Sandra Ratcliff (2013). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. The third edition of this guide covers the development of adult education programs and contains information on every area of program planning for adult learners, from understanding the purpose of educational programs to obtaining suitable facilities to incorporating technology appropriately.

Scoreboost for the 2014 GED Test: Mathematics, Writing, and Thinking Skills. Lipke, Terrie, Editor (2013). Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press. Written at reading grade level 8-10, these workbooks cover three critical areas for success on the 2014 Series Tests. Four mathematics workbooks are included: Fractions, Decimals, Percents, and Proportions; Measurement and Geometry; Graphs, Data Analysis,

and Probability; and Algebraic Reasoning. Two writing workbooks include Responding to Text on the Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science Tests as well as Sentence Structure, Usage, and Mechanics. The two Thinking Skills workbooks include Critical Thinking for Reading, Science, and Social Studies plus Data and Graphic Skills for Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

Teaching Adults: A 2014 GED® Test Resource Book. Farrell, Meagen (2014). Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press. This resource guide for GED test preparation instructors provides an overview of new 2014 GED Test, a description of new test item types, addresses the needs of adult learners, provides activities for each subject area as well as interdisciplinary activities for use in all classes.

Why Teach? In Defense of a Real Education. Edmundson, Mark (2013). New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA. The author laments the erosion of a college education from a search for learning and meaning in life to a search for career training, online courses, and inflated grades. Exploring education's changes in recent decades from a purely intellectual pursuit to one that is commercially driven, Edmundson points to demographic and market forces, including the decline in birthrates since the baby boom and the incredible competition for students that has resulted in treating students as consumers. As professors and colleges feel compelled to keep their customers happy, there is a decidedly adverse impact on the quality of education, with less emphasis on the philosophical and more on the practical or even the entertaining. He ends each essay with a declaration to fight against the trend. With literary references spanning from Homer to Joyce Carol Oates, Edmundson's essays are filled with ideals, recollections, and poetry.

Writing for the GED® Test. Oddy, Beth, Editor (2014). Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press. Instruction books to help students with the language and writing skills needed to develop constructed responses on the new GED® test. The set includes 3 books: Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics; Reading Comprehension; and Extended Response and Short Answers.

Texas Adult Education & Literacy Quarterly is a publication of the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy & Learning (TCALL) at Texas A&M University. **The Quarterly** is dedicated to advancing the knowledge in the field by addressing topics of concern to adult education and literacy practitioners, policymakers, and scholars. Topics include but are not limited to methods and innovations in teaching and learning reading, writing, and numeracy; second language learning; family literacy; workforce literacy; transitions to post-secondary education and job training; learning technologies; health, financial, and civic literacy; and the professional development of practitioners.

Email subscriptions are free to teachers, students, administrators, program coordinators, researchers, literacy volunteers, adult education's partners in the Workforce Development system, and others interested in the fields of adult and family literacy.

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