

*Sample: provided for guidance only.*

**Standard (a)1. Incorporates theories of and research in adult development in designing effective instruction appropriate to the learning environment (e.g., in the classroom, workplace, homeless shelter).**

Evidentiary Documentation:

Attached under Appendix \_\_\_\_\_ is a set of lesson plans on understanding and responding to poetry.

Explanatory Statements:

1. **Developmental theory applied in these lesson plans.** The underpinning of my teaching is an integration of Paulo Freire's concepts of popular education with Jack Mezirow's concepts of development as a lifelong process and Robert Kegan's emphasis on the growing importance of higher order skills in adult development. Freire states that an educator should be an "animator" rather than an instructor. Rather than directly teaching to passive students who merely receive and store the information, the animator provides learners with opportunities for cognition – that is, the animator creates an environment within which students can learn. This includes teaching, to be sure, but it also and perhaps more importantly involves helping students to trust themselves and each other, to value their own experience and insights, and to bring their strengths rather than merely their deficits to the process. In addition, Freire's popular education is education directed toward social change. It seeks "to build the capacity for democratic social change through education," to promote in its participants a "social transformation toward full human participation in society." (John Hurst, "Education: A Powerful Tool," in *Educator*, Spring 1995) Its methods as well as its philosophy are democratic. Non-traditional teaching methods that promote both collective experience and different ways of individual learning– for example, drama, music, movement, action and research outside the classroom, individual and group reflection – are an integral part of popular education pedagogy.

Mezirow and Kegan both argue that development is lifelong, and that adult tasks of development make their needs as learners different from those of children or adolescents. Mezirow, for example, notes that a focal point for adult learners is "reflecting back on prior learning to determine whether what we have learned is justified under present circumstances." (*Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1990, p.5). In addition, Kegan emphasizes the particular importance for adults of grappling with the question of **how** they know what they know. Contemporary culture, he says, makes tremendous demands on adults for flexibility of mind, complexity of consciousness, and ability to navigate contradictory information from competing informants. "The expectations upon us," Kegan insists, "demand something more than mere behavior, the acquisition of specific skills, or the mastery of particular knowledge. They make demands on *how* we know, on the complexity of our consciousness" (*In Over Our Heads*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Ma, 1994, p. 5, emphasis in original). Adult learners, Kegan says, must "assert [their] own authority over the information" that surrounds them. (5-6) This is, he adds, a **qualitative** mental change for adults.

2. **Why these theories were used in these lesson plans.** I employ these theories of adult development in my classroom planning and teaching because I believe they point to profoundly important development goals in both personal and social settings. The vast majority of my students initially have little ability to judge critically the information they are inundated with in their daily lives. Many have simply withdrawn from a cascade they fear could drown them, isolating themselves from political or community activities: "Why should I vote (or read the newspaper, or watch the news)? It doesn't matter, politicians (or reporters or newscasters) are all the same, and they all lie." They have little belief in their ability to understand issues or to discriminate among competing viewpoints. I mention this in a social context here, but it applies to all their learning. Most of my students believe that it will be sufficient, in Kegan's words, to learn specific skills or master particular knowledge. Adult learning, in my opinion, is not only about learning, but also about developing an adult approach to the world and the self. Many students

enter our classes with limited perceptions of themselves in both contexts. The theories on which I depend for my teaching insist that in order to change one, we must also help our students to change the other. This learning is, of course, necessary, but in my classroom it is far from sufficient. Therefore, in my classroom students play an active role in the construction of their own knowledge and take responsibility for it.

**3. How these theories were employed in these lesson plans.** To give an example of how I employ these theories, in my writing class (GLE 4-6), students construct their own definition of and rubric for evaluating good writing. We eliminate issues of grammar from this process, both because of students' tendency to focus too much on it and their relatively limited ability to evaluate it. Rather, we read a short piece of writing and brainstorm the qualities that make it good. This "opportunity for cognition," as Freire would call it, also gives students an early taste of a democratically organized classroom, in which their own insights determine and guide their goals. I turn their decisions about good writing into a rubric with descriptions and benchmarks that we all subsequently agree on, and students then keep a copy of the rubric in their notebooks. Deciding for themselves what qualities make good writing, and developing the confidence that they can themselves discern these qualities, is a Freirean approach to developing Kegan's higher order skills. Students are then far more empowered to take on the risks of actually trying to produce good quality writing. Then, both throughout and at the end of the term, I am able to work with students individually to evaluate their writing according to criteria that they have constructed and take responsibility for.

**Standard (a)2. Incorporates theories of and research in adult learning and learning disabilities in designing effective instruction appropriate to the learning environment.**

Evidentiary Documentation:

Included under Appendix \_\_\_\_\_ is a set of lesson plans on understanding and responding to poetry.

Explanatory Statements:

1) **Theory or concept or principle used in the design of instruction.** I teach poetry for several reasons: first, because the curriculum for my writing class requires that students be able to read and write poetry when they leave the class and GED-bound students must understand poetry for the GED test; second, because studying poetry is an extremely effective way of forcing students' attention to the importance of every word in a piece of writing; and third, because success with poetry, so long an educational bogeyman, is a powerful boost to students' self-esteem and enables them to approach other learning more confidently.

First and foremost, I rely on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences as one of the foundations for all of my teaching. Traditional education emphasizes learning through language, both written and oral, and through numbers and mathematical concepts. For many people, however, these are not the natural ways in which their minds work. Most of us know people who appear to learn and process information through active work with their hands or bodies, or who express themselves best through music or art. In his theory of multiple intelligences, Howard Gardner suggests that these are not merely talents, but are fundamental to the organization of people's brains, and that they are, in fact, preferential ways in which individuals learn. I also rely on Renate Nummela Caine and Geoffrey Caine's *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994). Drawing on Vygotsky's theory of social learning (*Mind in Society*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), they emphasize research showing that for students, "new items become meaningful quickly, by virtue of their being packaged in relevant, complex, and highly socially interactive experiences." (47) In addition, I find that my own experience dovetails with the findings of the NCSALL Adult Development Research Study on the importance of learner cohorts (Drago-Severson, Eleanor et al., "NCSALL Adult Development Research: The Power of a Cohort and of Collaborative Groups," in *Focus on Basics*, Volume 5, Issue B., October 2001. Boston MA: World Education and NCSALL).

2) **Why this theory or concept or principle was used in the design of instruction.**

Gardner's theory suggests that learning for individuals will take place best when their strongest intelligences are engaged, and that learning for all takes place best when a number of intelligences are involved to integrate and reinforce what is being learned. The multiple intelligences theory currently posits eight intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. Individuals normally possess all eight, but abilities within each intelligence differ widely both as to strength and area. Someone with high spatial intelligence may be a gifted artist but unable to read or interpret a map. My experience has demonstrated success in both creating a safe and stimulating environment for student writers and improving their skills by combining what is possible of Gardner's theories with those of the Caines on the importance of relevance, complexity, and social interactivity and Kegan on the power of cohorts for adult learners.

3) **How this theory or concept or principle was used in the design of instruction.** In my teaching, I begin almost all lessons with students' prior knowledge and experience as a way of making what we are about to do relevant to them. For example, in my "Apple Poetry" lesson plan, students first think about their own experiences (engaging their intrapersonal intelligence) that revolve around apples. They then discuss these with a partner, adding social interaction (using their interpersonal intelligence) to their memories. During this time, they are actually holding an apple, engaging both spatial and kinesthetic intelligences along with linguistic as they speak and listen. These same activities continue through the lesson as they consider the words of the poem

(linguistic intelligence), visualize the image in the poem (spatial intelligence) and cut the apple into the appropriate pieces (kinesthetic intelligence). This process is extremely socially interactive, and because it involves translating an abstract image into a concrete object, it is also highly complex and challenging.

Likewise, in the "Skinny Poem" lesson, I begin from the shape of the poem, asking students to brainstorm other things they know that mirror its skinny shape. We show, handle, and describe available items that fit into that category. From there we examine the poem, brainstorm vocabulary that applies to the items we have discussed, and develop and share our own poems. The poems' shapes, with only one or two words to a line (spatial intelligence), also reinforce the notion – a difficult one for many students – that poetry is written in short lines, unlike prose.

The "I'm From" poem lesson is entirely involved with students' own experiences – what could be more relevant to them? This is a deeply intrapersonal activity, asking students to reflect on their own experiences and transform them into poetry. It becomes interpersonal, however, when students share their poems with their classmates. This is always an extremely moving and powerful experience which goes far toward creating the strength of the student cohort.

#### **4) How the design of instruction is appropriate for students with learning disabilities.**

According to the *Young Adults with Learning Disabilities (YALD) manual, Do my ESOL Students Have Learning Disabilities?* (Pittsfield, MA: Western MA YALD Project, 1998) "Learning Disabilities are a group of disorders of presumed neurological origin, which interfere with the acquisition, integration and performance of verbal and/or non-verbal skills." (3) They list many issues that I see in many of my students: poor spelling, difficulty following directions, poor organization, poor memory, distractibility, and so on.

Although few of my students have been formally diagnosed, based on the YALD and other materials I have consulted, many could be classified as having learning disabilities. Nevertheless, with these lessons and others I have seen them learn, progress, and produce high-quality and moving pieces of writing. Most learning disability specialists emphasize the importance of multi-modal teaching, and I believe that the integration into my teaching of the multiple intelligences theory, along with the others I have mentioned, makes it particularly effective for students with learning disabilities. Classroom activities are relevant to learners by being based in their experience and their own work. They reduce distractibility by involving "several states of arousal" that the Caines insist is necessary for effective learning (34). Most important, they involve a variety of intelligences, allowing students with deficits in one area to compensate in others. Students whose imaginations are not stimulated by words, for example, may produce vivid image when they view or handle objects or pictures. Students who may not retain verbal or written instructions to add the **s** to third-person singular verbs may find that visual or movement-based matching exercises make this verb form memorable.

I believe that many of my students, in addition to whatever learning disabilities they may actually have, are the victims of what I call "teaching disability" – the tendency of much education to focus on "right" ways of learning, and to actually discourage students from developing the compensations and strategies that allow them to most easily assimilate new learning. My approach of creating safe, structured settings that reduce the anxiety and shame students may have felt previously over their difficulties in learning, and to offer and honor many ways of learning, is particularly effective. In addition, for learners who appear very cognitively challenged, and as good reinforcement for all, I supplement with the standard tools of direct instruction and frequent repetition and review.

**C5. Sets forth the learning objectives, instructional methods, and their rationale in the design of instruction and makes them available to colleagues and learners.**

Evidentiary documentation:

Appended under Appendix \_\_\_\_ is a series of lesson plans on understanding and responding to poetry. A meeting agenda is included under Appendix \_\_\_\_.

Explanatory statements:

1. **Why these learning objectives were employed.** The scope and sequence of the Writing course at the Community Learning Center (Appendix \_\_\_\_ ) requires students to be familiar with and produce writing in a variety of genres, including poetry. Poetry requires the close attention in both reading and writing that I encourage in my students, yet requires a minimum of time for reading. In this 4-6 GLE class, students are often poor readers; poetry provides text which is rich in meaning but which can be read in a minimum of time. It is also a genre which many students find intimidating. Giving them even the most rudimentary ability to understand and produce it often gives students a boost in self-confidence that carries over into other work.

2) **Why these instructional methods were employed.** Several poetry lesson plans are provided under Appendix \_\_\_\_\_. The instructional methods employed are derived in great measure from Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MI), and Mezirow's insistence on the powerful learning adults experience from reflection on past experience.

Gardner's MI theory helps us understand that the use of hands-on activities is not merely fun and novel for students, but also allows students to use intelligences other than the verbal one we teachers tend to rely on. For example, in one lesson called "Apple Poetry," students participate in a hands-on activity as they consider the imagery of a poem. Students at this level tend to be extremely concrete; imagery and inference are often difficult for them to grasp. By having them create in reality what appears as an image in the poem, students experience moving between the abstract and the concrete. In addition, MI theory would note that students are bringing kinesthetic, spatial, and naturalist intelligences to bear on this verbal problem.

The lesson plans also call for students to speak and listen in pairs, in small groups, and/or as a whole group. I want students to have their minds, emotions, and imaginations as active as possible for these lessons, which will all end in their writing individual poems. These students are much more facile in speech than in writing, and initial verbal sharing activates both prior knowledge and imagination by removing the block students often encounter when trying to write. Sharing in pairs enables even the shyest to participate, while small- and whole-group discussion produces richer reservoirs of material to work with in creating poems. MI theory tells us that these activities engage the interpersonal intelligence.

They also, of course, generate past experiences for reflection. Mezirow tells us that using students' own experience is not only a question of maintaining their interest but also of providing opportunities for reflection and gaining new, more positive and adult perspectives. This is one of my primary goals in teaching. To facilitate reflection and new perspectives, I create a safe environment for my students to share their work, emphasizing positive feedback and taking credit for both their work and their courage in sharing it.

3) **How the learning objectives were implemented.** Students read, discuss, and write poetry in these lessons. They consider the characteristics of and methods used in poetry in order to enrich their understanding of the genre. They produce and share their own poems, both as a group and as individuals. At the end of the year, each student receives a bound book containing his or her poems, along with other writings produced during the year, selected by the student. In some cases, the poems have been published in our own Learning Center newsletter and/or in Four Winds, the adult student literary magazine published by Northeast SABES.

4) **How the instructional methods were implemented.** In the "Apple Poetry" lesson, students begin by sharing memories of apples in pairs. Then we examine part of the poem "The Apple" by Bruce Guernsey, including the lines "Quartered/ a seed rocks/ in each tiny cradle." I ask students what the lines mean, and how to cut their apples in the way the author pictures. They cut the apple (almost all cut them appropriately) and discuss the relationship between the image and the reality.

In the shape poem lesson, students examine poems and discuss how they differ from prose. The poems "Seal" and "Skinny poem" are particularly useful in emphasizing the points that poems have short lines compared to prose, and that line breaks are meaningful.

The "I'm From" poems provide a powerful lesson in producing poetry from one's own experience. In this lesson we examine models with the repeated refrain, "I'm from..." This activity invites students to bring their own lives into the classroom. I give them a worksheet that helps them organize their memories. Students produce rich and moving poems which, when shared, provide the class with a wealth of multi-cultural and multi-generational insights.

In all these lessons, we brainstorm exhaustively to produce a reservoir of vocabulary, insights, and images for use in their poems. Some students rely heavily on this resource; others invent more original work. It matters little. When students come to share their work, all are able to grasp the effort that was involved in producing it, and the richness of the result.

5) **How the lesson plans were made available to colleagues.** I make my work available to colleagues in a number of ways. I give frequent workshops under the auspices of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute (ALRI) throughout the Boston region. One, called "Novel Ways of Teaching Language and Literature," almost always includes the "Apple Poetry" lesson, and sometimes the "I'm From" lesson as well. An agenda for one of these workshops, with additional dates and places noted, is included in Appendix \_\_\_\_\_. My colleagues at the Learning Center were particularly interested in the "I'm From" lesson, which I both handed out to them and left in our "Emergency lesson" file.

## **C6. Uses a variety of instructional methods, techniques, and tools that facilitate adult learning.**

### Evidentiary Documentation:

A set of lesson plans on understanding and responding to poetry is included under Appendix \_\_\_\_.

### Explanatory Statements:

#### **1) What instructional methods, or techniques, or tools were used with adult learners.**

Drawing as I do on multiple intelligences (MI) theory, I try to use as many different methods, techniques, and tools as possible with my students. The following is a partial list – modified constantly as my students or I come up with new ideas – of the kinds of teaching methods, techniques, and tools I employ:

1. Listening and speaking, involving both themselves and the teacher.
2. Class and small-group discussion.
3. Brainstorming, both individually and in small and large groups.
4. Cooperative and competitive grammar and editing activities.
5. Flashcards, matching cards, and matching sentence strips.
6. *Project Read's* multi-sensory grammar instruction methods.
7. Teacher-made crossword puzzles, to help with vocabulary and spelling.
8. Overhead transparencies, especially for correcting grammar exercises and crossword puzzles.
9. Writing, both individually and in small and large groups.
10. Individual journals.
11. One-on-one editing assistance with written work.
12. Lengthy written critiques of written work.
13. Hands-on, concrete activities, ranging from activities with objects to flashcards and matching activities, science experiments, and memory games.
14. Field trips to hear authors read their work.
15. Graphic organizers for writing of different types.
16. Computer activities, both purchased and teacher-made, for GED preparation as well as research, writing, grammar, spelling, and multiple-choice testing practice.
17. Production of individual bound student books of their own writing during the year.
18. Submission of student work for publication in *Four Winds*, an adult student literary magazine, and the Learning Center newsletter.

**2) Why these instructional methods, or techniques, or tools were used with adult learners.** The instructional methods, techniques, and tools I use with my students are all chosen for their abilities to reach different types of learners, stimulate different kinds of thought processes, and affirm and inspire these students as they attempt the difficult process of adult learning.

Numbers 1 through 4 above, for example, I use largely for their reliance on what Gardner defines as the interpersonal intelligence – the ability to understand and appreciate others' points of view. For many adult students, learning through interaction with their peers is an extremely effective method. Indeed, in *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain* (Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1994), Renata Nummela Caine and Geoffrey Caine emphasize the importance of "relevant, complex, and highly socially interactive experiences" (47) in learning.

Numbers 5 through 8 above combine visual and spatial intelligences, and number 5 also includes the kinesthetic in the learning environment. Either students or I make flashcards, matching cards or sentence strips with are also cut for matching. Flashcards are used either at home or in class; the other activities are done cooperatively class. Students physically move cards or sentence

components into the correct positions, just as they must put letters into the correct spots in the crosswords.

Numbers 9 through 12 are the core of much of what I teach – writing at both the GED and lower levels. I use overhead transparencies frequently, because they can match what students have on paper in front of them, while encouraging interaction. Journals provide an opportunity for private interaction with me, as do my lengthy critiques and one-on-one work with students.

Numbers 13 through 16 involve a variety of different learning modalities which students find engaging, and which allow them to process what they are learning in different ways.

Numbers 17 and 18 above I use primarily for motivation and affirmation. Knowing their work will be in books that others will read provides students with intrinsic motivation to make their work grammatically correct: “I don’t want to look like a fool,” one student said when I asked if he wanted me to help him proofread a piece. Likewise, formal publication in *Four Winds*, or even in our Learning Center newsletter, is an affirmation of the value of their work and their effort. This can allow learners to break through their self-conceptions as poor writers and poor students and go on to take greater academic risks and make more progress.

**3) How these instructional methods, or techniques, or tools were used in the curriculum or syllabus or series of lesson plans for adult basic education learners.** in the lesson plans included, I use primarily numbers 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 18. Students listen to me and to each other, and speak to me and each other as we read the poem for the lesson and the ones they write (No. 1). We discuss poems in small and large groups (No. 2), and we brainstorm materials for use in writing poems (No. 3). We write both group and individual poems (No. 9). I work with students individually on their poems (No. 11). In the Apple Poetry lesson, we use apples as concrete objects in a hands-on activity to aid understanding of the poem (No. 13). For both “I’m From” and cinquain poems, students use graphic organizers to help them understand what is expected (No. 15). Students finish their poems on the computer, using spell checking, on-line thesaurus and dictionary as needed, and learning word processing techniques along the way (No. 16). Students for the last two years have produced books of their own work, bringing in self-initiated writing as well as homework and in-class work, and editing and proofreading them extensively (No. 17). Finally, a number of “I’m From” poems (and other works) have been published in *Four Winds*, and cinquains in the Learning Center newsletter (No. 18).

**C7. Uses strategies that are effective for learners to develop and use critical thinking skills and to solve complex problems.**

Evidentiary documentation:

A set of lesson plans on understanding and reponding to poetry is included under Appendix \_\_\_\_.

Explanatory statements:

1) **Strategy employed to develop adult learners' critical thinking or complex problem solving skills (e.g. study skills, metacognitive strategies).** I use many strategies for developing learners' critical and complex thinking skills. My favorite, and I believe one of the most successful, is reading, analyzing, interpreting, and writing poetry.

2) **Why this strategy was employed to develop adult learners' critical thinking or complex problem solving skills.** The English Language Arts Frameworks highlight seven skills in the critical thinking strand for 11-12 GLE learners. The poetry lessons included in Appendix \_\_\_\_ address five of these:

- Use appropriate tools to express ideas and opinions
- Distinguish between fact and opinion
- Use appropriate tools for gathering information
- Recognize that there is not always a "right" answer
- Recognize how medium affects message.

In addition, Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (\_\_\_\_), upon which the GED is based, includes as its highest levels analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which most educators consider to be integral parts of critical thinking. These skills are used extensively in the poetry lessons already mentioned.

Reading, analyzing and interpreting poetry involve short texts, an important consideration both for low-level readers and for students who cannot be relied on to do reading homework. These readings are rich in vocabulary, abstraction, inference, nuance, and multiple, ambiguous meanings. Students must learn to analyze the text for meaning, and to differentiate between what the text says (the "facts" of poetry) and the meanings they infer from it (the "opinion" of analysis and interpretation). They must learn to use reference to the text and logical argument as appropriate tools for the expression of ideas and opinions about the poems. Students also must come to recognize that there may be no single "right" interpretation of a poem, but that, there may be – in fact, usually are – multiple possibilities, all defensible by reference to the text. Many of these meanings are not immediately apparent, but must be synthesized from a combination of obvious and inferred meaning. Students learn how the medium of poetry, with its fluid grammar, line breaks, and page placement, can affect the poet's expression of message and meaning.

By definition, writing poetry requires students to synthesize disparate elements of thought, experience, and reflection into new compositions. In the course of doing so, they continually evaluate whether the choice of word or line is appropriate for what they wish to express. Again, because these writings are brief, each word – even each punctuation mark! – requires the kind of close attention and evaluation that students are often unable to sustain over longer writings. Poems free students from many of the grammar constraints which often inhibit them, and permit them to experiment with deeply personal and meaningful expression. They must focus on every word to determine which are appropriate to what they wish to express and which can be omitted; they must make many complex decisions about and evaluations of form, format, content and meaning that are not required in prose.

3) **How this strategy was employed within the curriculum, or syllabus, or series of lesson plans.** In all three of these lesson plans, student read poems as models of what they are expected to produce. The poems are discussed exhaustively, mined for multiple meanings and for ambiguity, and analyzed extensively as to form and meaning. In one of the lesson plans, "Apple Poetry," students use a hands-on activity to analyze the relationship between poetic imagery and concrete reality. In the lesson based on "Seal," students analyze how the shape of a poem on the page contributes to its meaning. In the lesson on "I'm From" poems, students analyze at least one model poem and evaluate their own lives and experience as material to produce their own poem.

In all three lessons, students discuss and analyze poetry at length, and in all three they produce poems modeled on those they have read and discussed. We use lengthy brainstorming, both as a group and individually, and reflection on experience as appropriate tools for gathering the information and material upon which these poems will be based. The production of these poems is a highly complex activity, requiring complex and critical thinking at a level students have seldom employed before.