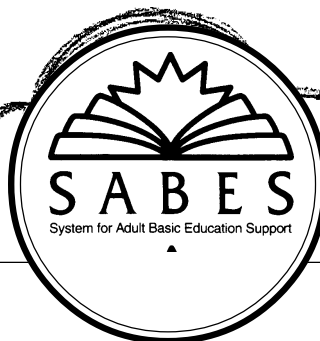


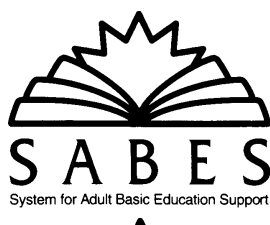
# Adventures **in** Assessment

*Learner-centered approaches  
to assessment and evaluation  
in adult literacy*

**Volume 6:  
Responding to the Dream Conference**

April 1994





*SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills.*

*SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts. SABES also offers a 15-hour Orientation that introduces new staff to adult education theory and practice and enables them to build support networks.*

*SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models, and encourages the development and use of practitioner and learner-generated materials. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.*



*The SABES Central Resource Center, a program of World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."*

*The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, **Getting Started**, includes start-up and intake activities; Volume 2, **Ongoing**, shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3, **Looking Back, Starting Again**, focuses on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 covered a range of interests, and Volume 5, **The Tale of the Tools** is dedicated to reflecting on Component 3 tools of alternative assessment. This volume, **Responding to the Dream Conference**, is dedicated to responses to Volumes 1-5. Future volumes will similarly cover either a variety of issues or specific topics. The Fall, 1994 issue will highlight writings from the Partnership Project, a mentoring project for practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment.*

*We'd like to see your contribution. Contact Editor Loren McGrail to discuss your submission.*

***Adventures in Assessment** is free to Massachusetts programs; out-of-state requests will be charged a nominal fee, at cost. Please write to, or call:*

**Elizabeth Santiago**  
**SABES Central Resource Center**  
**World Education**  
**210 Lincoln Street**  
**Boston, MA 02111**  
**617-482-9485**

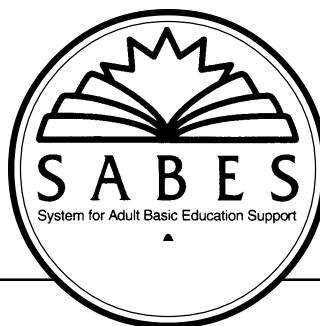
# Adventures **in** Assessment

## **Volume 6: Responding to the Dream Conference**

April 1994

**EDITOR:** Loren McGrail  
**ASSISTANT EDITOR:** Rick Schwartz

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and funded by the Federal Adult Education Act (S.353)  
administered by the Bureau of Adult Education, Massachusetts Department of Education*





## Final Reflections from Your Editor

# Creating, Editing, and Producing the Dream Conference

*As a sometime adult literacy practitioner, particularly interested in alternative assessment, reading through all five issues of **Adventures in Assessment** felt akin to attending a dream conference.*

*Cathy Luna*

**I**t is spring and it is still snowing. The crocuses are shivering but Passover is here and Easter is around the corner. Getting this journal out the door and into the anonymous hands of practitioners around this state and all over the country feels a little more like a nightmare than a dream during this phase of the production cycle but the dream is still alive: the simple belief that a journal dedicated to writings on learner-centered or participatory approaches to assessment and evaluation written by and for practitioners will be of use.

This issue of *Adventures in Assessment* is the last issue that I will edit. The journal will continue to be published bi-annually by SABES. It is an issue primarily devoted to responses to the journal, all 5 volumes. The field is vast and wide. The authors in volume 6 include a doctoral candidate in a graduate school of education, an ESOL teacher in a community based program, a staff development facilitator, a tutor trainer, a state ABE director and the former assistant director of a national clearinghouse. I invite you to listen and drink in their thoughts and reflections, how and why

they have used or adapted the tools they have or how they have used the journal's participatory principles and philosophy to guide their assessment adventures.

Before introducing each author to you, I would like to ask for your indulgence for a moment while I sing my swan song— reflect and do my own critical assessment of the five volumes and where I hope and think the journal should go in the future.

As stated already *Adventures in Assessment* is a field-based journal dedicated to writings on learner-centered or participatory approaches to assessment and evaluation. In my job as Literacy Specialist for SABES with the charge to provide technical assistance to adult literacy practitioners and programs, it was my belief that the field needed both a framework for investigating participatory approaches to assessment and a forum for expressing, sharing, and documenting ideas, tools, and questions. From the beginning these two strands were woven together into one cloth— “writing about it”. Both were equally important; the it-learner-centered approaches to assessment and the writing- documenting inquiry.

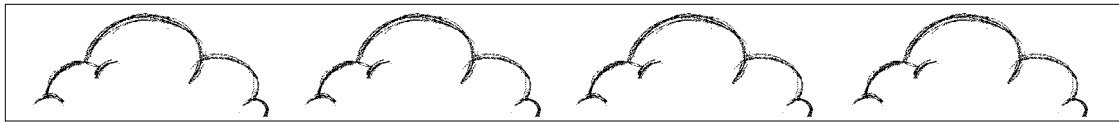
### “It”

Let me start first with “it”, learner-centered or participatory approaches to assessment. From the beginning the journal was a way to reinforce and

by  
**Loren McGrail**



*Editor*  
**SABES Central  
Resource Center/  
World Education**



sustain energy my workshops on assessment had created- a way to get practitioners to talk and listen to each other across the state. The journal was a beginning point for the development of the toolkit of alternative assessment approaches and tools based on the three phases of the assessment process. And finally, the journal was an attempt to make real some of Susan Lytle's recommendations to the field of adult education (Lytle, 1988). Lytle stated that funders and legislators use standardized measurements to determine program accountability and effectiveness because they lack good information about the qualitative effects of programs on learner's lives. She advocated two basic strategies to remedy this situation: the first was to invite a wider participation into the conversation, thus, who better than the literacy practitioners themselves; the second was to conduct program-based practitioner research simultaneously across the country to strengthen these new conceptual frameworks and to exchange and critique innovative practices.

To start this process we needed a framework with clearly articulated guiding principles so that the word "alternative" didn't just mean anything other than standardized tests. As Susan Lytle (1989) said, "Constructing new images of adults- images built on assumptions of dignity and competence, of literacy as reflective and self-critical practice, and of learning as participatory — requires that we rethink or reconceptualize not only our notions of what counts as literacy but also our methods of inquiry- the processes we use to document and assess learning".

The following principles are a synthe-

sis of the work of Lytle, Fingeret, and Auerbach, my mentors. The reader will note that they are also part of the Massachusetts Participatory Assessment Team's mission statement:

#### *Principles of Participatory Assessment*

1. It must be program-based and learner-centered.
2. It should help the learners achieve their goals.
3. It must build on learner strengths, not deficits.
4. It should be part of the learning experience.
5. It should not be a single procedure but a variety of procedures.
6. It should provide feedback that will lead to better instruction.

In addition to these principles, to engage in truly alternative assessment, we need to include learners as active participants at the center of the process of measurements as "co-investigators in determining their own literacy practices, strengths and strategies" (Lytle, 1988). As I stated in Volume II in talking about portfolio assessment, "If all we do is substitute new multiple measures for old standardized measurements and monitor student progress for diagnostic purposes in terms of identifying strengths and weaknesses in language and content areas, we will not have created a new paradigm."

Paradigm shifts are not easy. To support this shift we looked at the assessment process in three phases: 1.) Start Up or Intake Activities; 2.) Along the Way or On-going Activities; and 3.) Looking Back or End of Cycle Activities (Auerbach, 1992).

*To engage in truly alternative assessment, we need to include learners as active participants at the center of the process of measurements as "co-investigators in determining their own literacy practices, strengths and strategies."*



*These journals were intended as guides, resources by and for practitioners to select and adapt tools for their own contexts.*

## HISTORY OF THE JOURNAL

The journal began in the Fall of 1991. The intention from the beginning was to publish three journals devoted to the three phases of the assessment process. These journals were intended as guides, resources by and for practitioners to select and adapt tools for their own contexts.

By volume II, in addition to introducing the authors, I asked the reader to think about the different “lenses” through which to view and analyze the writings. I posed questions for the reader to consider like “compare the evolution of the forms and tools Paul Trunnell developed for his ABE learners to the way Kathy Brucker developed her tools. How are the processes similar? How do they compare to the kind of anecdotal reporting Janet Isserlis does daily in her classroom? If progress is achieved, for whom is it achieved and by whom?” In retrospect, I see in these words the beginning of a shift in tone, a caution for people not to just adapt someone else’s tool but to remember that first came the toolmaker- the context, then the tool.

In Volume III, Looking Back, I added three new features: What Counts? (math assessment), Voices From the Field (interviews, dialogues, or writings from practitioners who are not classroom teachers, and Letters.

I don’t recall precisely when or who made the decision that the journal should continue beyond the original three. This fact leads me to believe the field had started to count on the journal as a sure thing so then we institutionalized it and said we could publish two a year- one in the fall and one in the spring. However, between Volumes III

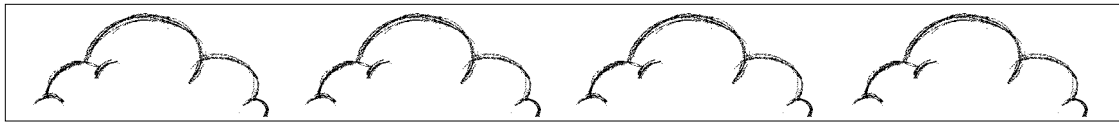
and IV the journal lost its production editor. This forced SABES to reconsider what kind of editorial support we needed. After much thought, we decided to hire an editor, Rick, with lots of editing, layout and graphic experience, but who was not an ABE practitioner. His task was to redesign the journal so its format was more consistent with and attractive and to do final edits with the authors. These decisions were made in part because the journal was gaining popularity outside the state and we were moving towards selling it. One of the design decisions was to do away with the appendices, which included all the forms and charts practitioners used. Though at first this seemed like a design decision, it really became a shift in what the journal was supposed to do for the field. By integrating the charts, forms, and graphs back into the author’s piece we were hopefully sending the message that you can’t just go out and take someone else’s tool; you have to make it your own. In addition to these graphic changes, we included two articles from practitioners from out of state and a publication review.

## WRITING

*“...Loren asked me, reminded me, encouraged me, helped and revised with me.”*

*Don Robishaw*

*“...It formalized a process that had been developing with much discussion, but little or no documentation... In some cases writing about the process we were using with a particular form codified something that didn’t necessarily make much sense in practice. In others, the opposite took place-*



*something that didn't make sense became obvious in the process of writing about it. I was able to see it, or dump it altogether."*

*Janet Kelly*

*"We started with an initial chat, followed by a sharing of the forms and feedback and then a more extensive chat—"the diner dialogue" where Loren reviewed my work and sent back a framework for preparing and pairing it into an article."*

*Paul Trunnell*

In addition to providing a framework and a forum for alternative assessment, I saw the creation of a field-based journal as a golden opportunity to put into practice a process approach to writing, a way for practitioners to experience first hand the power of having their writing responded to with non-evaluative feedback. Many of the authors in Lindy Whiton's research survey in this issue wrote about this experience.

In general I am not surprised by what these authors had to say about the journal and how it helped them reflect upon their practice. I am struck, however, by a few prevailing comments and sentiments. The first is embarrassment over how important my asking, prodding, pleading was to get people to write. Comments like "She asked me" and "She asked me to submit" make me feel both a little uncomfortable with my persuasive abilities and at the same time assured me that without that initial push, many wouldn't have done it. The second is the power of what happens when you write something down. All the authors commented on the self knowledge they gained by the act of

writing itself. I had underestimated the power of writing to reflect back to us what we really think and believe. And third, I was surprised to hear, repeatedly, the desire many authors expressed to connect with others so they could get feedback on their own practice—"I also thought other practitioners might think of improvements, and I learn from them."

I am also struck by some authors' clarity about the need to get this information out: "I want presentation portfolios to be used everywhere. I think they are marvelous!" and "I wanted to share my belief that self-assessment is not beyond beginning ESL students; that it reduces me and elevates the student to co-creators of the learning environments. I wanted to support the cause of alternative assessment and remind people that there are other options to the TABE."

All these comments reinforce that writing for the journal has been an effective means for doing inquiry-based staff development as well as developing the knowledge base of what participatory assessment looks like in practice.

So now that you have listened to my own reflections and critical commentary, I would like to invite you to read with pleasure what some of your colleagues across this country who have attended the dream conference have said about the journal.

We begin with "One Step of Inquiry: Documenting the Voices" by Lindy Whiton. Whiton conducted a research project last year to find out if the process of writing for the journal and the product itself was useful staff development and whether it increased the field's knowledge base. Her documentation on

*All of these comments reinforce that writing for the journal has been an effective means for doing inquiry-based staff development as well as developing the knowledge base of what participatory assessment looks like in practice.*



how she conducted her inquiry and what she learned from both the reader and writer surveys confirmed many of her hypotheses.

The voices of teachers in Massachusetts have been heard in Maine. In “Hello, Massachusetts”, Brawders outlines what the vision and goals are for the new nationally-funded Horizon Project. According to Brawders, Maine has chosen portfolio assessment to replace standardized tests. Maine is doing what they call “contextualized portfolio assessment”. By contextual they mean “each adult learner, each teacher, each administrator of an adult education program will develop a progress portfolio of their work for the year.” The programs will then measure their qualitative and quantitative progress in relation to this baseline over a three-year period. What’s important and exciting here is that programs are not measuring against some specified norm or against another but against themselves. As Brawders says, “What counts is the articulation of action steps that can be taken at the end of each year for the purpose of program improvement.”

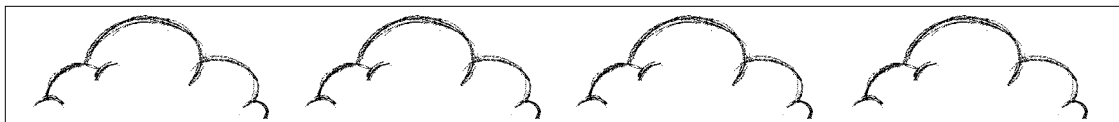
Program improvement is not the only goal for portfolio assessment as Richard Goldberg tells us in “Portfolios as Alternative Assessments in a Community-based ESL to College Transition Program.” Influenced by David Rosen’s article “The Progress Portfolio” in *AiA*, Volume 2, and by his own experience in broadcast journalism with students assembling portfolios of their work, Goldberg decided to implement them in the U.S. Department of Education’s Massachusetts English Literacy Demon-

stration project (MELD). The MELD program in Chinatown consists of three steps: an ESL class, an Adult Basic education class, and then enrollment at Bunker Hill Community College. Goldberg teaches the ABE class and began using portfolios to document writing progress. The turning point in the MELD program’s use of portfolio assessments came when Bunker Hill Community College agreed to use student portfolios as an alternative to its standardized Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT).

Like Goldberg, Byron Barahona also got ideas from the journal on how to adapt and create tools for his volunteer program in northern California. He adds that all the different ideas shown in the journals have influenced his vision of assessment — from diagnosing problems and needs, to measuring the process of learning itself. For Barahona both the articles and the tools pose important questions: “First and foremost, they make us think and rethink the need and the process involved in evaluating progress. Second, they make us look back to analyze more critically what has been done. Third, they help us reflect upon what can be changed, adapted or implemented.” His article, “Implementing Alternative Assessment Tools” is a wonderful tribute to the authors he has read as well as to the thoughtful process for real adaptation

In “Images of Participatory Assessment in Adult Education: An Analysis of Adventures in Assessment”, Cathy Luna echoes Barahona when she says that the reports of “experiments” with participatory assessment practices may help practitioners, learners and researchers

*What’s important and exciting here is that programs are not measuring against some specified norm or against another but against themselves.*



better understand the nature of critical reflection in adult education. Luna's careful and thoughtful analysis of the journal focuses attention on the way the authors write about how they involve adult learners in the development, use, and revision of the tools and processes used to assess learner progress and program evaluation. She asks "In what ways can practitioners and learners talk and work together to build frameworks for critical reflection and assessment?" Her research and analysis of the authors' writings about learner involvement reveal that there is less involvement of learners in the design and revision of assessment practices than in their implementation. This critical feedback is helpful because it points out where our strengths are and gives us direction for where we need to spend more energy.

In addition to these critical reflections are writings that fall under our established departments: What Counts? (math assessment), *From the Field*, Book Review, and Letters. The reader will note that there are a few other writings as well. Beginning in this issue and hopefully to continue is the start of a new column called "Learning From Experience," designed to encourage practitioners and learners to write about their own personal experiences being assessed or evaluated. Two other writings that complete this *Responding to the Dream Conference* journal are a survey completed by a practitioner from West Virginia and the mission statement from the "Transformers", the Massachusetts Participatory Assessment Team.

In "Out of A Pickle: Setting the Stage For Math", Martha Merson draws upon her experience with the ABE Math Team

teachers, and writes about how to create a "class evaluation that doesn't hurt self-esteem, where learners' knowledge about the world gets counted and woven into the learning at hand, where work that is done in the class has a purpose." She reminds us that we need to educate our students to the alternatives and that we can do this by laying out a strategy for "familiarizing students with a broad view of mathematics, for opening the dialogue about what topics should get covered during math class, for using assessment as an opportunity to build expectations for a new or continuing class."

Marilyn Gillespie in *From the Field* reminds us to keep the dialogue going and to try to find better ways to include learners in our conversations. She also challenges us, those who write for the AiA, to reflect upon the conditions that affect our work at large and how they could be changed.

Anne Marie De Martino's letter to Don Robishaw discusses the impact his article had on her thinking about goal setting. She thanks him for calling attention to the need to place goal setting strategies within a context of the greater philosophy of self-directed learning but disagrees with his statement that "It is very important that the facilitator has had similar life and schooling experiences as the learners to develop solidarity with them."

In "From Minnow to Overachiever" in *Learning From Experience*, I write about the lasting effects of being evaluated at different points in my youth and adult life.

Don Robishaw reviews a new book on portfolio assessment called *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom*. Though all the

*In what ways can practitioners and learners talk and work together to build frameworks for critical reflection and assessment?*



*We need to figure out a way to bring the learners into our conversation.*

*We need to hear their voices. We need to know if our new conceptual frameworks have merit, if our new approaches to assessing skills are useful and if our attempts to capture their gains meaningful.*

articles are written by and for teachers working in K-12, he recommends the book to us in Adult Education who are interested in portfolio as both a tool and a pedagogical stance.

And finally, *Responding to The Dream Conference* ends with the Transformers mission statement and strategies for achieving their goals. The Transformers are a group of ABE and ESL practitioners who are “dedicated to concentrating and coordinating efforts towards broadening the understanding of adult educators, learners, administrators, and funders about participatory principles which are the basis for meaningful assessment and social change.”

#### *Recommendations for the Future*

As part of my final reflection, I would like to conclude with some recommendations for the future of the journal. My first recommendation is that we need to figure out a way to bring the learners into our conversation. We need to hear their voices. We need to know if our new conceptual frameworks have merit, if our new approaches to assessing skills are useful and if our attempts to capture their gains meaningful. “We need to risk finding out not just how our learners experience learning but how we help or fail them in that process.” Second, I would also like to figure out a way to document what people do as a group or community. I think we need tools and procedures that not only measure individuals but communities of individuals

working towards social change. Third, I would like to see the journal take a political stand and support native language and biliteracy. I would like to see articles in the journal on how to assess native language literacy, not just for diagnostic purposes or as way to establish a baseline for comparing English language acquisition, but as a way to affirm and validate the belief that our learners have a right to be bilingual and bi-literate and that we believe English is a plus, not a substitution. Lastly, I would like us all to practice a little self-reflection on our own past experiences at being assessed or evaluated. Were these positive or negative experiences? Do we now as teachers impose what was done to us on others, and if not, what informs our choice?

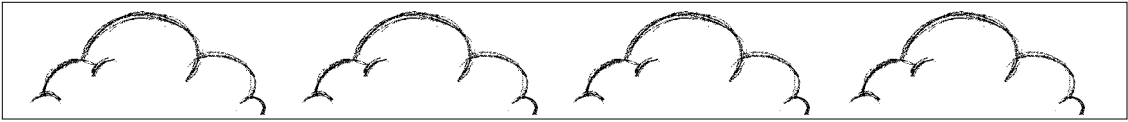
In general, we need more critical reflection. As Stephen Brookfield says, we need to take a reflective stance on our practice (both past and present) to be clear about what we stand for or are trying to achieve. We need to pose questions not just seek solutions or create tools. We need to become skillful teachers in our reflective stance on practice and our dance of experimentation and risk-taking.

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## One Step of Inquiry

# Documenting the Voices

The objective of this paper is to describe the effect documenting inquiry has on practitioners who write for *Adventures in Assessment*. This is a journal dedicated to writings on alternative, learner-centered assessment and published by Massachusetts' System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES).

The purpose of this research came from wanting to know if the process of writing for the journal was useful staff development. It has developed since then to also ask if the product itself provides opportunities for staff development, and whether it increases the field's knowledge base.

Many questions come into play when people talk about documentation. It is my belief that a place that allows practitioners to document their work also encourages them to continue to do research. It is also my belief that the act of doing so is part of the process of inquiry and not just the product of the research, that the act of documenting encourages teachers to look more closely at what they have done and to reflect on their process.

by  
Lindy Whiton



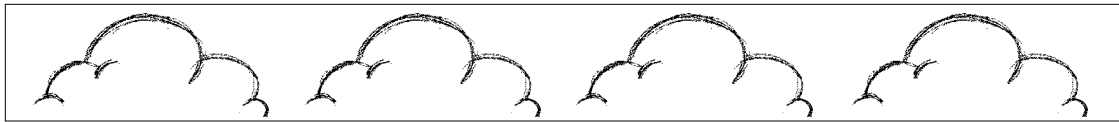
Western Mass. SABES

### HOW THIS INQUIRY WAS CONDUCTED: METHODOLOGY

As originally published in the Introduction to *Adventures in Assessment*, Volume I, the journal's creators hoped it would become a "resource by and for practitioners from which to select and

adapt tools for their own contexts." (McGrail 1991). The development of this resource depends upon programs-based practitioners' research, the results of which will help develop the field of adult education (Lytle & Wolfe 1989). It was felt that giving practitioners a place to publish would not only encourage teacher-research, but be a place where their work could be validated and shared with their colleagues. According to Lytle & Wolfe (1989) and Auerbach (1992), many researchers believe it is imperative that practitioners begin to document their inquiry, to record their objections and to engage in dialogues with one another informing their colleagues and adding to the body of qualitative research in education.

First, it was assumed that **writing for this journal would be good staff development**. Good staff development is defined as the process of building, reinforcing, and maintaining effective teaching practices. Ultimately, staff development acts as an antidote to burnout. Second, the **actual process of writing would be important to development of the field** (Gillespie 1991). I felt that the actual steps in revision that authors would take were important to their personal development and that the act of publishing would be validating. Third, the journal would **increase the knowledge and understanding of alternative assessment**; and fourth, **this is important to practitioners**. The



journal offers a stage for the voices of teachers to be heard. It is a place where other teachers can listen not only to the "tale of the tools," but to the narrative, the story of "Who," "What," "Why," and "How come?"

In the past several months, an attempt has been made to collect data on the effect of the journal, to discover what both authors and readers thought about *Adventures in Assessment* and was it doing what we assumed it would do? When an article was published, did it validate a practitioner's work? Did it actually help to spark inquiry in other programs? It is this data that I would like to share with others.

All 21 people who contributed articles to the journal were sent letters and surveys. Only eleven people returned the surveys. The other ten authors were contacted, but their input never was completed (see appendix).

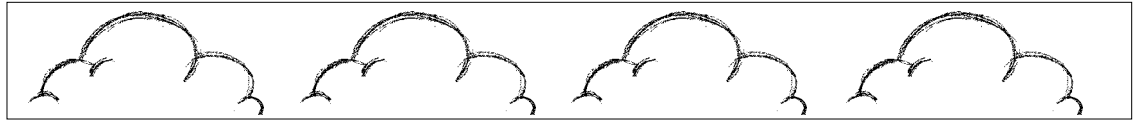
Five hundred copies of the Readers' Survey were sent out. The actual survey form was developed by McGrail, two staff members of SABES' Central Resource Center, and myself (see Appendix 2). There was no attempt to concentrate on specific groups (e.g. the SABES' coordinators mailing list versus regular journal readers). The objective of the Readers' Survey was to discover whether practitioners were using their colleagues' writings to further their staff development or as encouragement or inspiration to do their own plunge into alternative assessment. Only twenty-three of the five hundred questionnaires mailed were returned, less than 5%.

## ANALYSIS

### Readers' Surveys

It should be noted that not only was the mailing list inappropriate for this survey, but the turn-around-time on the survey was much too short. In approximately a one-week period, twenty-three responded. Out of that group, sixteen stated they had never heard of the journal. Several conclusions can be drawn from this data. First, respondents find it easier to simply check the box and mail the forms rather than spend time reflecting and answering questions. Therefore, those who could just check "No" on the "Have you ever read this journal?" question had the easiest task and were most apt to send it back. Second, unfortunately, practitioners were inundated by surveys last fall and this was just one of many. It should be noted that while attending the annual state conference, practitioners did approach me and apologize for their absent-mindedness in not responding to the survey. Third, the mailing lists were deemed inappropriate. The decision was made to ask each SABES coordinator for the names of ten practitioners to whom they had personally handed the journal. Surveys will ultimately be sent to those people, supported by telephone interviews. In the interim, copies of the journal were sent to those individuals who had responded they were unfamiliar with the *Adventures in Assessment*. The seven responses that were most informative for this research emphasized using the tools and peoples' reflections as models to adapt in their own classrooms, which is a major objective of the journal.

*The objective of the Readers' Survey was to discover whether practitioners were using their colleagues' writings to further their staff development or as encouragement or inspiration to do their own plunge into alternative assessment.*



*The majority used the journal regularly. Thus, we believe the journal fits the definition of “good staff development.”*

### Authors’ Surveys

The author’s answers were considered in reference to the assumptions listed above. I examined whether our assumptions were repeated in their answers. I also wanted to know if the journal was useful in ways other than initially predicted. What was most interesting in this process was that, while we attempted to show that the journal was a product of teacher-research, which served a very important role, it was actually just a snapshot which helped us to look at the process of inquiry at a specific moment. Authors referred to the journal as “a useful tool.”

Many of the authors did speak of their process with Loren McGrail, editor of *Adventures in Assessment*, as important elements in the writing of the article. Loren’s behavior was reflective of her theoretical beliefs of writing instruction for all. She treats teachers and learners the same. These comments made it quite apparent to me that Loren’s input and her inclusion as co-researcher was necessary to the project. She brought to the paper an entire body of data she has compiled from her perspective as the editor and from her close association with the authors (see *Introduction*).

### CONCLUSION

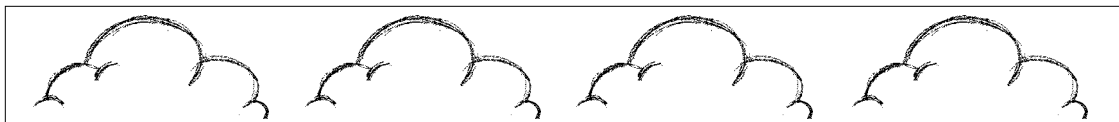
***Adventures in Assessment is perceived by contributors and readers alike as good staff development.*** It provides practitioners with a process that builds, reinforces and maintains effective teaching practices. It is also a successful vehicle for helping teachers to write and declare their voice. “The journal helped me to believe in me.” “I have a voice and it, too, is worth

listening to.” “It reinforced my beliefs.” These comments are representative of the types of responses I received. For ten of the eleven respondents, the act of writing for the journal was a successful staff development activity. It should also be noted that, of the respondents familiar with *Adventures in Assessment*, the majority used the journal regularly. Thus, we believe the journal fits the definition of “good staff development.”

***The actual process of writing is an important one.*** Publishing is valuable in validating educators’ voices. Most of the respondents in both categories talked about sharing. They spoke about the importance of sharing in the field and the place the journal played in that. They spoke about it being a place in the process, not the product at the end of the process. In his responses, Paul Trunnell suggested we allow more dialogue to happen in the journal itself. “I would like to encourage the journal and the field towards dialogue-based on dialogue-intended work. Particularly now that such a range of tools and procedures has been discussed.”

According to Janet Isserlis, the journal is not necessarily a vehicle for closure; it is a way to lead to more questions.

The journal does create a public space for teacher writings. This public space is an important step for teachers to now take (Cochran and Lytle ’93, Gillespie ’90). These authors never spoke directly about the publishing as being validating, however. They were much more aware of the sharing with others as being validating in and of itself and spoke of the act of writing as helping to “clarify”, “review”, or be more “succinct.” “I was



inspired by the work done by Janet Kelley. I was reminded of the value of sharing tools, frustrations, and solutions and thought that writing an article was the easiest way to share with a larger group." "I also thought that other practitioners might think of improvements, and I would learn from them." The effect would "be that they might get some ideas about reflecting on their own work in ways that would ultimately be helpful to them and to their learners." They spoke of the journal as a useful tool.

**The journal increases ones knowledge base.** This is evident in how many adult education classes are now using *Adventures in Assessment* as a classroom reading. Continued compilation of data from readers will clarify just how their knowledge base is being increased.

In regards to the authors' voices, some saw their article as an addition to the field; others did not.

**There is a genuine interest in the journal.** "Thanks for the encouragement. . ." was a comment frequently noted. Other comments indicated bona fide enthusiasm and support for the journal. The following comments repeatedly surfaced during our research: "Let's get more people involved." "dialogue" "people should try. . ." "I appreciate its presence."

This research did not reveal anything startling. It basically confirmed by hypothesis about the process. The only surprise for me was that practitioners did not feel that the actual article was an ending point, nor a concrete validation of their work. Instead, they focused on what part the articles played in the process of inquiry; they were a part of the process, one point along the trail.

Although that finding was surprising to me, it was also exciting and reaffirming. It was a stronger indication that the journal was a stimulus for further thought and conversation.

This research has not come to an end; it is not complete. The readers' surveys are a very important piece of the work, and I am planning to continue this research. I believe that this information will not only support the publishing of the journal, but will also support inquiry-based staff development. Not all the authors who responded to my questionnaire were involved in actual inquiry projects, however, most were involved in their own questioning process. I hope that further research will not only support the claims that inquiry-based staff development is successful, but it will also indicate more clearly why. Listening to the readers' responses should shed light on some of the answers, or at least help us to form new questions. The authors of "The Tale of the Tools," Volume 5, were not interviewed. Their responses will be enlightening because many of those articles came straight from either the assessment or math inquiry projects. Their perspectives may be slightly different. I hope to keep the research on-going and to provide an update later on.

It is still important to look at the changes in classroom practices, changes in methodology, and learners' success in which the journal may be inspirational. Possibly more important, however, is that it continues to provide a place where linkages can be made, where teachers and eventually learners can write about practices in assessment and curricula that model the most effective

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*The journal will always play different roles at different times for different teachers. But most importantly, it provides great linkages and begins to end the massive problem of isolation across all members of the adult education community.*

programs. *Adventures in Assessment* models writing those practices in its various steps towards publication. The collaborative efforts of the editor, assistant editor, and author need to continue to model the type of writing process work that we subscribe to. This, in turn, models our understanding of good assessment practices as well. Thus, for me, the data echoes what “these voices” have said, that *Adventures in Assessment* is good staff development.

#### POSTSCRIPT

Now that I have completed this part of the research, taught a mini-course on alternative assessment, and used the journal as text, I would like to state that staff development is just that — Development. People are at different places with different needs. There were nine regular participants in my class. At the end, only three were comfortable enough to take a stab at writing for the sixth edition. I thought in the beginning there would be more. However, all group members had read all five issues and found pieces to respond to, whether verbally or in their process of developing assessment for their classrooms.

Another example of the outcome of inquiry-based staff development is the “Mentor Project” that the Component #3 practitioners have now developed and begun. They are finding different programs are at different points of the process. They need to fit what they are

doing to the individual program needs. *Adventures in Assessment* will be appropriate to use for many points of this process. The journal will always play different roles at different times for different teachers. But most importantly, it provides great linkages and begins to end the massive problem of isolation across all members of the adult education community.

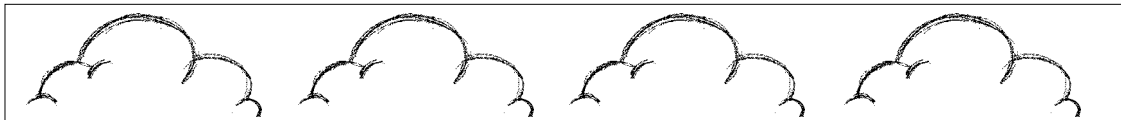
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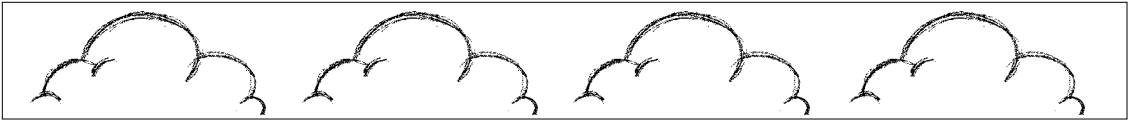


## Responses to the Journal

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SAMPLE SURVEY. IF YOU WISH TO FILL ONE OUT, SEE PAGES 75 AND 76

This survey is to determine the effect that *Adventures in Assessment: Learner Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation* has had on the field. Does the journal either change or validate people's practices and is it a good staff development tool? We define staff development as the process of reinforcing, maintaining and building effective teaching practices. Ultimately, staff development acts as an antidote to burnout.

1. Have you read *Adventures in Assessment*?  Yes  No

If you have, which volume(s)?  Volume 1 (Yellow)  Volume 2 (Light Green)  
 Volume 3 (Purple)  Volume 4 (Dark Green)

2. Do you find the layout/design of *Adventures in Assessment* accessible or easy to understand? Yes No

Comments:

3. What criteria do you use when deciding which articles to read?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Titles or articles | Do you read the introductions? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Author             | Do you read Voices from the Field? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interests          | Do you read Getting Started? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)    | Do you read Ongoing? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No               |
|   | Do you read What Counts? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No           |

Comments:

4. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your thinking or beliefs?  Yes  No

Comments:

5. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your practices (such as sparked a new tool or thrown out all of them)?  Yes  No

Comments:

6. Have you changed the your assessment practices in your classroom and/or program?  Yes  No

7. Do you have ways in which you include learners in your assessment practices? What are they?

8a. Have you ever used any ideas or tools from an article?  Yes  No Which one?

8b. Please comment on how you used it. Did you change it? Did you adapt it?

8c. May we publish these comments in the "Letter to the Editor" section of the journal?

Yes  No

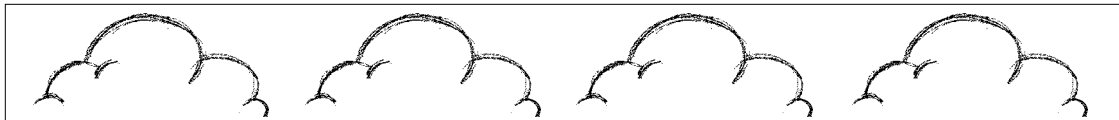
9. Would you be interested in writing for the journal? Yes No

If yes, please fill in the information below or call Loren McGrail at World Education, (617) 482-9485.

Name:

Address:

Phone:



## Portfolio in Maine

# Hello, Massachusetts

*The New England Literacy Resource Center was established to strengthen adult literacy services in New England by promoting and facilitating collaborations and sharing among adult literacy practitioners, resource centers and policymakers in our region. NELRC will be doing its job if we can turn the information flowing across our borders from a trickle to a stream with many tributaries. Alternative assessment is one area of great interest across New England. Clearly, we have a lot to learn from each other.*

*I had the privilege to participate in the kick-off training for Maine's Horizon Project in which portfolio assessment is central. The level of energy and enthusiasm I witnessed is a good match to the ambitious scope of the project. Its reporting and evaluation dimensions, in particular, tackle some of the greatest unanswered questions about alternative assessment. I am eager to learn from Maine's experience, and I hope that we will all hear updates on this project.*

*I hope this article serves as inspiration for practitioners across New England to explore alternative assessment and to contribute to the growing body of information and experience on the subject. May this article mark the beginning of sustained collaboration on alternative assessment among all New England states.*

— Silja Kallenbach, NELRC Coordinator

**T**he adult education network in the state of Maine wants to thank all the teachers for the excellent work that you produced in the five volumes of *Adventures in Assessment* that we have received. Thank you for being honest, persistent, committed, creative, flamboyant, grounded and, above all, diverse.

All of us in Maine are hoping for a summit of assessment in the next 12 months and all journal contributors will be sent an invitation. I would like to thank Loren McGrail for her ability to encourage busy practitioners to share their work for the greater good of all adult learners. The five volumes may become a bestseller in Maine. I am using them as the only text in an evaluation course I am teaching through the University of Maine.

“Escaping flatland is an essential task of envisioning information — for all the interesting worlds (physical, biological, imaginary, human) that we seek to understand and inevitably and happily multivariate in nature. Not flatlands.”

— from *Envisioning Information* by  
Edward Tufte

The excitement that we want to share with you is that Maine through its Quality Indicators has chosen *portfolio assessment* to replace our standardized tests, *peer evaluation* as our program review, *teacher-based research* to affect public policy, and a *new reporting mechanism* that blends qualitative and quantitative data into a usable commodity for program improvement.

Maine is doing what we call contextualized portfolio assessment. Each adult learner, each teacher, each administrator

by  
**Sandy Brawders**



Director, CALL  
Center for Adult  
Learning and Literacy  
in Maine



*What counts is the articulation of action steps that can be taken at the end of each year for the purpose of program improvement.*

of an adult education program will develop a progress portfolio of their work for the year. This portfolio will not be scored, graded, ranked, or put in competition to beat out some other program for funding. The purpose of the tiered portfolios that build on each other is program improvement.

Each program in Maine is developing a baseline of who they are, what they offer, what they have for funding, how many hours teachers work, what services are/are not in the community to support next steps, what barriers might be insurmountable for the adult learners given rural issues of transportation, etc.

The baseline is the first item in everyone's portfolio; the programs will measure qualitative and quantitative progress in relation to this baseline over a three-year period. The program measures against itself, not in relation to a program three hours away with four times the funding and a different population!

What counts is the articulation of action steps that can be taken at the end of each year for the purpose of program improvement. The steps and follow through become the basis of the self-evaluation of a peer evaluation process that may occur every three or four years.

In their roles, teachers see themselves change through their portfolio depending on the people with whom they are working. Adult learners understand their importance to improving the program for the next year.

Adult learner portfolios are only one measure of a program's goals being reached. The yearly action plans of each program double as their end of year report, and gives the Staff Development

Team specific instructions for prioritizing program needs.

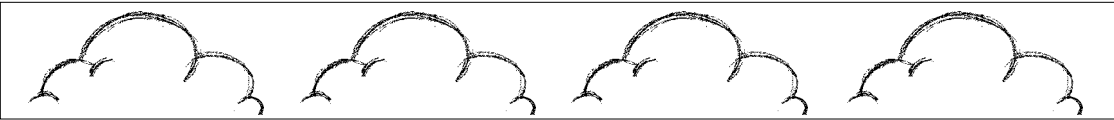
Through our Horizon Grant with the National Institute for Literacy, Maine has seven regional trainers working on site with teachers, adult learners, and administrators to create this integrated system of assessment, evaluation, research, and reporting. Reporting will no longer be a mystery that only administrators understand. Adult learners and teachers will know why we need certain things and will have the language to question whether we do need certain things!

This contextualized portfolio process gets rid of the secret language of standardized testing results, the secret language of funding, and the secret language of day school. This is education among peers! Portfolio allows respect and dignity to prevail!

We are using the portfolio process as a real curriculum for developing critical thinking skills and also as a vehicle to demonstrate transferable skills.

Some programs in Maine are using video portfolio, portfolio on disc, audio portions, or a combination of various media. Jokes are circulating that we want to eventually send our state report to the federal government as a hologram showing the quantitative and then the qualitative. I think pop-ups would also get some attention.

The real point of the humor is that technology is giving us permission to think and display what we think differently. Yes, there are CD-ROM life-long learning portfolios that are not just text! Technology will change the way we perceive information. To believe that we will not find a way to report large



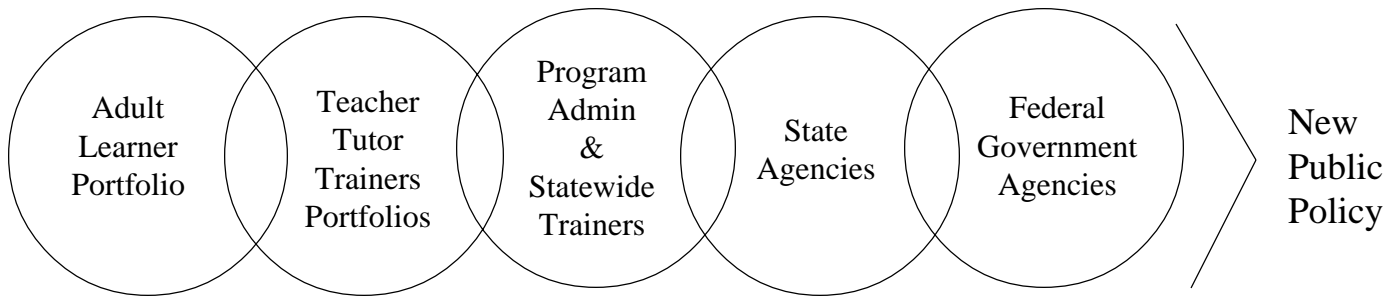
amounts of qualitative data from portfolios when we have a computer with 500 megabytes of memory is absurd. We cannot allow a lack of imagination to stop us, especially if it means a more truthful document upon which to base the development of public policy and funding for adult learners.

Join us in this great adventure and leave flatland behind. Reports are meant

to be read and anticipated, evaluation is meant to lead towards exciting change, assessment is a vehicle of building self-esteem and documenting progress, and research is a way to check standardization and assumptions.

If only I could put a pop-up here, just a small, discreet pop-up, not too flashy...

## EDUCATIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHIES for Every Level



- \*individualized
- \*measure progress and outcomes
- \*determine goals and ongoing assessment
- \*no secrets cc: learner knows everything/has everything
- \*process taught
- \*accomplishments demonstrated
- \*ownership by learner

- \*changing roles captured
- \*determine next step for next year
- \*evaluates materials content priorities
- \*new teacher training mechanism
- \*this is about a teacher's role with the student

- \*program goals met
- \*change determined
- \*facilitate reporting
- \*research questions
- \*process set up for input to state plan

- \*quantitative
- \*qualitative analysis
- \*interagency reporting
- \*policy development
- \*cross fertilization

- \*determine need for new initiatives
- \*new funding levels supported
- \*innovation and research field based

**Contextualized Evaluation**



## PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT *FOREVER* CHANGES

Content

Methodology

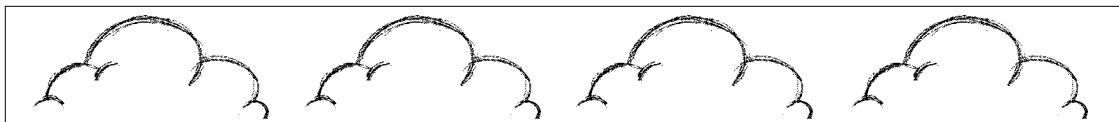
Evaluation

### **The Golden Rules**

The Agreed Upon Ethical Framework  
for Adult Educators

1. The Adult Learner controls, owns, and designs their own portfolio with the practitioner. It is to be portable and transferable.
2. The learner will self-evaluate their own portfolio (progress portfolio) and learn to seek peer evaluation of their outcome portfolio.
3. Demonstration of progress toward the learner's long and short term goals will take place within the portfolio.
4. Portfolio assessment models the concept of process thinking, evaluation, sequential thinking, problem solving, data gathering, theorizing, critiquing and contrasting ideas.

5. The completion of the outcome portfolio is a marker in the adult learner's process of life long learning.



# Portfolios as Alternative Assessment in a Community-Based ESL Transition Program

**T**his article concerns an idea that is still evolving. It's an idea that was implemented in January, 1993, but was hatched several years earlier through my experiences at other workplaces. It's an idea that exemplifies the spirit of cooperation between two community-based organizations and a community college. And it's an idea, similar to one tried in other places, which shows students a lot about how they can see their progress beyond traditional standardized tests.

## Background

The Massachusetts English Literacy Demonstration (MELD) was established in late 1992 through a U.S. Department of Education grant. The Massachusetts Department of Education wrote the proposal for three partnerships between community-based organizations and community colleges.

The focus here is on one of those partnerships, involving the Asian American Civic Association and Quincy School Community Council, both located in Boston's Chinatown community, and Bunker Hill Community College. The partnership adopted the acronym ETP (English Transitional Program).

The MELD program in Chinatown consists of three steps: an ESL class, Adult Basic Education (my class) and then enrollment at Bunker Hill in programs leading to either a one-year

certificate or a two-year associate's degree. Depending on their English proficiency, students can enter the program at any of the three steps.

At all levels students receive counseling throughout the transition from Chinatown to Bunker Hill, which lasts between 20 weeks and almost one year. Before the first classes began, teachers and program administrators agreed that helping students build an on-going collection of their work was worth a try. Since MELD was part of a national demonstration project, we had the freedom to experiment.

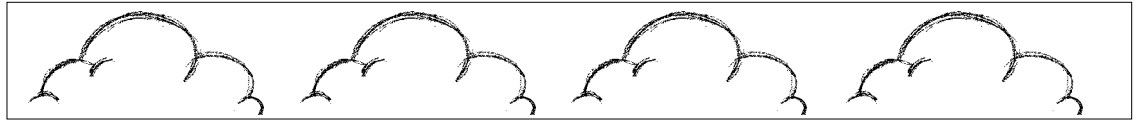
## Previous Experience

My feelings about portfolio assessments go back to an experience in my previous career as a television news producer and writer in Boston. While teaching broadcast journalism courses at two local colleges, it was easy for me to have students assemble portfolios. Among other things, the curriculum called for students to write between 15 and 25 news stories ranging from politics to economics to items off the police blotter. They also had to put together a five-minute news program on an audio tape cassette. I instructed students to use this collection of their work as a presentation portfolio similar to the one described below. When students returned from their internships at radio and TV stations, they told me about excellent feedback from their employers. Many

by  
**Richard  
Goldberg**



Asian American  
Civic Association



*The turning point in the MELD program's use of portfolio assessments came when Bunker Hill Community College agreed to use student portfolios as an alternative to its standardized Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT)*

students heard similar things from their bosses such as, "These examples show me you know enough to get right to work. I don't have to take time to teach you."

In the past two years, I have read some of the recent literature about alternative assessments, beginning with David Rosen's article, *The Progress Portfolio* (see *Adventures in Assessment*, Vol. 2: Ongoing, May, 1992). Especially helpful were the resources quoted at the end of David's article. At that time the presentation portfolio model and its step-by-step process seemed like a natural for many of the students in my class at a displaced workers transition center. Unfortunately, since it was late in the cycle, I didn't do anything with this idea.

A publication which had an even greater effect was *It Belongs to me a Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs* (Fingeret, 1993) (reviewed by Steve Reuys in *Adventures in Assessment*, Vol. 5: The Tale of the Tools, October, 1993). Fingeret's work, which crystallized many of my beliefs about alternative assessment, is a great "how-to-do-it" from people who have done it. Of greatest value for me was the section on moving materials from writing folders to portfolios and how students assess their collections on a regular basis and make the choices as to what constitutes "progress."

### **Beginnings**

During the first cycle of the MELD class, I was fortunate to have a group of students who liked to write, so writing became the focus of their portfolios. The ABE course content is theme-based and

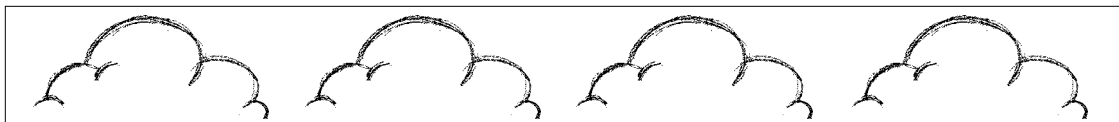
students generate most of the themes, such as the American college system, health care, workers' rights, the legal system, and American government, economics, and culture.

Throughout much of the cycle, students were writing a composition a week, which gave us plenty to look at once we began the process of moving material from writing folders to their portfolios. Toward the end of the cycle, one of the issues that surfaced was fear of failure, especially in a college classroom the students next step.

*"Certainly, I worry about the college class. I ask myself: If I go to Bunker Hill, can I understand the teacher's lecture? Can I finish the homework? Can I qualify for the test? Can I———Oh, I don't know."*

One of the ways we dealt with these fears was to have students conduct a self-assessment to show them how they improved in almost 23 weeks. (See Fig. 1, *Progress Checklist*). In subsequent cycles, the self-assessment was done at the midpoint and again at the end of the course.

There were other things in students' folders. (See Fig. 1-A, *From Folders to Portfolios*). One woman kept a running list of activities by skill area: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. We also had a math test with no computation, only brief descriptions in English of math terminology (the students' often-articulated math weakness), such as perimeter, area, volume, radius, diameter, and circumference. Folders also included copies of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which were updated with the program counselor about every six weeks. In many cases, students' educational goals became more sharply focused through these documents (see Fig.



## 2, *Individual Educational Plans*).

All of this presented a big problem as we tried to wrap things up in the last two weeks of the cycle. There was simply too much material in the folders and too little time for students to reflect on what was meaningful as an indicator of improved English skills. In the end, each student decided what he or she would put into the portfolios. Since this was the first time we were using portfolios, the criteria we used included questions such as, "What kinds of things in your folder would give a teacher at Bunker Hill a good picture of your ability to use English?" "What things in your folder show that you used English well?" Among their entries were the kinds of compositions which they might be asked to do in college, such as compare and contrast or taking a point of view and defending it (one example, "would you disobey a law which you believed was unfair?"). Then copies were made. Original documents were returned to each student. A completed application form for admission to Bunker Hill was included and the portfolios were turned over to the college.

### **Portfolios at Bunker Hill**

The turning point in the MELD program's use of portfolio assessments came when Bunker Hill Community College agreed to use student portfolios as an alternative to its standardized Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT), which is given to non-native English speakers who apply for admission. The entire process of convincing college officials involved a discussion between Alan Shute, MELD's program liaison at Bunker Hill, and Ralph Radell,

chairman of the school's ESL Department. Alan is a full-time employee who works out of Bunker Hill's Center for Self-Directed Learning. He also teaches an ESL course at the college and becomes the advisor to all MELD students once they register for courses. Long before they get there, he introduces students to the resources available at the Learning Center, usually in the second week of each cycle. His presence is a key element of our program and makes the Chinatown connection to the school much more visible and credible. Once students enroll at the college, they can take many courses in the Learning Center as well as in a traditional classroom.

The first time Radell looked at students' portfolios, he was not given their CELT scores. He was concerned about portfolio entries, for example, not knowing how many times their essays had been revised. A writing sample done under a 30-minute deadline on the same day as the CELT is given high priority in the evaluation of borderline test scores. After the next cycle, more and systematized information was provided. This time, CELT scores were included, along with results of each student's work in the Learning Center over the past six months, attendance, and a student profile giving some of Alan's personal observations for a more complete picture of the student's abilities and motivation. Students are actively involved in the decision on where they will be placed. Before they register for courses, they talk with Alan about the challenge and pace of the courses in which their portfolios placed them. For the most part, students are happy with

*The first time Radell looked at students' portfolios, he was not given their CELT scores. He was concerned about portfolio entries, for example, not knowing how many times their essays had been revised.*



*There is also an incentive for students, since we remind them Bunker Hill gives their portfolios equal weight to the standardized college placement test.*

their placement by portfolio, although in a few cases, students have felt more comfortable starting in the lower level courses where their standardized test scores placed them (see Fig. 3, BHCC Results).

### **Lessons of the First Year**

With each cycle, the process of introducing, implementing, and managing portfolios as alternative assessments gets easier, since all of us are sold on the idea that portfolios offer a more complete, in-depth picture of students than their test scores. The concept is still introduced during the first week of classes in Chinatown. Before students in the ESL class move up to the ABE class, they present a portfolio of their work to me. Now we try to show students that a portfolio is a way for them to measure their progress over a period of time. There is also an incentive for students, since we remind them Bunker Hill gives their portfolios equal weight to the standardized college placement test. MELD program graduates who are now students at the college come back to talk with current students and often mention how they felt comfortable with the academic ESL level placement made by their portfolio.

Subsequent classes do essays during the first week of the cycle on defining goals, which become the first entries in their portfolios (see Fig. 4, *Defining Goals*). We give students more time to reflect on what's in their folders. One ABE class took almost one hour to answer these questions 12 weeks into the cycle:

*What in your folder tells you that you have made progress?*

*How do you know?*

*What other things that you have done (not in the folder) also tell you that your English has improved?*

*What else would you like to add to your folder? (See Fig. 5, Portfolio Evaluation).*

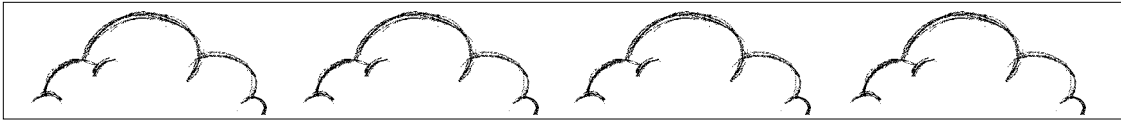
This was a big change from the previous kinds of biweekly class evaluations I used, short answers (I liked ; I did not like ) and checklists, which were often rushed at the end of Friday classes and rarely told me more than I already knew.

We also allow more time for reflection at the end of each cycle, when students notice some of the biggest changes and I see the biggest rewards of portfolio assessments (see Fig. 5: *How Did I Improve?*).

### **The Future**

As we near the end of the second and final year of federal funding for the MELD program, we continue to refine the process of portfolio assessments. Now the portfolios are used not only as a presentation portfolio for enrolling at Bunker Hill, but also as an on-going document of students' work once they get there. As their advisor, Alan tracks their progress and adds to the portfolio teachers' mid-semester evaluations or recommendations for early intervention if a student is at risk. Also included are course schedules, transcripts and requirements for each student's chosen certificate or degree program. The portfolio is then used when Alan advises students during registration periods.

After just one semester the results are encouraging. Only one student said she struggled with her placement according to the portfolio, but she passed the course. Another student who placed



into non-ESL academic courses gave birth to her first child just before final exams and will have to make up incomplete work. All the MELD students moved up the following semester, a tribute to their motivation and commitment. Nine more graduates of our classes in Chinatown joined them at the

college in January, 1994. There's also evidence that portfolio assessments are taking hold in other parts of Bunker Hill. Some teachers in the college's non-credit ESL division have followed MELD's example and are encouraging their students to develop portfolios as an alternative placement to the CELT.



FIGURE 1

## Progress Checklist

My reading comprehension of English has improved

- a great deal  
 a fair amount  
 not very much  
 not at all

When I read something in English now, I can  
 (check all of the things that you can do better  
 than before)

- understand the main idea of what I read.  
 give a short oral summary of what I read.  
 give a short written summary of what I  
 read,  
 use my background knowledge of the  
 subject to help me understand what I read.  
 guess the meanings of some new words  
 from how they are used in a sentence.

My writing skills have improved

- a great deal  
 a fair amount  
 not very much  
 not at all

When I write an essay now, I can  
 (check all of the things that you can do better  
 than before)

- brainstorm several ideas about the subject  
 organize my ideas before writing  
 follow directions and write on a specific  
 subject  
 write sentences that are clear and easy to  
 understand  
 use correct punctuation and capitalization  
 find my grammar mistakes and correct  
 them  
 write an essay under a time limit



FIGURE 1 CONTINUED

My speaking skills have improved

- a great deal
- a fair amount
- not very much
- not at all

When I speak English now, I can  
(check all of the things that you can do better  
than before)

- speak clearly so that an English speaker  
can understand me.
- ask an English speaker questions when I do  
not understand him or her.
- use English more in the classroom to speak  
with teachers and classmates
- give the correct pronunciation of most  
English words I know.

My listening and note-taking skills have im-  
proved

- a great deal
  - a fair amount
  - not very much
  - not at all
- understand the main idea of what the  
person is saying

When I listen to the teacher or to a tape now, I  
can understand most of what the person said in  
the lecture or on the tape

- (check all of the things you can do better than  
before)
- take notes using my own abbreviations or  
"shorthand"
  - answer questions correctly about what the  
speaker said



FIGURE 1-A

Figure 1-A

From Folders to Portfolios in the First MELD  
Class

\* Writings  
\* Self-Assessment  
\* Activities by skill area  
\* Math Test  
\* Individual Education Plan (IEP)  
\* Completed Bunker Hill admission  
application



FIGURE 2

Individual Education Plans (IEP's)

NAME: S.X.

Date: Sept. 2, 1993

GOAL: Medical Secretary

WHEN: 1994

STEPS ACHIEVED

- 1. Finished ESL Class 4/93
- 2. Move up to ABE class 5/93
- 3 Will go to Bunker Hill Community College  
9/93
- 4. Will register for BHCC 9/7/93

ACTIONS:

- 1. Listen to the radio and watch the TV to improve my listening.
- 2. Read more books to know more words.
- 3. Talk more to improve my speaking.

BARRIERS

Listening and vocabulary are still my barriers.



## FIGURE 2 CONTINUED

NAME: H.L.

GOAL: After I get a high school certificate, I will apply for college to study electronics.

WHEN: ?

STEPS ACHIEVED

1. Enroll ABE class 7/93
2. Go to EDP (External Diploma Program) at AACA. 7/94
3. Apply for college to study electronics program. 7/95

ACTIONS:

1. Working on grammar, writing, essays and discussion.
2. Watch TV and finish the homework.
3. Go to BHCC to use the computer.

BARRIERS:

Time problem (restaurant cook)

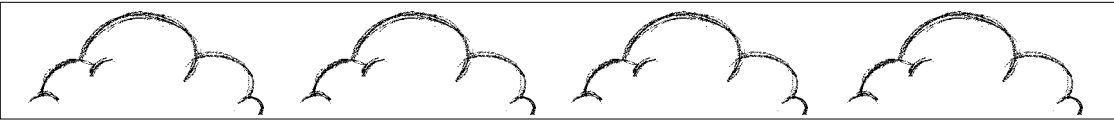


FIGURE 3

Most of the students making the transition to Bunker Hill Community College from Chinatown place in one of three levels of academic ESL courses, one being the lowest and three being the highest and last level of ESL before students can enroll in regular academic courses. In many cases, the alternative portfolio assessments placed students in one level higher than they were placed by the CELT (Comprehensive English Language Test), which the college uses as its standardized placement test for non-native English speakers. These assessments were done in August, 1993 for students planning to enroll for the September, 1993 semester. Once they enrolled, all but three took courses at the level of their portfolio assessments.

Student Placement According to College's Standardized Test Placement According to Portfolio Assessment

T.L.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2
J.W.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 3
H.W.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2
S.X.	ESL Level 3	ESL Level 2

This student was right on the line between 2 and 3, she asked to be placed in 2

Q.L.	ESL Level 3	ESL Level 3
Q.K.	ESL Level 3	ESL Level 3
M.C.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 2
F.L.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2

This student asked to be placed in Level 1

C.F.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2
Y.T.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2
K.C.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 3
P.C.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 3
M.H.	ESL Level 1	ESL Level 2

This student asked to be placed in Level 1

B.H.	ESL Level 2	ESL Level 2
------	-------------	-------------



FIGURE 4

## Figure 4

Excerpts from the first essays on defining goals  
(written during first week of cycle)

"First of all I should learn English hard and finish my homework on time. Secondly, I must try to speak more English anytime and go to Bunker Hill Community College's Learning Center discussion group once a week. Finally, I am determined to overcome the barriers that stopped me from learning. I'll watch TV, listen to the radio tape, and read newspaper's news every day. If I have any questions, I'll ask the teacher and classmates. I hope after finish the class my English will move into a new level. I'll be a college student soon.

"At public occasions I was unable to express my idea. I felt that I was almost a person with a mouth that could not speak and ears that could not hear. Now I face a big change.... The teacher encourages us with a sentence "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." Confidence is too trusty myself. Confidence will bring infinite strength... I know everybody has peaks and valleys in the life. I seem like to be in my valleys now. I have got to have patience and faith. In this class I learn step by step, word by word. I study time by time. Things are going to turn around for me.

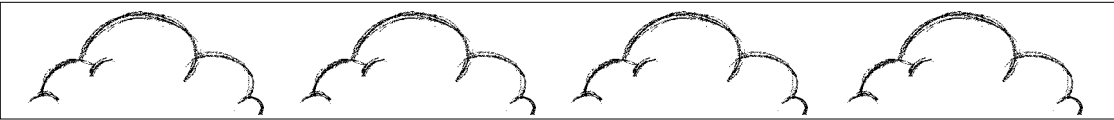


FIGURE 5

When you look at what is in your portfolio, how can you tell your English has improved?

(written during week 17 of a 23 week cycle)

"Since I started learning at this class, I fell my English has improved. Such as when I watch TV and listen to the radio, I can understand more than before. And also I have more confidence to talk with other people. Such as when I go outside I can talk with someone and on the telephone."

"I am working on grammar, writing, essays, reading, idiom and comprehension in ESL Transitional Program. I visited Bunker Hill Learning Center once a week discussion group and worked on the computer... I have improved my English a lot... I can talk English with American people at work. My reading and writing skills are also better then before."

"The time passed very fast, our study is almost finished. When I reviewed my achievement, I found that I made great progress in my English studies. For instance, my reading skills are improving. I read the newspaper, letters and books more often than before, and my writing is improving too. Although I feel writing is still difficult for me, but I still keep doing it, after I finish each essay I feel very happy..."

"I'm very sorry that the class end very soon, and we'll go to Bunker Hill College to continue our study, it will be another exciting day!"



## Assessment in California

# Implementing Alternative Assessment Tools

I would like to start by expressing my appreciation for all the work and ideas of those involved in the creation of this journal, especially to teachers who contributed articles and alternative assessment tools. I would like to offer my response to the tools presented in previous journals and particularly how they have been adapted to address the needs of the learning environment where I teach. Moreover, I will attempt to conceptualize the extent to which the journals have affected and influenced my vision of assessment.

It is important to mention, however, that *all* the different ideas shown in the journals made me evaluate my notion of assessment and functioned to create and implement mechanisms that may enable me to evaluate learners' progress more efficiently and accurately. The range of issues oscillates from diagnosing problems and needs to measuring the process of learning. Some tools were not particularly applicable, yet they acted as elicitors to analyzing and measuring the effectiveness of the different assessment tools presented.

by  
**Byron Barahona**



Alameda County Library  
Adult Literacy Program,  
Fremont, California

### The California Program

The adult literacy program I work in is located in Alameda County, northern California. This program operates with volunteers who commit to tutor ABE or ESL students for two to four hours a week for a minimum of six months. These tutors are first trained by our staff

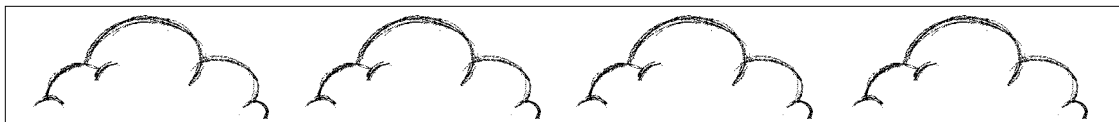
for 18 hours. Students or adult learners who come to this program are expected to be able to focus more on reading and writing. Likewise, ESL students are expected to have a minimum level of conversational English and some basic knowledge of English structure.

As the number of students and tutors grows, there's also an increasing need to find more adequate means to maintain records of students' progress. This need has led to pursuing new and more diverse assessment tools. In this search, *Adventures in Assessment* journals have been timely for pedagogical concern and key to the success of reaching this goal, for both articles and assessment tools found in the journals pose important questions.

First and foremost, they make us — practitioners — think and rethink the need and the process involved in evaluating progress. Second, they make us look back to analyze more critically what has been done.

Third, they help us to reflect upon what can be changed, adapted or implemented. Finally, while there is a large degree of accountability in the process, there is also an attempt to withdraw from the notion that only standardized tests can accurately provide the information needed. This balance is essential since both students and tutors or teachers want and need to know what progress has been made.

The following are some of the tools



that have been incorporated into the tutor training. The selection was rather difficult to make because the options were many and of important value. However, due to the nature of our program we are unable to expect extensive and more comprehensive assessment from the tutors. Thus, while there was a clear attempt to limit the amount of assessment tools, much effort was put to incorporate the most appropriate tools. Now let's look at some of the alternative tools chosen.

The progress profile, discussed in Lucille Fandel's article "*Getting in Touch: Participants Goals and issues*" (November 1991), is a good example of a tool that actively engages the learner. It has the power to pose questions only students may be able to answer. It calls for reflection in a manner that goes beyond the general desire of simply wanting to improve writing and readings skills. In a Progress Profile the learner is invited to think about what she or he wants to learn, why, and its feasibility. Once these three steps are completed, there is the opportunity to stop and reflect on its effectiveness along the process and finally to evaluate how far the student has succeeded in achieving his/her goal. As a result learners should be able to recognize their responsibility in the learning process and to diagnose what the next step is. Also very important in this assessment tool is that there is a genuine attempt to involve both student and tutor in the decision making process.

At our program the *Progress Profile* has been well received by staff members who predict tutors may be eager to try it out because of its compact size yet fairly

comprehensive format. In the past, learners made progress, but there was no systematic mechanism to measure that progress and the process involved.

The *Read/Write/Now Adult Learning Center Assessment Adventures portfolio* by Janet Kelly (November 1991 and May 1992, *Adventures in Assessment*) has also been well received at our program. It would be practically impossible to absorb all the different and valuable tools that this center has created. Therefore, a limited number of tools have been chosen to be used. Since we operate with volunteers who tutor no more than four hours per week, it is necessary to create an effective assessment system that does not require a tremendous amount of time to implement. Our volunteers work full time jobs for the most part so the program is very careful not to take too much time evaluating progress and to expect unrealistic goals. In addition, in the process of selecting tools modifications were made in order to adapt such tools to particular needs and aspects of the program. The following is a list of what was considered to be suitable for our program: Book List, Looking at Your Own Reading Behavior, Reading Conference Record, Teacher Log, Learner's Log, Goals List, Reading Progress Checklist, and the Writing Progress Checklist.

We have adapted the above tools and presented them to tutors, to provide them with different options. In principle, tutors are expected to test them out and then decide what works for them given that each tutoring situation is different from one another.

Taking into account that there might be a tendency to not use the above assessment tools, we have tried to

*At our program the Progress Profile has been well received by staff members who predict tutors may be eager to try it out because of its compact size yet fairly comprehensive format. In the past, learners made progress, but there was no systematic mechanism to measure that progress and the process involved.*



*The idea to ask learners to think about how they read seemed appropriate to us. It encourages learners to think critically about how they confront a given text or reading.*

consolidate all the different options into our current monthly report that hopefully would allow us to perceive how learners are progressing.

Here is what our tool kit or portfolio looks like after adaptations and revisions.

**Reading List.** We changed Kelly's *Book List* to *Reading List* because most of our students (both ABE and ESL) do not necessarily read complete books. Instead, they concentrate on shorter pieces of readings. The reasons are obvious. Reading a complete book in class or for class would require a long period of time. Nor are all our students able to read complete books. Even those who can may still need a lot of time to finish a book. Therefore this would limit other class activities that are also necessary to develop and enhance their reading and writing skills.

Nevertheless, the rationale was very much appreciated among our staff. Students do need to gain a sense of accomplishment. This is therefore a good way to keep track of whatever reading occurs in and outside of class as well as registering achievements.

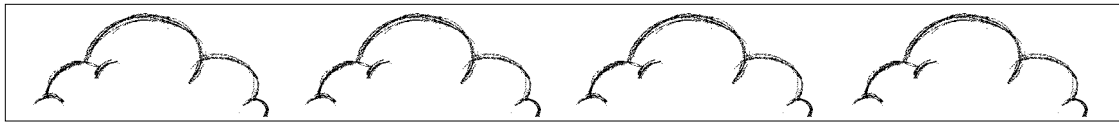
**Reading Behavior Checklist.** The idea to ask learners to think about *how* they read seemed appropriate to us. It encourages learners to think critically about how they confront a given text or reading. The questions posed are essential in order to elucidate important reading issues, for learners — ideally — will be stimulated to discover and reinvent their own reading strategies. Taking into consideration the level of difficulty that some of these questions may have for some learner whose read-

ing and writing skills are not that developed, it was decided to simplify them and to incorporate most of the questions into the monthly report (see the attached monthly report; this report is still in process).

**Reading Conference Record.** Once again the basic principle behind this tool was well received. Keeping a record of questions, observations and reflections about sustained readings enables teachers to understand problems and successes learners may have in reading. A minor modification to this form had to be done where it says "*Book Read.*" Instead we put "Reading" for the same reasons indicated in the Reading List.

**Teacher's Log.** This is an essential assessment tool. It allows the teacher to maintain a conspicuous and adequate record of classroom issues. This way teachers do not have to look for notes scattered all around desks filled with papers, etc. The advantage is that teachers and tutors can immediately register difficulties, concerns, and new interests learners may have. Nothing has been changed in this tool and tutors are strongly encouraged to use it. Some of our staff members are currently using this tool as well. It can be noted that continual review and analysis of these notes can lead to properly addressing learners' needs.

**Learner's Log.** The Learner's Log is another essential assessment tool. It helps the learner maintain a good record of what he or she views as improvement in their reading and writing skills. This is very important for teachers because it



will help us see what students consider important indications or markers of progress and what part of instruction has had a significant impact.

In the same way, the Learning Diary by Johan Uvin (November 1991) has been incorporated. Although it is similar to the previous one, it was included because it addresses issues that pertain to ESL students.

**Spelling Self Test.** This is not necessarily a striking spelling device, but important to the extent that students can test their spelling on their own and concentrate on words whose spelling they need to review immediately.

**Goals List.** Asking learners to identify their goals for learning is unquestionably very important. Currently we use a tool that has been designed by the California Department of Education (Bureau of Adult Literacy) called CALPEP, California Adult Learner Progress Evaluation. Although most of the goals listed in the Read/Write Goals List are the same as CALPEP's, there are items in the latter that could be incorporated to CALPEP, including Personal Goals: 1,2,5,8,16,17; Family: 1; Community: 2; Work: 2, 5, 8; and Educational Goals: all.

The last two assessment tools I found of tremendous value are the Reading Progress Checklist and the Writing Progress Checklist. These tools were not incorporated into the portfolio to be used by tutors. Some of the points raised in them, however, have been incorporated into the monthly report. In addition, I have decided to use them for the

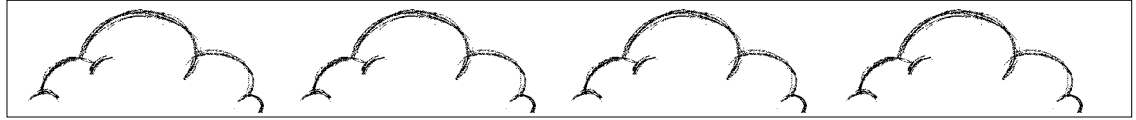
following reasons. First, both the reading and writing checklist allow me to register specific reading and writing issues, such as how well learners understand in-class readings, participation, ability to select topics to write about, etc. Second, I could look at this information periodically to gain an understanding of which areas learners are improving in and which ones continue to be problematic. Overall, what I find even more valuable is that all the different assessment tools tackle different problems in ways that might normally be overlooked. In this portfolio there is an opportunity to deal with every learning issue in its own sphere and consequently the level of learner's success may increase more rapidly.

Finally, another tool that attracted our attention was the *Listening Progress Tool* described in *Letter from Uruguay*, Volume 4. This is an ingenious adaptation of some of the tools which appeared in previous issues of this journal. We found it to be quite relevant to the work we do with the ESL students. We thought this would be a very good way to measure how ESL students do in the outside world.

We consider that progress in reading and writing leads to progress in learners' ability to communicate outside the classroom. The Listening Progress Tool addresses this issue quite well, so it was decided to incorporate it into the monthly report. As usual changes have been made, but the basic principle remains the same (see monthly report).

To conclude I want to add that looking back to evaluate assessment tools requires a great amount of effort, reading, understanding, adapting,

*We consider that progress in reading and writing leads to progress in learners' ability to communicate outside the classroom. The Listening Progress Tool addresses this issue quite well, so it was decided to incorporate it into the monthly report.*



changing and applying new ideas. Now, given that student populations change over time as do learners' interests, it seems essential to evaluate ongoing assessment practices more often than is usually done. If not to change, at least to reaffirm that what is being done is still relevant and applicable. Yet, there is always room for improvement and change. How apprehensively and efficiently we do this will determine the

success of our work. Students' progress will to some extent reflect such effort. With this in mind, the Alameda County Library Adult Literacy Program gave me the task to investigate alternative assessment tools and look at the different options I found in *Adventures in Assessment* journals. In this article I wanted to share the result of this process and our appreciation for the valuable ideas that enriched our assessment practices.



## MONTHLY TUTORING REPORT

**Attendance** Group tutor note the dates your group met and who attended

One to one tutors put the dates you and your met.

Student (s)/ Tutors	Dates

### Reading

What did you read this month?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Students and tutors: Please answer the following questions. You may answer, "yes," "no," "sometimes," or anything you think is correct.

1 Which activity helped you in your reading?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 What did you learn this month about reading?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 Did you understand most of what you read in your tutoring sessions?  
\_\_\_\_\_

4 Do you try to understand what you read by:  
\*\*\*thinking about the title  
\*\*\*looking at the pictures  
\*\*\*thinking about how what you are reading relates to your life

5 Can you read and understand more words than before?  
\_\_\_\_\_

6 If you don't know a word do you try:  
\*\*\* sounding out the letters  
\*\*\* breaking it down into smaller words or syllables  
\*\*\* reading the words around it and guessing what the words make sense

7 What continues to be a problem in your reading?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Writing

What did you write this month?  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 Which activities helped you in your writing?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 What did you learn this month about writing?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 What continues to be a problem in your writing?  
\_\_\_\_\_

4 Can you spell more words than you could last month or before?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5 If you can't spell a word do you leave it blank, or spell as much as you can?  
\_\_\_\_\_



## MONTHLY TUTORING REPORT

Do you think your writing is getting better?  
 What activities did you find useful to improve your writing?  
 Do you work on reading and writing?  
 Do you work on reading and writing at home? What kinds of things do you do?

### Goals

What do you want to read and write next month?  
 Have any of your goals been fulfilled?  
 Have any of your goals changed?  
 Do you have any new goals that relate to improving your writing and reading; or improving your English if you are an ESL student?

### ESOL Section

For ESOL students to fill out.  
 The Adult Literacy program would like to know how your participation in the program affects your ability to communicate outside the classroom.

Please answer the following questions:

### LISTENING PROGRESS

Could you follow the conversation successfully?  
 Were you able to understand most of the words?  
 How did you do it?  
 a. guessing the meaning of unknown words?  
 b. guessing the meaning of words you did not hear?  
 c. predicting according to the interpretation of the picture?  
 d. other?

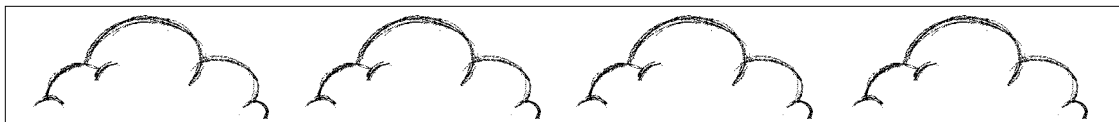
How was the speed of the conversation?

- a. Slow
- b. Medium
- c. Medium —fast
- d. Fast

Prediction helped me.

- I understood
- a. the general idea
  - b. the details
  - c. the purpose

Because of the speed I could understand  
 I could use the context to guess unfamiliar or unheard words



## *An Analysis of Adventures in Assessment*

# Images of Participatory Assessment in Adult Education

**A**s a sometime adult literacy practitioner particularly interested in alternative assessment, reading through all five issues of *Adventures in Assessment* felt akin to attending a dream conference. The forty-odd articles in these journals, all written by adult literacy practitioners and program staff, offer a dazzling variety of assessment ideas, tools and procedures, as well as the stories behind their development and ongoing revision.

A bi-annual journal, *Adventures in Assessment* is edited by Loren McGrail and published by SABES, the Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support. Each edition begins with an introduction by McGrail, and includes articles written by practitioners working in a wide variety of contexts, including workplace, ESL, family literacy, ABE and GED programs. Most pieces include samples of specific forms, checklists, questionnaires, surveys or interview questions, along with a narrative explaining the process of developing, using and, often, revising these tools. The idea behind the publication is that it "will become a resource by and for practitioners to select and adapt tools for their own contexts" (McGrail, *AiA*, Vol. 1, p. ii).

The first three volumes of *Adventures in Assessment* are entitled "Getting Started," "Ongoing" and "Looking Back, Starting Again," representing three "stages" in learner and program assess-

ment. According to the cover page of Volume 4, "the first three volumes of *Adventures in Assessment* present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts." The fourth volume contains articles in all three categories, and Volume 5 (October 1993), called "The Tale of the Tools," includes reflective pieces written by practitioners who were involved in Component Three of the Greater Opportunities in Adult Learner Success (G.O.A.L.S) Project developed by the Massachusetts Bureau of Adult Education. Although the original intention of the G.O.A.L.S. Project was to "investigate and design an accountability system which would be a true reflection of the field" (Whiton, *AiA*, Vol. 5, p. 10), these articles demonstrate, instead, practitioners' commitment to developing alternative assessments whose purpose is primarily informing learners and instruction rather than funders. The result is an incredibly rich collection of "tales" of alternative assessment.

What makes *Adventures in Assessment* especially intriguing and useful is the journal's unifying purpose, which, as McGrail writes in the introduction to Volume One, is "to explore participatory assessment or learner-centered approaches to assessment and evaluation" (McGrail, *AiA*, Vol. 1, p. ii). Citing Lytle (1991), McGrail identifies key features of participatory adult education and assessment. "The most important principle,"

by  
**Cathy Luna**



Instructor, University  
Reading/Study  
Improvement Service



*The practitioners in Adventures in Assessment recognize that traditional methods of assessing learners and programs cannot support their commitment to these new ways of thinking about adult learners and literacy learning. Instead, the participatory images of assessment they present move towards a redefinition of assessment as learning.*

she writes, “is that assessment be done with the learner and not to the learner” (p. ii). Specifically, “[p]articipatory assessment means a collaborative relationship among learners and program staff in determining the goals, texts and contexts of assessment, as well as in judging its outcomes” (p. ii).

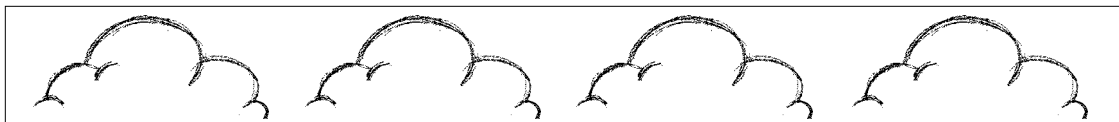
This focus on participatory assessment reflects a wider paradigm shift in adult education. McGrail begins her introduction to Volume One with a quote from Lytle (1991) which reveals the interconnected aspects of this shift:

Constructing new images of adults—images built on assumptions of dignity and competence, of literacy as reflective and self-critical practice, and of learning as participatory—requires that we rethink or reconceptualize not only our notions of what counts as literacy but also our methods of inquiry—the processes we use to document and assess learning (Cited in McGrail, 1991, p. ii).

The practitioners in *Adventures in Assessment* recognize that traditional methods of assessing learners and programs cannot support their commitment to these new ways of thinking about adult learners and literacy learning. Instead, the participatory images of assessment they present move towards a redefinition of assessment as learning. Lytle and Wolfe (1989) write that “[a]lthough various approaches assess literacy as skills, tasks and practices, only participatory approaches have the potential for assessing literacy as critical reflection” (p. 58). Perhaps this is because taking an active role in assessing oneself and one’s world results in the “internal change of consciousness” which Brookfield argues

is central to self-directed learning: “This consciousness involves an appreciation of the contextuality of knowledge and an awareness of the culturally constructed form of value frameworks, belief systems and moral codes that influence behavior and the creation of social structures” (Cited in Robishaw, AiA, Vol. 5, p. 94). There is a cyclical relationship between action and reflection, and taking an active role in assessment is part of that cycle: “In the course of this recurring cycle of action and reflection, according to Brookfield, learners become more proactive, assume control over goal setting, and determine personally meaningful criteria for evaluating their learning” (Lytle, 1991, p. 118). Thus, a definition of literacy as critical reflection leads to a reconceptualization of assessment as participatory and as a part of learning. And, similarly, reports of “experiments” with more participatory assessment practices may help practitioners, learners and researchers better understand the nature of critical reflection in adult education.

Recognizing the centrality of the active involvement of adult learners in participatory assessment practices, McGrail and the practitioners contributing to *Adventures in Assessment* seek to reconceptualize assessment by upsetting the traditional roles of “teachers” and students.” In particular, they make a commitment to look for ways to involve adult learners in the development, use and revision of the tools and processes used to assess learner progress and to evaluate adult literacy classes and programs. What does it look like when adult literacy practitioners attempt to make assessment practices participa-



tory? What new images of assessment and possibilities for learner participation emerge in these articles, and what questions and issues do they raise?

### **Possibilities for Participatory Assessment Practices**

Figure 1 illustrates some examples of the roles learners are asked to take on in the assessment practices described in *Adventures in Assessment*. These practices can be categorized as 'initial', 'ongoing' and 'looking back' assessments of learner progress (McGrail, AiA, Vol. 1), assessments of classes and programs, and learner participation in the development and revision of assessments. To help illuminate the participatory aspects of these practices and some of the questions they raise, I will relate them to three of the "general features" of learner-centered or participatory assessment practices that Lytle observes emerging from other "grassroots research and staff development projects" (Lytle, 1988, p. 3):

*(1) Adults are active participants, co-investigators in determining and describing their own literacy practices, strengths and strategies. Whether initiated by an administrator, teacher/tutor, or by adults themselves, the design and implementation of the procedures constitute a dialogue or collaboration. (Lytle, 1988, p. 3)*

The initial assessment practices described in Figure 1 (next two pages) illustrate adults co-investigating their own literacies through discussion, reading and writing. In contrast to the traditional role of test taker and recipient of expert diagnoses, these adult learners are asked to generate or choose their

own goals, answer questions based on their own knowledge of their abilities and interests, and even "place" themselves into classes through a process of self evaluation and discussion with staff. Rosen (AiA, Vol. 2) writes about a portfolio assessment process that asks students to choose not only the contexts, but also the purpose and audience for their portfolio; this illustrates a practice that encourages adult learners to describe themselves in their own terms.

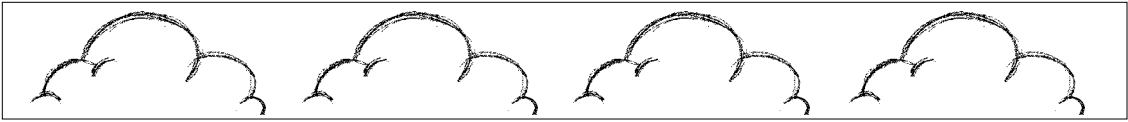
Several practitioners raise concerns about what it might mean to ask learners to describe their progress, however. Isserlis, working with ESL learners, worries that "[f]or learners with little prior schooling or from cultures where teachers dictate what happens in a classroom, the concept of self-assessment may be difficult to grasp. Surely, many learners have an innate sense of their own movement with language and literacy, but the expression/ verbalization of that progress may not be within the frameworks they have developed or use in describing learning" (AiA, Vol. 2, p. 6). Isserlis supports her concern with examples of learners' very general answers to survey questions such as "What do you think you learned this year?" Often, she believes, the answers to such questions (e.g. "Before I understand nothing. now I understand small") reflect learners' modesty, cultural background, or desire to show appreciation to the teacher, rather than revealing an awareness of specific progress. While, Isserlis writes, "there is value in the process of asking questions about how learners learn and about how they feel they are progressing...[t]his talk about learning...is somewhat of a language of

*Several practitioners raise concerns about what it might mean to ask learners to describe their progress.*



FIGURE 1:  
**SOME EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES  
FROM *ADVENTURES IN ASSESSMENT***

***PART 1: LEARNER SELF ASSESSMENT***



**FIGURE 1:  
SOME EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES  
FROM *ADVENTURES IN ASSESSMENT***

***PART 2: LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENT OF CLASSES,  
PROGRAMS AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES***



*Perhaps the process of working together to learn a 'language' with which to assess ourselves is inseparable from 'growth and change.'*

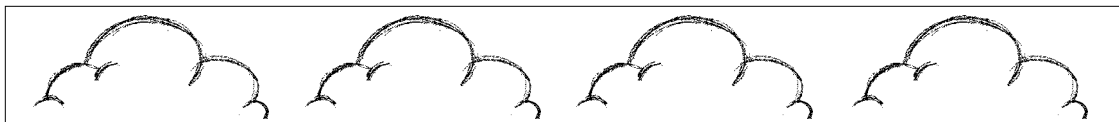
its own and must be learned as (yet another) language" (p. 8). Isserlis' comments focus practitioners again on a central question: Who is assessment for? One hope is that learning the kind of "metalanguage" needed to talk about changes in their reading/writing strategies, for example, is part of a more general process of critical reflection and growth. McGrail points out that this might be true for everyone:

All of us—administrators, counselors, teachers and students—find it difficult to talk about literacy and language development beyond talking about skills. We are all new to thinking about learning as a process and not just a product. What Isserlis claims is true for many learners... is probably true for practitioners as well. We are just beginning to develop our own framework and don't always know how to translate our thoughts, hunches, and ideas about what constitutes progress into practice, tools and procedures that measure and document what we believe to be real indicators of growth and change" (AiA, Vol. 3, p. vi).

Perhaps the process of working together to learn a 'language' with which to assess ourselves is inseparable from 'growth and change.' One caveat to this, however, is that we need to make sure that learners are not stifled or silenced in this process. This might mean encouraging learners to use their first language or other, nonverbal modes of communication as they take part in this process of assessment/literacy learning. The overarching question we are left with is one of communication and collaboration: In what ways can practitioners and learners talk and work together to build frameworks for critical reflection and assessment?

Practitioner/authors in *Adventures in Assessment* report less involvement of learners in the design and revision of the assessment practices they discuss than in their implementation. While most of the authors relate that they revise assessment practices based on learners' reactions to them in the classroom, only a few report involving learners in the initial design of assessment practices (Uvin, AiA, Vol. 1) or asking for explicit feedback on the usefulness of particular practices to learners (Barry, AiA, Vol. 5). In Volume 5, however, several authors look closely at what assessment practices have taught them about particular learners and find themselves wanting to know more about "how learners experience learning" (McGrail, AiA, Vol. 5, p.5). Trunnel, for example, investigates the contents of two students' portfolios and evaluates the usefulness of various assessment tools. He realizes, though, that he cannot do this alone: "All this is fine. But what is helpful FOR THE STUDENT?" (AiA, Vol. 5, p. 46). In her piece (co-authored by Pat F., her student), Barry (AiA, Vol. 5) asks Pat which assessment tools she finds useful. Barry's report of their discussion represents a needed movement towards learner involvement in designing, revising, and reporting on new assessment practices and, ultimately, in building new frameworks.

*(2) Rather than adhering too strictly to a predetermined script, learner-centered assessment involves dynamic exchanges among learners, texts and teachers/tutors. When difficulties are encountered, assistance is given rather than withheld; the social situation provides a supportive context for*



*experimentation and risk-taking (Lytle, 1988, p.3).*

Practices such as asking learners to choose which texts to read during initial placement interviews contradict the rigidity of traditional tests. Other practices that illustrate 'dynamic exchanges' include open-ended self and course evaluation questions, 'town meetings' (Cason, AiA, Vol. 3) and shared teacher logs (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 5). The idea of a practitioner sharing the anecdotal records she keeps about students represents an important shift in assessment roles; rather than being the evaluator of students' progress, the practitioner who shares her observations about students becomes a co-investigator, and her students can use her perspective as data for self-reflection. This would also seem to change the power relationships in the classroom, contributing to a "supportive environment for experimentation." While only one practitioner reports having worked on ways to share teacher log entries with students (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 5, p. 20) several others note in their articles that they are interested in this idea.

Asking learners for feedback about programs and classes and then acting on that feedback is another practice that supports open exchanges and risk-taking on the part of both learners and practitioners. One inspiring example of this is Cason's report of the all program 'town meetings' held by the ESL learners and practitioners at the Log School in Dorchester, Mass. Teachers provided questions as a springboard for two group discussions which resulted in concrete changes in the program. These

changes included adding drop-in tutoring times, instituting a different attendance policy and including current students in orientation programs for incoming learners (Cason, AiA, Vol. 2, p. 13). Less tangible results of the meetings, according to Cason, included building the program's sense of community, and involving students in leadership roles outside of the classroom. In addition, Cason believes that the meetings helped learners envision the ESL program as a part of a larger community, and that this new vision encouraged them to see community issues, such as neighborhood safety, as "legitimate topics of action and discussion in ESL class" (p. 14). The open-ended dynamics of the town meetings seem to have been a springboard for further action for both learners and practitioners.

*(3) What's assessed reflects the particular goals of learners and often includes (a) literacy practices in everyday life (how adults are using what they've learned and what significance these things have in their lives), (b) varieties of tasks and strategies for reading and writing particular texts in specific contexts, as well as (c) learners' perceptions or theories of reading and writing (Lytle, 1988, p.4).*

I will discuss the implications of asking learners to set goals later in this paper; in terms of the range of what is being assessed by the practices documented here, however, many of the goal setting questions and activities described in *Adventures in Assessment* do ask learners to think about the ways they use literacy in their lives and about the ways they think about reading and writing.

*Asking learners for feedback about programs and classes and then acting on that feedback is another practice that supports open exchanges and risk-taking on the part of both learners and practitioners.*



*Along with assessing what learners accomplish in relation to their language/literacy goals, practitioners express interest in assessing other aspects of growth, including changes in learner self-esteem, confidence, and community building.*

For example, Ebbitt, et al. (AiA, Vol. 2) describe a goal setting process during which “students prioritize, in pairs or as a group, the language survival areas they would like to explore in their ESL class” (p. 50). The Read/Write/Now placement interview form asks adult learners to consider their most important reasons for wanting to learn to read and write (AiA, Vol. 1, p. 20), and their questionnaire, “Looking at Your Own Reading Behavior” asks learners to answer questions such as “Do you ask yourself questions when you read?” (Appendix 10).

Along with assessing what learners accomplish in relation to their language/literacy goals, practitioners express interest in assessing other aspects of growth, including changes in learner self-esteem, confidence, and community building. This interest seems to spring from an expanded notion of what constitutes growth and learning and from a desire to help learners see the progress they are making in all of these facets of their lives. While these aspects of growth are not generally ones that are captured in learners’ initial written goals, practitioners report that these kinds of changes are often the ones that learners themselves notice and value when they occur.

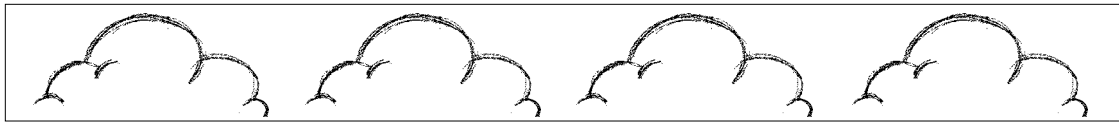
Barry, for example, writes that her student Pat “highlighted the value of teaching and learning from [classmates], and developing a sense of responsibility towards each other” (AiA, Vol. 5, 80). Discussing Pat’s enthusiastic comments about having her work published and offering a workshop to other teachers and students, Barry writes, “The importance of recording these kinds of comments is obvious to me. This is the

data which reflects development of self-esteem and self doubt. It is my hope that by recording segments of conversation with students, over time, I will gather a true reflection of their views of themselves as learners” (p. 79).

She then goes on to write that she has heard of another teacher who shared this data with learners through her teachers log, and comments, “I hope to make my log available so that, just as with the other assessment tools, the log is not a device for a teacher to measure a student’s progress, but a method through which learners can assess their own growth.” (p. 79). Barry’s thoughts on the importance of sharing the information she collects about learners emphasize that the primary purpose of this kind of information should be to inform learner self-assessment and not to convince funders of a program’s viability; uses of this kind of information which do not include the learner bypass the opportunity for critical reflection and therefore seem unproductive, if not exploitative.

This conclusion raises the question, though, of what kind of information about learner progress *should* be used for accountability purposes. Comings, in a letter in Vol. 3 of *Adventures in Assessment*, argues that learner assessment should not be used for program evaluation:

Using student assessment as the measure of effectiveness for program accountability, no matter how good the assessment tool, will always make the test result the focus of programs, rather than the needs of the student. Funding agencies do have a legitimate right to measure the effectiveness of the programs they fund. But, looking



at student progress does not necessarily provide a way to judge whether or not money is being well spent" (p. 43).

Comings argues instead that programs should be judged against "standards of practice and service," following the accreditation model used by colleges and universities (p. 44). Such a model might free practitioners and learners to focus less on measuring and documenting learner progress for others and more on making sure learners have opportunities for self assessment and critical reflection.

Overall, the participatory assessment practices described in *Adventures in Assessment* demonstrate a range of learner roles that are characterized by action, reflection and decision-making. They involve learners in generating goals, making choices, assessing their own progress, providing feedback and bringing about change.

The image of learners that informs and results from these practices is very different from the image inspired by traditional assessments that focus on uncovering deficits and prescribing remediation. Instead of the picture of a passive adult learner who waits for someone else to tell her what she needs to learn and then "gives" her that needed knowledge, these assessment practices paint portraits of adults who come to programs with valuable experience and knowledge and with their own agendas. As Lytle (1988) writes, "these new approaches to assessment communicate respect for adults — for what they bring to learning and for what they come to learn" (p. 3).

The practitioners writing about these new approaches raise many important

questions about their own assumptions and about their hopes and fears for the future of participatory adult education and assessment. Reading through these journals, I hear a conversation among practitioners, one that often focuses on what to do next. In order to further clarify this conversation and to contribute some ideas towards next steps, I will discuss one assessment practice that many of these practitioner/ authors write about: asking learners to set goals.

### **Learners Setting Goals**

One possibility for learner participation in initial and ongoing assessment that is advocated by almost every author is learner goal setting. According to McGrail, a key principle of alternative assessment is that "it should help the learner achieve his or her goals. In other words, what is assessed must reflect what the learner wishes or needs to accomplish" (AiA, Vol 1, p. 3). This assumption leads to practices designed to help learners uncover and articulate their initial and ongoing goals. In an ESL class, this might take the form of learners drawing maps to show where want to be able to use English (Fandel, AiA, Vol. 1). In a class for adult beginning readers and writers, it might involve checking off goals from a Goals List created by practitioners (often collected from past learners) or answering more open-ended questions such as "What are some things that you want to do that being able to read and write better will help you do?" (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 1). Some programs ask learners to generate or choose these goals independently, while others set up group discussion or conversations with teachers for the purpose of setting goals.

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A variety of goals are suggested by the goals lists; these are often categorized under titles such as “Personal,” “Family,” “Work,” “Community,” and “Academic” (see Vol. 1, appendices 8, 15, 18 & 20). Such categories reflect a definition of literacy as practices and an understanding that adults’ literacies are multiple and context-specific. Examples of goals from one checklist include: “To read a phone book”, “To write notes to school”, “To register to vote”, “Punctuation”, and “To tell time” (Germanowski, AiA, Vol. 1, Appendix 17). Illustrative of the few learner goal statements that were included in articles (most presented blank rather than completed forms) are statements such as “Understanding bigger words,” “To write letters to friends and family,” and “I will like can speak English to be a beautician” (Fandel).

In many classes, learners are asked to record their goals and then monitor their progress towards meeting them. Some programs, such as Read/Write/Now (a library-sponsored program for adult beginning readers and writers) also use ‘learning contracts’ which involve learners in creating a “plan of action” for meeting their stated or chosen goals (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 1). Learner goals are usually “revisited” both during and at the end of class cycles; clearly, many practitioners see learner involvement in setting, meeting and revising goals as a valuable assessment practice.

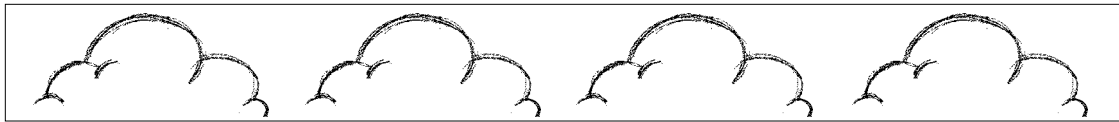
Indeed, these practitioners consider learner goal setting to be central to participatory education. Goal setting is seen as empowering because it asks learners to identify what *they* want to accomplish and motivating because it

encourages them to focus on the progress they make towards their own goals. Kelly articulates this belief in the context of the Read/Write/Now program:

One of the goals of a whole-language program is to empower learners by helping them to become more self-directed, to identify and work towards their own goals for learning, literacy and life... Both learners and teachers need to know why they do what they do in a classroom so that they can have a sense of progress, as well as make decisions about future directions. (AiA, Vol. 1, p.17)

As Kelly’s words imply, practitioners also attempt to change power relationships by basing curriculum and instruction on the goals that learners set. For example, in a written ‘conversation’ with McGrail, Lindy Whiton, coordinator of Component Three (alternative assessment) of the G.O.A.L.S. Project, describes the relationship between goals and curriculum at the Log School (see also Cason, AiA, Vol. 3): “When they get a group of people in, they take those goals...that are the most in common across all learners [and that] is where they start their curriculum....In the end the students do the evaluation: Did your goals get met?” (McGrail and Whiton, AiA, Vol. 3, p. 39-40). Many practitioners describe more individualized processes for using learners’ goals to develop curriculum; these might involve using goal sheets to create specific assignments (Gluckman, et. al., AIA, Vol. 3, p. 26) or activity plans (Martin, Hall & Bahre, AIA, Vol. 4, p. 16). One hope is that this kind of learner input will result in a curriculum that directly addresses learners’ lives and interests.

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In addition to providing learners with inspiration and with input, practitioners regard goal setting as a way to help learners see learning as active and themselves as subjects: "It is impossible to see education as the passive receiving of information from others when, as a learner, you have just written down a plan of action for meeting your own goals in reading and writing, and this plan involves you in doing things, not just listening while a teacher tells you about doing things" (Kelly, AiA, Vol. 1, p. 26). These practitioners' conceptions and uses of learner goal setting as an integral part of assessment reinforce a definition of learning as participatory and of literacy as practices and critical reflection.

However, some practitioners/ authors also express concerns about the practice of asking adult learners to set goals, concerns centered on the need for cultural sensitivity and for dialogue and negotiation. For example, Don Robishaw (a SABES Research Consultant) sees goal setting as "a linear, future-oriented, individualistic, Western phenomenon which is not always transferable to English as a Second Language (ESL) learners from non-Western cultures and other domestic cultural contexts" (AiA, Vol. 5, p. 93). Writing from the perspective of someone who "grew up in a housing project" and "avoided schooling as much as possible up to the age of sixteen," (p. 93), Robishaw worries that goal setting may be a culturally-specific activity that makes little sense to learners who did not necessarily experience life as that 'controllable' growing up. One assumption that informs participatory education is that many adult

literacy learners come to adult education having internalized negative images of themselves as learners (Lytle, 1991); Robishaw sees this as both the problem with goal setting — because these adults don't necessarily believe that they can learn — *and* as a possible solution. He refers to the article, "Group Goal Setting Activities: An Approach from Youth Service Corps" (AiA, Vol. 4), which describes structured *pre*-goal setting discussions in which youth service corpsmembers critically reflect together on their past schooling and life experiences. Robishaw sees this participatory group process as invaluable: "Adult learners need to reflect on their past life history and to sort through their experiences in order to see beyond their own formal schooling experiences in order to better develop, persist and continue with learning" (p. 94-95). Robishaw puts goal setting in the larger context of self-directed learning and reminds us that learners' experiences need to be both the starting place and the medium of a participatory assessment process. He also demonstrates that goal setting needs to be an interactive process, that it is not enough to simply ask learners set goals.

Kelly, writing about the evolution of Read/Write/Now's initial assessment tools and processes, echoes this idea. Citing learner and practitioner frustration with unrealistic or very general goals, Kelly writes about the need for teacher participation in the goal setting process:

Learning about helping learners to choose goals and trying to empower them as decision-makers in their own learning has been an evolutionary process....We have gone from a stance

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*I can almost 'see' empowerment in the pages of Adventures in Assessment; learners and teachers both have a voice in the assessment practices that practitioners describe.*

of very limited interference and influence in the learners' decision-making about their educational goals to the role of full participants in a learning community. Full participation means listening to each other, sharing our opinions, knowledge, and advice in the process of negotiating the decisions that we often make together (Kelly, AiA, Vol 1, p. 28).

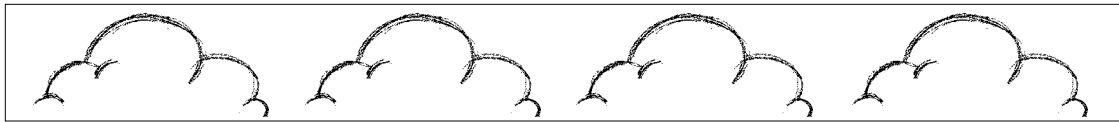
What Kelly is talking about is the balance of power that seems to be at the heart of many practitioners' concerns and questions about participatory assessment. It is important to recognize and acknowledge the fact that most (if not all) practitioners and learners come to adult education with images of "teachers," "students" and "school" that involve unequal power relationships. Participatory education and assessment is about trying to change these relationships, and this is a very difficult task. In a fascinating way, the evolution Kelly describes reveals the dynamics of this struggle. To begin with, practitioners believe that asking adult learners to set their own goals makes sense; they are adults and know what they need out of a class or program. However, when practitioners abdicate their own power by not helping learners do this often unfamiliar task, everyone can end up frustrated. In the end, a participatory approach to goal setting means that both learners and practitioners need to have a voice in the process. *Both* parties need to trust that the other will be honest and explicit about their agenda and will contribute their particular experience and expertise. Empowerment is not something that adult literacy practitioners can give to adult learners; it is, instead, both the process and the prod-

uct of shared participation and critical reflection.

I can almost 'see' empowerment in the pages of *Adventures in Assessment*; learners and teachers both have a voice in the assessment practices that practitioners describe. In terms of where to go next, the authors in Volume 5 point the way. Practitioners need to invite learners into the conversation about assessment, not just into the assessment practices themselves. I look forward to hearing more from learners about what assessment practices are valuable to them in future issues. I also thank the practitioners who have contributed to *Adventures in Assessment* so far; they have begun a powerful conversation.

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## What Counts?

# Out of a Pickle: Setting the Stage for Math

**I**n every literacy setting I've worked in, I've wanted to change the rules. The new rules would be: this is a class where evaluation doesn't hurt self-esteem, where learners' knowledge about the world gets counted and woven into the learning at hand, where the work that is done in the class has a purpose or use.

During this past year I worked with 16 ABE Math Team teachers, all intent on changing the rules to make our classes look more like a hands-on math lab of the 21st century. (To read more about our vision and the results of the shifts in math instruction, see *The Massachusetts ABE Math Standards Project Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.*)

Much of the time, adult learners will politely go along with whatever the teacher has in mind. Often the learners who come and stay, however, are empowered enough to ask that the class meet some felt need. How frustrating it is, though, when learners request something reminiscent of the traditional schooling I was working against. And it happens in every setting. The class wants to read orally round robin instead of practicing silent reading. The students in one-to-one want a pure phonics curriculum, the math class wants me to correct their worksheets.

Bonnie Mullinix and the research we did together are responsible for the ideas that have at least temporarily gotten me out of this pickle jar. On an abstract

level, the answer is continuing education. We have to educate students to the alternatives. If they haven't heard of dialogue journals or cooperative learning puzzles, I shouldn't be surprised that students aren't asking for them. We have to be clear about our own views and the reasons. But sometimes such a forthright approach doesn't work. I need to make my point concretely without getting on a soapbox, lecturing, or preaching.

### Meeting Math Goals

This paper lays out a strategy for familiarizing students with a broad view of mathematics, for opening the dialogue about which topics should get covered during math class, and for using assessment as an opportunity to build expectations for a new or continuing class. In this article I am recommending a way to meet these goals. Listen, it's CHEAP – not a lot of materials, not a lot of time. Teachers can add this strategy to a repertoire of ways to create situations in which students become familiar with a wider range of instructional options and are therefore more informed when they exercise their right to choose.

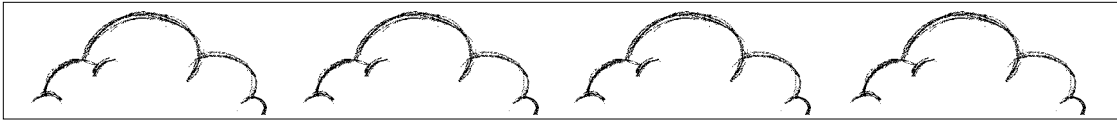
The strategy is simple and could be adapted to serve as an initial classroom assessment, as an interim evaluation to get student feedback on next steps, or as an ongoing or final evaluation to compare students' ideas and comfort with mathematics with their ideas at the beginning of the program.

by

**Martha Merson**



Adult Literacy  
Resource Institute



**Topics on Cards**

I gave students in pairs or groups of three, a set of twelve cards. I used this Topic on Cards approach three different times. In one case I worked with the whole class. In the other two cases, I asked the teachers to choose two students they thought would be interested.

Each of the twelve cards had a math topic on it. (See Figures 1-3.) For example:

Estimation  
*Guessing about how much something will be*

Whole numbers  
*(Computation)*  
 + - x :

I simply said, "I'm going to give you a bunch of cards. Each of these cards has a math topic on it. I want you to look through them and put them in order. Put the thing you think is most important on the top. Put what you think is the least important on the bottom."

With basic level readers, I read the topics with them. Usually the topics didn't need elaboration, although I found myself offering some examples. The students needed little else to work on the task.

Some learners did need help working well together. Although there were no stated rules about coming to consensus, I wanted both students in a pair to participate actively. I checked in with the

*This activity opened three new doors. A rush of new ideas flowed in to mingle with the typical expectations of math in adult ed.*

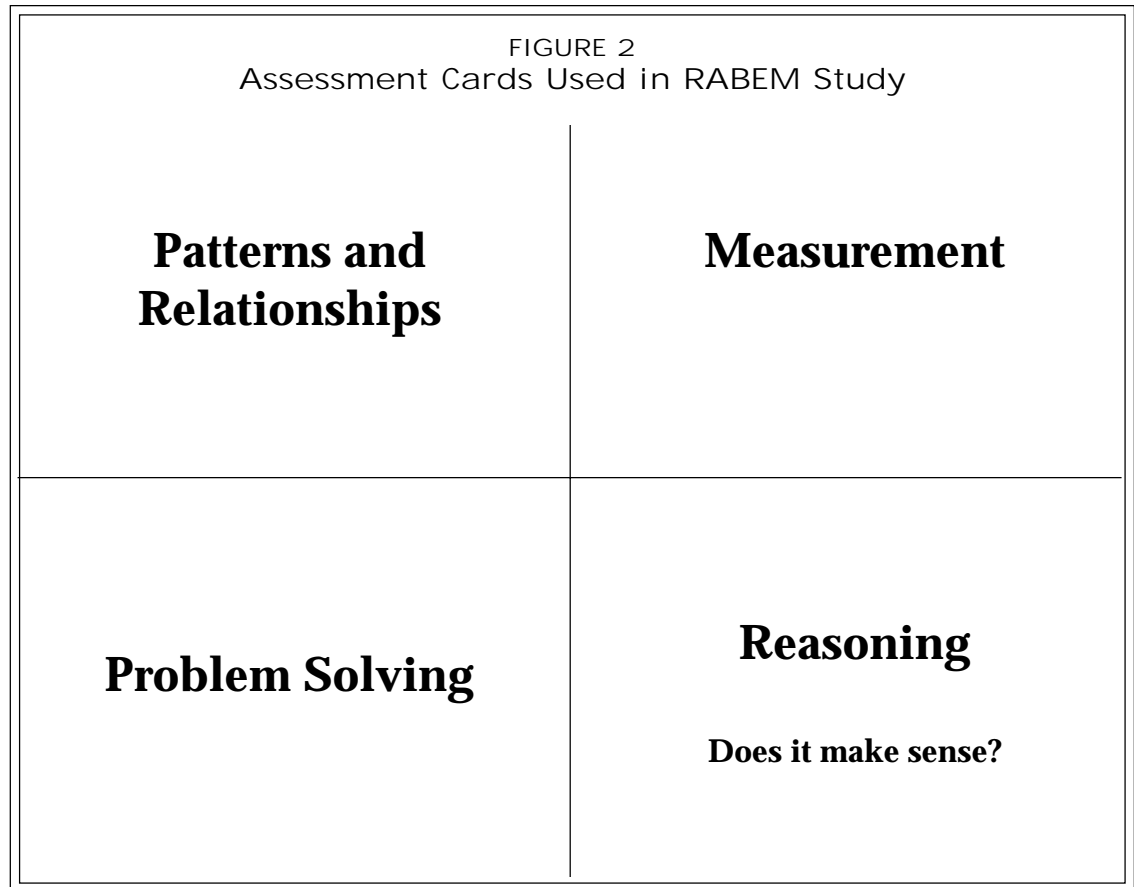
FIGURE 1  
 Assessment Cards Used in RABEM Study

<p><b>Estimation</b></p> <p><b>Guessing about how much something will be</b></p>	<p><b>Whole Numbers</b></p> <p><b>Computation</b></p> <p>+ - x ÷</p>
<p><b>Fractions</b></p>	<p><b>Decimals</b></p>



*What if they feel that math will only get harder and be even more tedious than the times tables, or more complicated than adding fractions with different denominators?*

FIGURE 2  
Assessment Cards Used in RABEM Study



quieter student, saying, “Do you agree with that?” or “Didn’t you want to keep estimation at the top?” When one student seemed to have lost track of the purpose, I reminded her “This is about your opinion. What do you think is most important for an adult to know? There is no right answer.”

Once students had finished and I had recorded the outcome, I asked them to use the same cards to show me “which topics you spend the most time on in class. Put the ones you do the most at the top and the ones you don’t do much or barely touch at the bottom.” In both tasks, I said that ties between two of the topics were allowed. In other words, two cards could occupy the same place in the order by being positioned side by side.

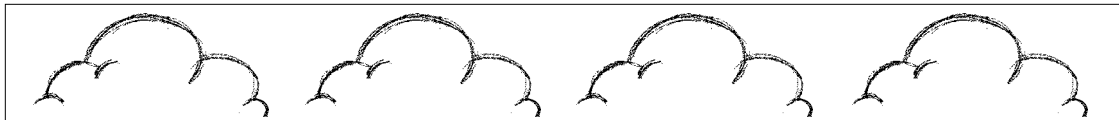
### What Emerged

This activity opened three new doors. A rush of new ideas flowed in to mingle with the typical expectations of math in adult ed. They are:

- Relevance of math to life rather than to the test
- New awareness of the range and breadth of math
- Placement of computation in perspective.

These results are true for all 49 learners Bonnie and I interviewed. I’ve chosen to focus here on the nine learners I interviewed.

**Students cited relevance to life as one criterion for a high ranking.** Two of the three groups rated decimals as more important than fractions. One student



explained that “if you don’t know where that decimal is, you can’t tell about how much to expect. In a bank or a store, they could give you forty dollars instead of four hundred. You have to know where that decimal is.” Without a secure knowledge of decimals, adults are vulnerable in the world of money. The third group gave decimals and fractions equal importance, but none of the groups invoked the GED as their criteria for importance.

In another instance, measurement was consistently above geometry for all the groups. Though geometry figures on the GED, measurement is a skill called for in daily life. In one class, a learner asked me to explain what geometry is.

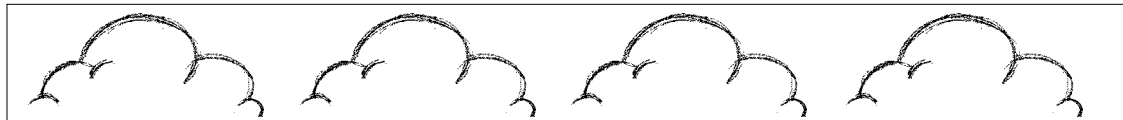
On reflection, I realized this lack of information is indicative of a much larger gap. **Many adults lack an overall sense of mathematics as a discipline, as an area of study.** I can hear impatient voices asking, why should someone who needs to learn addition and subtraction be burdened with explanations of geometry or calculus? Isn’t that jumping the gun?

No, it’s not. Our students are consumers of education. It is critical for adults as students, parents, and citizens, to have some sense of the topics that lie ahead of them, the kinds of math their children will study, the disciplines that comprise scientific endeavor. Furthermore, an attitude toward math informed

*By the act of choosing problem solving or reasoning in their top five important topics, they commit themselves to learning concepts that will help them in those areas.*

FIGURE 3  
Assessment Cards Used in RABEM Study

<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>Symbolic, graphic, text</p> <p>How do you read and say different math symbols?</p>	<p><b>Geometry and Spatial Sense</b></p> <p>Understanding shapes and spaces</p>
<p><b>Algebra</b></p>	<p><b>Statistics and Probability</b></p> <p>Collecting and organizing information, reading graphs, etc.</p>



*To maximize the open lines of communication about instruction, I would connect what I had planned to do to what the student was asking for.*

by limited experience with computation may well have an adverse effect on their drive to learn. If they feel that math will only get harder and be even more tedious than the times tables, or more complicated than adding fractions with different denominators, they'll pace themselves more slowly. Like people anticipating an ordeal, they'll make the tasteless thing they are working on drag on as long as possible. Subconsciously they may hope that time will run out before they have to go on to the next thing, and in the meantime, at least their struggle will be familiar.

I noticed learners initially reach for the Whole Numbers card. One student asked "Where's addition. You're going to need that even if you aren't going to know anything else." **In the course of reviewing the other cards, however, learners began to place whole numbers in perspective.** All three groups pulled communication out and put it on the top. Without an understanding of symbols, you wouldn't know whether to add two numbers or multiply them. Without communication, you couldn't explain your answer, couldn't explain that you'd been given you the wrong change. Without problem solving, "you can't solve the problem; you're lost." The learners were clearly still attached to computation, but they were seeing it in the context of other mathematical skills. Since members of the Math Team and other teachers are experimenting with the math curriculum, I was interested to see that students wouldn't necessarily be wedded to tradition. The responses to this task indicate that learners' expectations of math class can be quite flexible.

### **Using this Strategy**

To adapt this activity for initial or ongoing assessment, I would ask:

Which topics would you like to spend most time on in class? Put the cards in order from most time to least time.

*or*

Which topics do you think are most important for us to cover during the next cycle?

*and*

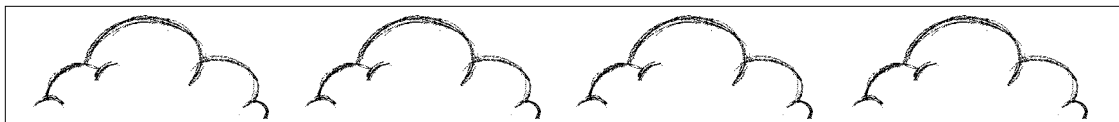
Which topics do you feel most comfortable with? Put those at the top, the least comfortable at the bottom.

I would phrase follow-up questions to get at the thinking behind the order. To maximize the open lines of communication about instruction, I would connect what I had planned to do to what the student was asking for. For example, "I see you want to learn fractions. When you start class, we'll be doing measurement with whole numbers. As we get into it, you'll be able to begin fractions and see how they work using rulers." Or "You said that problem solving is important. We will do that in two ways during math class. We do problems together as a group that you have to talk about (point to communication) and you'll have problems to take home as well."

### **The Context:**

#### **Where This Activity Comes From**

This activity came about as part of a larger study from February to May, 1993. I worked with Bonnie Mullinix of World Education on the Research into Adult Basic Education Mathematics (RABEM) project sponsored by the Federal Department of Education. The primary purpose of RABEM was to get



a really good picture of math instruction in Massachusetts ABE programs. To do that, program coordinators and teachers filled out surveys. Bonnie and I interviewed teachers, observed classes and interviewed students.

One aspect of the larger goal was to figure out where Massachusetts adult ed classes are in relation to the *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* published by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The cards we gave students came in part from the standards NCTM put forth. A few minor changes were made based on teacher interviews which preceded the learner interviews. For example, Number Sense was too vague for teachers, so we left it out of the student interview. A few other changes came from learners themselves. When students from the Jackson-Mann ABE class helped design the learner interview, they identified terms which needed rewording or clarification.

The card part of the learner interview came after we had asked students questions about their instructors, present and past (how do you think your teacher feels about math? how do you know?); to define math (what do you think math is anyway?); and how they liked math (what they liked most and least). While we made no effort to convert anyone to a holistic view of math, the types of questions we asked certainly geared students to think about math from many different angles.

### Conclusion

Now when I hear about students' negative response to an innovative math class (like "This isn't math. When are we going to get back to long division?"), I think this kind of exercise would really help. By doing it, students are reminded that math is bigger than the whole number computation they are used to. By the act of choosing problem solving or reasoning in their top five important topics, they commit themselves to learning concepts that will help them in those areas.

The excitement I felt at discovering a successful new strategy to work my way out of a pickle was undoubtedly intensified by the use of a manipulative, in this case, the cards. I suppose some readers may already be planning to turn this idea into a checklist. In this case, a checklist would turn a hands-on activity into a two-dimensional task. It will shut off creative thinking. It will limit ownership because if the teacher holds it, she will retain control and if she gives the page to the student, that act will turn the activity into a written task, like a test, a medium which literacy students generally find nerve-racking. Cards are more open-ended. The task gives students a chance to be creative in their lay-out and to exhibit their organizational strategies in a way reading and writing assessments don't usually. The cards allow for pyramids, diamonds as well as stairs or a linear arrangement. Because one can talk while moving the cards, they encourage an external thinking process. Physically moving the cards around made the impact of each decision on the order as a whole a visible fact. In one case, learners kept adding topics to

*The excitement I felt at discovering a successful new strategy to work my way out of a pickle was undoubtedly intensified by the use of a manipulative, in this case, the cards.*



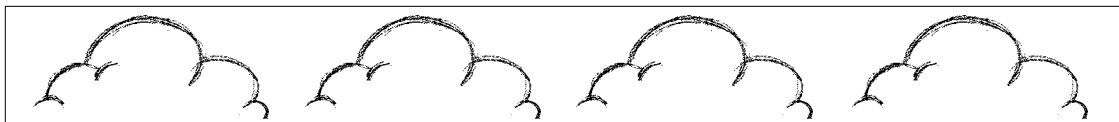
*The task gives students a chance to be creative in their lay-out and to exhibit their organizational strategies in a way reading and writing assessments don't usually.*

the top of the order and we watched as Algebra, originally placed toward the top sank down further and further. Manipulatives and tactile learning belong in assessment.

As more and more teachers implement the NCTM standards or the Massachusetts ABE Math Standards by emphasizing communication and problem solving with calculators and estimation, some will encounter resistance from their students. Countering student expectations in an understanding and empowering way will be key to a smooth transition to new and fun activities in the classroom. We need to react in ways that will further the adop-

tion of a new way of doing math as well as to reassure students and give them a feeling of control over what is happening in math class. Over the years I've learned that to have a real conversation about what learners want, I need to provide some structure or some scaffolding. Otherwise, I'll hear the internalized messages from a lifetime of encounters with a traditional approach to schooling. It's not fair to ourselves as teachers or to our students as consumers of education to present choices without providing learners with the information they need to make reasoned and informed choices. Topics on cards are one simple strategy. Let's build a repertoire.





## From the Field

# A Response to AIA Democracy Begins in Conversation

**D**o I read *Adventures in Assessment*? Yes! Well, I try. Until recently, as the director of the National Clearinghouse on ESL Literacy in Washington, D.C., I received literally stacks of adult-literacy related materials every week—journals, unpublished documents, curricula, textbooks, junk mail. They came from around the United States and a few from as far away as England and Australia. I mention this because this position gave me the opportunity to recognize what a unique forum *Adventures in Assessment* really is. I have found nothing else—either in the U.S. or overseas—quite like it. There are a few journals and newsletters in the field that speak to concerns of teachers, but none I know of engages the writers, readers and responders in the kind of honest, dialogic process *Adventures in Assessment* does.

I'd like to use this occasion to thank all of you who have written for or worked on *Adventures in Assessment* for the tremendous effort that keeping such a work going must have meant. Your experiences have become models not only for teachers looking for information about alternative assessment, but also, I know, for many teachers out there around the country who ask questions about how to make learner-centered and participatory education work for them and who feel lonely and isolated in their own communities. Your articles allow

us, as readers, to feel like we are truly in the midst of a conversation about teaching and learning. For me this was especially true of the articles that are followed up in subsequent issues with reflections on how the learners are progressing, which lessons worked or didn't work, and what continues to need to be done. Janet Kelly's articles about being continually reminded of the importance of consistent, frequent, informal communication with the learner, as well as her on-going reflections on various assessment tools that "seemed perfect until put to practical use" is one example. Janet Isserlis' article about her student Rosalie, and the follow-up story, where she describes how Rosalie proudly took the article written about her home to show her family, is another.

I would like to comment on one topic, touched on by John Comings in Volume 3. In his letter he expressed the view that assessment can, at times, be a red herring, drawing attention away from the need for staff and program development. He implied, I believe, among other things, that it would be useful for teachers to direct their attention not only toward what happens inside the classroom with students, but also toward what happens outside the classroom. Massachusetts is a state where some of the most innovative work in staff and program development, as well as assessment, is taking place. Many

by  
**Marilyn Gillespie**



Senior Program  
Associate, Center for  
Applied Linguistics,  
Sunbelt Office,  
Sarasota, Florida



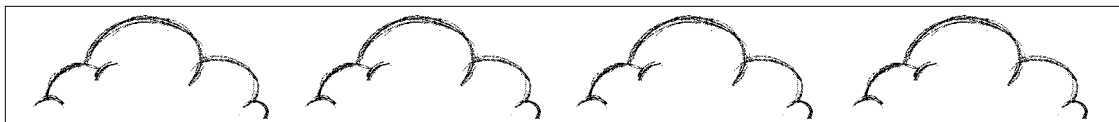
***Adventures in Assessment is special because, in this fast-paced world, it engages us as teachers and learners in true conversations.***

of the most innovative curricula and assessment tools have had their origins there. Teachers involved in these projects, I believe, could do much for the field if they were to find ways to apply the critical analysis process they use in the classroom outward to examine how institutional supports and constraints affect their work. While “changing the system” in the current social and political climate may seem overwhelming at best, I know there are people—even people in Washington offices, believe me—who would read your observations about your working conditions as teachers with attention and respect. We all know the status of the adult education workforce in the U.S. Most of us struggle for excellence in the classroom as part-time employees with no benefits, no job security, few opportunities for professional development, a lack of coordination among programs, and unrealistic funding guidelines. The teachers who write for *Adventures in*

*Assessment* are in a good position to take up the challenge by reflecting upon how those conditions affect their work and how they might be improved.

I heard somewhere that when educator John Dewey was asked, toward the end of his life, what he had learned in all his years, his answer was elegant yet simple. “I learned,” he said, “that democracy begins in conversation.” *Adventures in Assessment* is special because, in this fast-paced world, it engages us as teachers and learners in true conversations. We need to cherish and nourish this activity as a genuine way to support one another as teachers, to improve what happens in the classroom, and to find better ways to include learners in our conversations. But we also need to extend our attentions outward to educate those who hold the power to make decisions about funding for literacy about the working conditions that affect our teaching and our lives.





## Letter

# Affirmation for Pre-Goal Setting

I would like to thank Don Robishaw for his insights presented in “The Case for Pre-Goal Setting” article in Volume 5 of *Adventures in Assessment*. More specifically, I appreciated the reminder about not assuming our learners will proceed and succeed through schooling as we did. I also valued the placement of goal-setting strategies within the context of the greater philosophy of self-directed learning. Seeing it within its larger context helps me to reaffirm its value as an empowering tool within my classrooms.

I would like to admit that this article led me to think about goal-setting as a “middle class phenomena” in ways I had not previously. As an ESL teacher, I have had many experiences where my more “middle-class”, “linear, future-oriented, individualistic” approach has not facilitated true communication and understanding between me and my students. I have not looked at my goal-setting activities from this perspective, and I valued the opportunity presented in this article.

I have learned a great deal about *angles* of learning, learning as circles and waves, and assumptions behind “knowledge” in working with multicultural students. For years I have felt the struggles between offering my students a learning environment in the forms *they* are used to versus the forms *I* am used to. There has become a place in me where being discriminatory about

learning situations feels appropriate. Teaching using a strict lecture format doesn’t work for me, even though it may be what my students are accustomed to. Negotiating both the form and content of classes with the students is always the cutting edge of my learning as a teacher.

I like your suggestion of channelling students’ former resistance to schooling into the persistence needed to become self-directed learners. I’d like to know more about how to assist students in overcoming their resistance. The pre-goal setting strategy of dialogical processes with their peers seems like a very helpful first step. I’d like to know what comes next. Self-reflective processes help all of us as learners, and I believe introducing them more formally into our teaching structure is very helpful.

“It is very important that the facilitator has had similar life and schooling experiences as the learners, to develop solidarity with them.”

Although I see this as an ideal scenario, it seems to presume that we cannot develop solidarity with learners if we are not from the same background. I’d like to strongly disagree with this, and offer other areas where we can form bonds with our students. First of all, the issues of struggle are not new to any (or most) of us. Of course, there is a range of levels of struggle — yet I believe it is a common thread of the human experience that we can easily draw upon to form

by  
**Anne Marie  
DeMartino**



Westfield State  
College

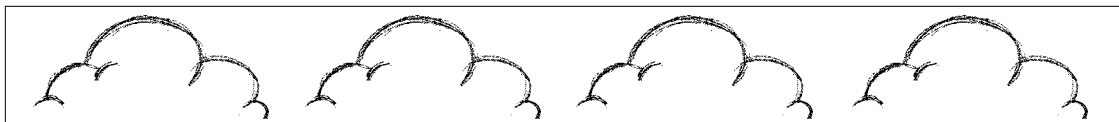


*When we bring this level of equality and respect to our classrooms, acknowledging our role as life-time learners, we create an environment that supports us all in taking risks, advocating for our needs and being the “experts”.*

webs of connection with our students. Furthermore, I play many similar life-roles as my students do: mother, daughter, bread-winner, partner, etc., each of them offering the food for building connections. But far more important than these is acknowledging the learning environment as a place where collaboration presides, where “professors and students actively and mutually engage in the learning process. Together, *they define and create a body of knowledge that informs and transforms our world*(N.E.A., p.8). This is where we primarily develop solidarity with the learners. We are paired in a co-creative process, as both learners and teachers. When we bring this level of equality and respect to our classrooms, acknowledging our role as life-time learners, we create an environ-

ment that supports us all in taking risks, advocating for our needs and being the “experts”. In my workplace, we use the term “communities of scholars” to denote this philosophical and pedagogical belief/structure. It is my experience that when allowed to see ourselves as an integral piece within the structure of a whole unit (class), we synergize in creating a dynamic whole which is defined by our needs and personal differences, and whose goals are to work together to serve our collective and individual needs. Thus, far more important than having the same background as our students, is having the same leverage and power in our present learning situations. This truly facilitates respect and solidarity.





## Learning from Experience

# From Minnow to Overachiever

*(The following is an account of my personal experiences with being evaluated and assessed as a learner. My road to participatory assessment is due in part to these early painful experiences. These visceral experiences have contributed substantially to my opposition and resistance to any kind of standardized testing. In addition reflecting back on these experiences has made me very empathetic to other learners who have experienced evaluation as a less than positive experience.)*

**T**here are four events in my life that have led me to learner-centered approaches to assessment. The first event occurred while I was in 2nd grade. I was a “minnow”. While all my girlfriends were swimming through the blue, green, yellow, and red versions of the endless and exciting tales of Sally, Dick, and Jane, I was stuck on “See Spot Run”. I was stuck in the back of the room with the rowdy boys (my friends on the baseball diamond) and the other “slow girls”. The only thing that motivated me to “grow up” and become a “goldfish” and eventually a “shark” was the glimmer of hope that one day I would be able to read a chapter book, a hard cover book that maybe had a story worth knowing. This was event #1. You can tell from my tone that I’ve been scarred for life— an adult child of tracking and basal readers.

My second event happened the summer of 5th grade. Somehow I had

learned to read by the time I got to 5th grade but math was still a problem for me. My parents had tried everything from summer school intensives to the “teaching machine”. Knowing math concepts or understanding how math could be used in one’s daily life hadn’t happened yet.

So my parents, in a desperate attempt to do their jobs as good parents, bought me a “teaching machine”, a small blue box that you put paper into then scrolled up endless math problems to solve over and over again until you got it right. It was the precursor to doing drills on the computer.

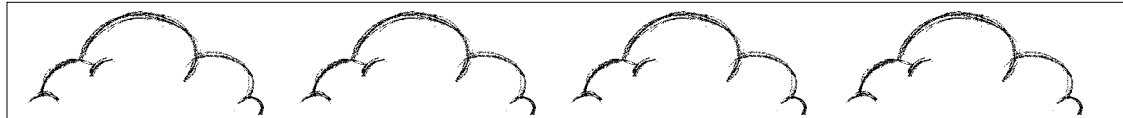
I was supposed to do a certain number of “units” a day before going out to play or swim. After about the third day sitting inside a hot stuffy room by myself trying to solve algebra problems that I more often than not got wrong, I discovered that when I put the paper into the machine I could see all the answers. The solution to my dilemma was simple; I would simply copy the correct answers (but not all the answers because then I would get caught). I figured out a certain percent I should get right and then I would increase it gradually so no one would suspect. The system worked great. I did my assigned summer work in less than half the time it normally would have taken me and indirectly learned something about percents.

I also learned something about math and learning too. I learned I could beat

by  
**Loren McGrail**



Editor  
**SABES Central  
Resource Center/  
World Education**



*I was now being punished for going beyond my assigned level of skill and experience as well. I was condemned and furthermore I could be thrown out of school for poetic inspiration. This was worse than just being labeled “slow”. I was being stigmatized as an “overachiever”— a person who achieved more than they were supposed to.*

the system if I really set my mind to it and that getting the right answer didn't feel like learning whether I cheated or worked on the problem. This second revelation came about when I decided I would not just copy the answer but figure out why it was the right answer and then work myself backwards into figuring out how this could be. As a result math became interesting and challenging and I think I actually learned something in the process.

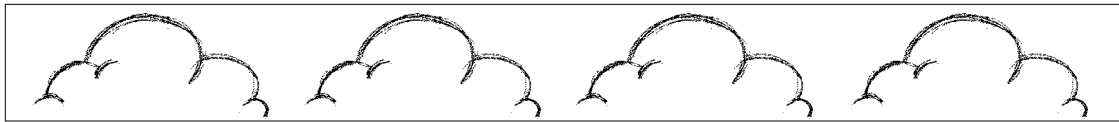
My third event happened in 10th grade in my English class. We were assigned an essay to do over the weekend. I wrote about death and dying *a la* Barry McQuire's "The Eve of Destruction", George Harrison and John Donne. An odd combination of influences I agree, but this was the 1960s and I was an anti-war protester and life was like that back then. I wrote this essay and, what can I say, I was divinely inspired when I wrote it. The words just poured out of me and I trusted them. I turned my paper in with a feeling of having done a great job for once. I got it back a few days later with a big red letter F on it and a "See me" scrawled next to it. I was in a state of shock. How could I have been so wrong about my accomplishments?

The teacher (also our football coach) said my essay was "unbelievably well written and mature and hence obviously not mine; I must have plagiarized and plagiarism was cause for expulsion. I

didn't know what to say. I was now being punished for going beyond my assigned level of skill and experience as well. I was condemned and furthermore I could be thrown out of school for poetic inspiration. This was worse than just being labeled "slow". I was being stigmatized as an "overachiever"— a person who achieved more than they were supposed to.

My final event happened during my senior year of high school. I had applied to a college which will remain nameless, though I will never forget that bitter autumn day in the admission officer's book-cluttered office. I had just finished a tour of the campus and was now chatting with the admissions officer about Thomas Aquinas and how I wanted to continue my education in philosophy. Yes, I had read already most of the Great Books. In the middle of our conversation he said he hadn't received my board scores yet but as soon as they came in he would let me know about the college's decision. He called his assistant who came in with them in her hand. I watched his face go from concerned to sad as he shook his head. Finally he said that though I had "wisdom," I didn't have the academic qualifications to go to this school. Wisdom but low test scores. This was my final run in with the system and its need to evaluate me not according to what I knew but how I measured against the "norm".





## Book Review

# Portfolios in the Writing Classroom

Yancy, K. B. (Ed.) (1992). *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

**A**lternative approaches to Assessment that enables adult literacy students to evaluate their own experiences and progress come to us in many forms today. These approaches help students view their own learning process in writing. They also help teachers identify the strategies students use and how these strategies change as they progress as learners. The use of portfolios as an assessment tool is one approach that has become quite popular in our field recently.

Many adult literacy/adult basic education (AL/ABE) practitioners are using portfolios in their writing classrooms. *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom* contains a range of essays on that very subject.

The book begins with an essay that discusses the relationship among portfolio assessment, summative assessment and formative assessment. It also discusses what might be called "reflective evaluation," a form of self evaluation considered very important to the writing process. The use of portfolio assessment in the writing class relies heavily on a self reflective process.

The article also deals with the challenges that the portfolio movement in the United States faces:

1) Weakening of effect through careless imitation (fear of the "bandwagon" effect, as happens in so many other areas of innovations).

2) The failure of research to validate this pedagogy. (Many still believe that "it" has to be measurable and countable to be valid and worth doing.)

3) The co-optation by large scale external testing programs. (There may be incongruities between large scale portfolio testing and writing portfolios used in the classroom.)

As in the introductory article, the remaining authors are not from an AL/ABE background, but mostly from fields related to formal schooling. Still, some of these discussions will be of interest to the AL/ABE professional.

The remaining articles are described as follows:

"Collectively, the chapters reflect a movement from the self initiated use of portfolios, as narrated in Sue Ellen Gold's chapter, and from the individual struggling to make sense out of a general "assignment" to introduce portfolios, as described by James Newkirk, towards the use of portfolios taken up by teachers working together in community. Catherine D'Aoust's teachers are still working individually, but support each other in a university seminar on 'Teachers as Researchers'. Sandra Murphy and Mary Ann Smith describe a middle school faculty cooperating with outside researchers to learn how to derive

by  
Don Robishaw



SABES



*It also discusses what might be called “reflective evaluation,” a form of self evaluation considered very important to the writing process. The use of portfolio assessment in the writing class relies heavily on a self reflective process.*

insights from a shared portfolio project — insights about students and about how portfolio projects work. Roberta Camp’s portfolio project grew out of cooperation between theorists, educational testers, administrators, and teachers of the performing arts, for whom portfolio took on a special function as instruments for student growth allowing assessment of the learning processes as well as the products... David Kneeshaw discusses portfolio from an even larger perspective in his description of the Ontario “Writing Folder” project, intended to allow evaluation and record keeping as a student moves across grade levels, but designed as well to encourage much of the same sense of discovery by teachers and students that characterizes the individual accounts... Irwin Weiser tells the last story, of a considered decision to introduce portfolios into the basic writing program at Purdue University, primarily as a way to defer summative grading” (pp. 13-14).

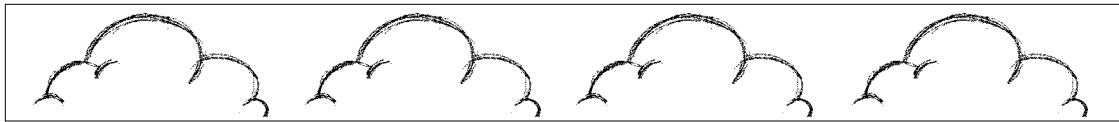
The book’s editor concludes with a short essay on the importance of self

reflection and portfolios in the writing classroom. She also leaves us with many unanswered questions that can be perhaps best answered by the individual teacher and his or her individual students.

There are a growing number of articles, but only a few books on the subject of portfolios, either as an assessment tool for reading and writing or an approach to helping students improve their writing. Kathleen Blake Yancy has put together this collection of essays on the use of it as an evaluation tool *and* on the “pedagogy of portfolios.”

I especially recommend this book to practitioners in our field who, because of the focus of *Adventures in Assessment*, and the recent “creative wave” of assessment tools by many Massachusetts AL/ABE practitioners that we may primarily think of portfolios as an innovative approach to assessment. In reality, though, it is more important to think of portfolios as an excellent self reflective writing tool and as an important pedagogical approach to the teaching of writing.





## Mission Statement from the Transformers

**T**he Transformers is a newly formed group of adult literacy practitioners in Massachusetts. Many of its members come from component #3 of the Department of Education's GOALS project which had as its mission the goal of looking at alternative assessment or learner-centered field-based assessment.

The goal of this team is to create and support systemic change from hierarchical models of education and social organization to egalitarian models, where learners and teachers are partners in education.

We will accomplish this by maintaining a dialogue within the field of adult education with a focus on participatory field-based assessment. We are dedicated to concentrating and coordinating our efforts towards broadening the understanding of adult educators, learners, administrators, and funders about participatory principles which are the basis for meaningful assessment and social change.

We are committed to developing new ways of looking at our programs, ourselves, and our communities in order to support mindful action and access to power. Our vision is to continue to build a network of interested people who will work together on projects that lead to this kind of change at the program, community, state, and national policy level.

### PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

1. It must be program-based and learner-centered.
2. It should help the learners achieve their goals.
3. It must build on learner strengths, not deficits.
4. It must be part of the learning experience.
5. It should not be a single procedure but a variety of procedures.
6. It should provide feedback that will lead to better instruction.

### STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with other groups and individuals with whom we share common goals such as SABES, New England Literacy Resource Center, and community based organizations.
- Continue to support the development of field-based assessment practices through the Partnership Project. The Partnership Project is a mentoring project funded by DOE which allows practitioners who are interested in learning about participatory assessment to become partners with program staff who have been developing

**Massachusetts  
Participatory  
Assessment  
Team**





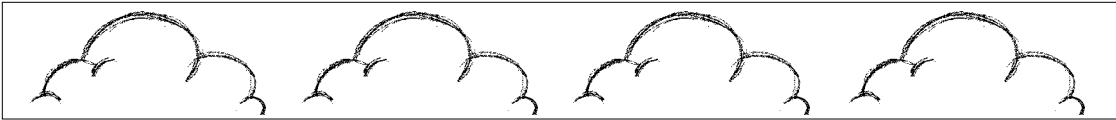
and using participatory procedures and tools.

- Disseminate the toolkit to practitioners throughout the state and the New England Region.
- Create and coordinate a pool of trainers in participatory assessment to provide training and technical assistance within our state, New England

and the country.

- Maintain our connection and commitment to the journal *Adventures in Assessment*.
- Interpret and clarify the Massachusetts Quality Indicators with a focus on how portfolio assessment fits in to the state's policy on assessment.





SURVEY

**Please fill out and return to Loren McGrail at SABES**

*(address on inside back cover)*

This survey is to determine the effect that *Adventures in Assessment: Learner Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation* has had on the field. Does the journal either change or validate people's practices and is it a good staff development tool? We define staff development as the process of reinforcing, maintaining and building effective teaching practices. Ultimately, staff development acts as an antidote to burnout.

1. Have you read *Adventures in Assessment*?  Yes  No

If you have, which volume(s)?  Volume 1 (Yellow)  Volume 2 (Light Green)  
 Volume 3 (Purple)  Volume 4 (Dark Green)

2. Do you find the layout/design of *Adventures in Assessment* accessible or easy to understand?  Yes  No

Comments:

3. What criteria do you use when deciding which articles to read?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Titles or articles | Do you read the introductions? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Author             | Do you read Voices from the Field? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interests          | Do you read Getting Started? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)    | Do you read Ongoing? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No               |
|   | Do you read What Counts? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No           |

Comments:

4. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your thinking or beliefs?  Yes  No

Comments:



5. Has *Adventures in Assessment* affected your practices (such as sparked a new tool or thrown out all of them)?  Yes  No

Comments:

6. Have you changed the your assessment practices in your classroom and/or program?  Yes  No

7. Do you have ways in which you include learners in your assessment practices?  Yes  No What are they?

8a. Have you ever used any ideas or tools from an article?  Yes  No Which one?

8b. Please comment on how you used it. Did you change it? Did you adapt it?

8c. May we publish these comments in the "Letter to the Editor" section of the journal?  Yes  No

9. Would you be interested in writing for the journal?  Yes  No

If yes, please fill in the information below or call Loren McGrail at World Education, (617) 482-9485.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

AN INVITATION TO WRITE

***Adventures in Assessment*** accepts articles regarding any of the three components of assessment: *Getting Started*, *Ongoing*, and *Looking Back*, or our other departments: *What Counts?*, *Voices from the Field*, *Learning from Experience*, and *Publication Reviews*.

If you would like to submit an article to ***Adventures in Assessment***, please contact us at:

Adventures in Assessment  
Loren McGrail, editor  
SABES  
210 Lincoln Street  
Boston, MA 02111  
**617-482-9485**

The next issue of ***Adventures in Assessment*** will highlight writings from the Partnership Project. The Partnership Project is a mentoring project which allows practitioners interested in learning about participatory assessment to become partners with program staff who have been developing and using participatory procedures and tools

We welcome your input and feedback. To be included in the Fall ***Adventures in Assessment***, please send your letters no later than September 1 to Loren McGrail at the above address.