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FIELD NOTES

by and for the Massachusetts
Adult Education Community

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Changes Project by Alex Risley-Schroeder	3
Valuing All Experiences by Khiet Luong	5
Using El Norte by Carole Ann Borges	7
Integrating Community Activism by David J. Rosen	9
How Do You Think About Community? by Lisa Deyo	10
What's It Like to Be Different by Marie Hassett	11
Beyond Skills Levels by Nancy Sheridan	12
ABE for the Homeless by Courtney Blum	13
Preparing for the INS Interview by Lynne Weintraub	14
The "N" Word by Louis Marbre-Cargill	17
Learning by Inclusion by Erik Jacobson	18
Fostering Independent Learning by Tom Lynch	21
Successes and Challenges by Kerline Auguste Tofuri	23
The Ghetto Is Who Raised Me by Rashida Gittens	24
Teacher Certification Update by Carey Reid and Mary Jayne Fay	25
(Sort of) Solving a Problem by Evelyn J. Baum	27

What's in a Name? *Bright Ideas* Changes to *Field Notes*

This issue of the Massachusetts statewide adult basic education newsletter looks different. It bears a new name, new logo, and new layout. But the original mission of the newsletter remains the same: to publish ABE practitioners' voices about a range of issues that affect our field.

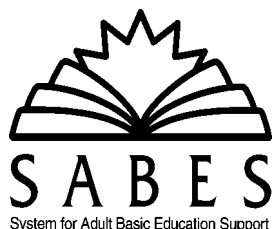
Why change the name? The newsletter, originally named Bright Ideas, was conceived and designed ten years ago. The field has changed since then, and the newsletter has, too. No longer just a vehicle for classroom ideas, the newsletter has expanded over the years to include policy information, expanded resource listings, and a greater depth and breadth of practitioner writings, which will remain the heart of the newsletter. We hope the name Field Notes better reflects this wider range of contents.

This premier issue of Field Notes departs from the standard format of Bright Ideas in another way. While every past issue of the newsletter has been organized around a particular theme, this issue of Field Notes does not. It's an "open issue." Practitioners were invited to submit articles of their own choosing. Hereafter, we will resume a theme-based approach, focusing on topics like reading, health and literacy, youth programs, and more.

The quality of the newsletter still depends on practitioners. Please continue to submit articles, offer feedback, and alert us to things you think should be included in future issues. Participate in the yearly Advisory Group to influence the content and evaluation of Field Notes as it evolves. Watch for upcoming topics and publication schedules in each issue.

We hope this premier issue of Field Notes builds on Bright Ideas and continues to improve—with your input, responses, and contributions.

Lenore Balliro, Editor



FOREWORD

In classroom research, teachers often start with the question "I wonder what would happen if I tried..." As editor of Field Notes, I wondered what would happen if we ran an issue without a unifying theme. So I tried it.

What happened? First, I received more unsolicited articles than ever before, and more articles from writers who have never written for the newsletter. The range of subjects was broad and often surprising; while some perennial issues resurfaced, some less common subjects and perspectives emerged. In this issue, Khiet Luong, an Americorps volunteer, explores the relationship between experienced teachers and volunteers. From Western Mass, Alex Risley-Schroeder reports on a two-and-a-half year action research project involving learners as researchers. Two articles explore different ways of grouping students: Erik Jacobson discusses an inclusion model of instruction where special needs students are integrated with more "traditional" students, while Nancy Sheridan's article suggests placing students by EFF categories rather than by language skills. Louis Marbre-Cargill gives us a preview of a community research project that examines the use of the "N" word among black youth in his community. Rashida Gittens offers a poem about her life, and Kerline Auguste Tofuri reflects on the challenges, joys, and value of being a Haitian woman practitioner in the field of ABE.

Two reviews—one written by David Rosen on the Civic Participation Sourcebook edited by Andy Nash, and one written by Lisa Deyo on the book, Building Communities From the Inside Out, reflect similar themes. Lynne Weintraub updates us on preparing students for the INS citizenship interview. Evelyn Baum humorously describes how a problem appeared and disappeared in her ESOL class. And Carole Ann Borges creatively adapts her use of the film El Norte to the ABE curriculum frameworks. This eclectic issue is a reminder of the scope of work and diversity of perspectives in this complex field.

Field Notes is a quarterly newsletter that provides a place to share innovative practices, new resources, and information within the field of adult basic education. It is published by SABES, the System for Adult Basic Education Support, and funded by Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS), Massachusetts Department of Education.

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Subscriptions are free to Massachusetts ABE practitioners. All others may subscribe for an annual fee of \$8.00. To subscribe, contact Lenore Balliro, 44 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210. Make checks payable to World Education.

Submissions are welcome. If you have an idea for an article or wish to submit a letter to the editor, call Lenore Balliro at (617) 482-9485.

We do reserve the right to decline publication.

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The Changes Project: Research & Learning in Western Massachusetts

BY ALEX RISLEY-SCHROEDER

What do we learn when adult learners become researchers of issues that intensely affect their own lives? The Changes Project, a two-and-a-half-year intensive effort, engaged learners from five programs in Western Massachusetts as researchers using a participatory action research approach. A core group of 21 learners, with assistance from research facilitators and other support staff, developed the data gathering tools, conducted the interviews and focus groups, worked with other researchers to develop surveys, and analyzed the data. Their research focused on three issues: the impacts of welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing workplace on adult learners.

Over the course of the investigation, more than 400 students participated in the project and described the ways in which these three issues had an impact on their lives. In participatory action research, investigators are affected by what is being investigated. This approach differs from other methods where researchers are outside of the research subjects. This article will highlight several findings and recommendations from the investigation. It will also reveal how learners were affected by acting as researchers.

Welfare Reform

Adult learners who are welfare recipients are having problems reaching their education goals. We heard over and over



again that they needed more time in school to achieve a level of education sufficient to get a job that pays a living wage. Without more schooling, many of the learners on welfare will struggle desperately to support themselves and their families once their benefits end. One woman told her daughter that the welfare benefits would be ending soon. Her young daughter responded: "But Ma, how you going to get a job if you don't know how to read and write?"

Complying with welfare regulations is a complex and confusing process that often inter-

feres or competes with family and educational needs. To comply with welfare regulations, learners reported missing classes and dropping out of school. To make matters worse, learners reported that important information is often

unavailable, is not known to the caseworker, or is not made available to recipients who need English language translation or who lack the ability to read and write.

Immigration Reform

Immigrants and other newcomers are confused about or unaware of the changing immigration laws and regulations and how they affect them. As with welfare, accurate and accessible information is difficult to get about changing visa status, applying for a green card or becoming a US citizen. In addition, immigrants are confused about the benefits they are legally eligible to receive and they are concerned about how receiving benefits will impact their immigration status. Some students had incorrect information, others wrongly believed that they were completely ineligible. They also told us about some of the barriers they faced in pursuing education, many of which were related to their immigration status.

Continued on page 4

Changes Project

Continued from page 3

Changing Workplace

Technology was identified as one of the big changes facing workers. Newcomers told us that they do not have adequate access to computer training that is appropriate to them as nonnative English speakers. The barriers they cited include waiting lists for instruction, instruction that was inappropriate for their English language level, and the high cost of computer classes.

Other workers indicated a need for computer training to either stay current with their jobs or to be competitive in seeking new job opportunities.

Uncertainty about skills and education needed for work in the future was another theme in the data. Some newcomers were frustrated that their degrees, professional experience, and training from their home country are often not recognized in the US. This often means that these newcomers are making less money and working at lower levels than they did in their home countries.

Networks of Support

Despite the negative effects of these three issues, the adult learners we talked with were resourceful, strong and resilient individuals. These learners crafted intricate, responsive networks of support that have enabled them to persevere in the face of

the negative effects of welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing workplace. To portray only the effects of these three issues without describing the networks of support would inaccurately portray the data we collected. We found that the pres-

One (teacher) said: "It's changed the way I think about how knowledge gets made."

ence or absence of appropriate support in learners' lives has a very strong effect on their ability to reach their education goals, especially in the face of the challenges described above.

Examples of Support

These networks include individual, personal and institutional support. Many learners told us that hopes, dreams, and faith are essential and support them to continue even when life is difficult. We consistently heard about the powerful and important support individuals got from family, friends, peers, and teachers. School (the adult learning program) was seen as a vital institutional support. Learners saw school as a way to gain specific skills and information necessary to manage life and to build self-esteem and self-confidence. For newcomers, school provides the key support of English language classes. One learner told us:

"You need support at home, you need support in the classrooms, from the teacher and the students—that helps you to learn more."

The Value of Participatory Research

Participatory research efforts like the Changes Project are powerful methods for deepening understanding of particular issues and their contexts. In addition to yielding important data, participatory research can also support participants in reaching their education and life goals by strengthening their skills and supporting them to create change in their lives and communities.

Changes Project research team members were very clear about the ways in which being involved changed them. They learned a great deal about the three issues, gaining an understanding of the complexities their fellow learners face as welfare recipients, immigrants, and workers. This knowledge, and working with one another, enhanced their awareness of differences and their ability to work within diverse and often unfamiliar settings. One researcher said the project "made me aware of cultural difference . . . on a different level . . . I had to go really deep to realize . . . how people deal in different ways."

Research team members also talked about how the project increased their ability to commu-

Continued on page 16

Valuing ALL Experiences: Exploring Teacher/Volunteer Dynamics in the ABE Classroom

BY KHIET LUONG

I am a recent and proud Millersville of Pennsylvania graduate with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Secondary English Education. Currently, I am a full-time Notre Dame AmeriCorps volunteer at an adult education center. I realize that I have a lot to learn. I value and honor the advice and experiences of those older than I—but I am proud of my own experiences and am fiercely confident in my ability to be critical about my individual teaching habits and paradigms. I also try to ask thoughtful questions about other people's methodology. This article was written as an attempt to explore my own professional struggle and to examine the power relationship between the classroom volunteer and the teacher he or she works with. Although the article may enrage a few readers, my intention is to present a volunteer's perspective—its challenges and insights.

The Value of Mentoring

Veteran teachers I have worked with tend to value their own experiences over those of less experienced teachers. As a result, the less-experienced teachers tend to

devalue their own instincts and acquiesce too readily to the more seasoned educator. It is a topic that I have heard very little discussion about in university courses and in "the real world." The instances

of ability and an interchange of ideas, while simultaneously recognizing the mentor teacher's authority and the volunteer's growth. The latter does not honor the experiences of the volunteer.

But how often do we in the United States talk about the wisdom of youth?

I am new to the field of adult education. While my university training and teaching experiences thus far have been challenging and diverse, I have limited exposure to adult learners and educators.

My experience does include a lot of work with mentor

teachers, however, and in all of those instances there was an unequivocal relationship of authority: I was the subordinate. I was always OK with that because the working terms were clear to me from the beginning.

where this dynamic can be most visible are in a classroom where both work together with the students. A teacher who works predominantly from a mentor perspective will engender more positive results from the volunteer than a teacher who operates from a mostly lead teacher mindset. If a mentoring relationship is well implemented, the volunteer understands that the mentor teacher is the lead teacher at all times, but also feels that the volunteer's perceptions and ideas are valid. The teacher who functions from a lead role sees the volunteer as a tabula rasa—a receptacle for knowledge. The former model allows for flex-

All volunteers should have the right to ask questions. Furthermore, they should be encouraged to do so, in the interest of refining the learning process of each person in the classroom. This encouragement can exist only if there is mutual respect between the teacher and the volunteer. A lead teacher's insistence that her opinions are more important and her methods are more effective than the volunteers ("because of

Continued on page 6

Valuing ALL Experience...

Continued from page 5

my many years of teaching") are usually understandable. But that experience is only one interpretation of the truth. The volunteer may have a different perception. In the modern age our old educational cliché is still true: "There is no such thing as a dumb question." As long as the question pertains to the topic at hand, it is valid. At the very least it must be acknowledged and considered.

Valuing Youth

Generally, societies and communities hold experience in high esteem. In my Vietnamese-American upbringing, this has certainly been the case. Many times I have expressed frustration at my own parents for their patronizing attitude towards my experiences. But I believe that truth is truth, no matter in what vessel it resides. A pot newly removed from the kiln can hold water just as well as a pot that has long since cooled down. How often do we in the United States talk about the wisdom of youth? In the realm of education, how often does an educator ask a less experienced educator, not to mention a volunteer, for advice (unless of course, it may have to do with computer technology)?

An experienced teacher is a dangerous person. Her years of teaching may have calcified her methodologies and made them battle-hardened. Consequently, her assumptions are well-honed and can easily cut through lesser-experienced educator's ideas. A lead educator may involuntarily or unconsciously dispense "solutions" like a broken vending machine

that does not appreciate the buyer's indecision/questioning of what to buy. As a result, all of the internal struggles between the volunteer and the lead teacher may result in feelings of resentment on both sides.

Representing, Reiterating, Replanting

I'm sure that many of us have uncritically accepted the answers of more experienced teachers and unwittingly fled the burden of our own responsibilities as educators. The result is that we reiterate teaching strategies that are accepted and recreate outcomes that are familiar—not necessarily the best possible ones for our students or ourselves. If volunteers or less experienced teachers merely represent the teaching methods of more experienced teachers, we do not stimulate new growth. Instead we replant the same seeds and harvest the same fruits quarter after quarter, semester after semester, and year after year.

Once, another volunteer told me, "I don't have any experience in the field, but as long as I show that I care, I am doing enough." I disagree. A caring teacher without the skills to help students learn is indeed not doing enough. The same can be said of a volunteer. Though it is the first and most important step, it is not the final position or by any account, enough. Anybody in the classroom who operates in a capacity of authority can be interpreted as a teacher. Keeping up with contemporary educational practices is the responsibility of all teachers and volunteers. Should not teachers, then, also be students to their own

students and volunteers in some capacity?

In retrospect I see the initial few months I spent at my adult learning center as a testing period. The responsibility for the students' education falls ultimately on the mentor/lead teacher, not the volunteer. The mentor teacher usually has a long-established rapport with her students and coworkers; her professional reputation is on the line. The volunteer in many cases has little or no experience and therefore has different responsibilities, one of which is to create a professional reputation. Both kinds of work are challenging and both perspectives must be respected.

Suggestions

I would like to offer a few suggestions for improving dialogue between volunteers and the teachers they are working with. These suggestions arise from my own experiences as a volunteer.

1. Volunteer should be clear about their motives and goals for volunteering and be able to articulate these ideas with the mentor teacher.
2. The mentor/lead teacher and the volunteer need to communicate honestly and share some common understanding about their work and goals in the classroom.
3. Both the mentor teacher and the volunteer should be open to critique from each other.

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Habits of Mind/Habits of the Heart: Using *El Norte* in an ASE Program

BY CAROLE ANN BORGES

Our Adult Secondary Education (ASE) diploma program meets in a storefront community learning center in Hull. The class, made up of 16- to 23-year-olds, has trouble focusing and staying "on task" for an extended length of time. Their ability to comprehend written material varies widely. They do have good oral skills and are often very outspoken and critical about assignments given. Popular films have proven to be an excellent teaching tool in this class, especially for those students who have learning disabilities and prefer visual and oral material.

Using Movies

Because movies are considered fun and entertaining, all the students have heartily embraced learning through popular films. They feel it's so much more interesting because you can "get the point" without having to read all the time. Even though feature films may seem quite nontraditional in an ASE curriculum, I have found they can easily satisfy many of the learning strands in the ABE social studies curriculum frameworks.

Of the eight students in the class, five are Caucasian from working class backgrounds. One is Latino, but adopted into a Caucasian family. He is very curious about his origins. One woman is a

Filipina who currently lives with her boyfriend's Cambodian family.

Some of the Caucasian students in the class had expressed prejudices about people from



other cultures. They expressed fear that immigrants were causing white Americans to lose desirable jobs. These students tended to view other people as stereotypes. As these students have to work and go to school with people from diverse cultures, it was clear that their prejudices created a barrier between themselves and others. The Latino and Asian students in the class were obviously hurt and angry that the majority of the class had so little respect for other cultures.

Immigration Theme

The goal of our exploration about immigrants was designed so students could gain a better

understanding about cultural differences, to see how other cultures relate to work, to examine immigration law, and to learn how immigration affects the workplace. The students generated this topic. It grew out of a discussion about their job experiences, and it fit in well with the learning strands in the social studies frameworks.

Since most of the students were very visual and auditory, they groaned at the idea of learning social studies from a textbook. That's when I got the idea of using a feature film to teach this topic.

The students initially anticipated being tortured with textbook chapters, charts and graphs, and perhaps one of those dreadful educational films about immigration.

When I told them that this time we were going to watch a regular movie, the sighs of relief were audible. Chuckling to themselves, they thought they were really "getting one over" on the teacher. Little did they realize how much they were about to learn.

Setting a Context: Examining Stereotypes

Several days before I showed the movie, I designed an activity to help them explore stereotypes. I wrote a list of several ethnic groups on the blackboard. The students were told to write down something

Continued on page 8

Habits of Mind

Continued from page 7

that they thought was true about each group.

By examining the lists the individual students had made about different cultures, we saw that we all view other ethnic groups through both fact and prejudice. Many heated debates, refutations, and personal experience stories grew out of the discussion about the student lists.

In this way, the students themselves helped to break down many of the prejudices other students held. Some of the listed beliefs surprised the group, especially the belief that Asians in Boston often cooked and ate cats.

This class also offered me a good opportunity to discuss ways to distinguish facts versus beliefs and to reveal to the students how easy it is to make faulty assumptions if they are based on weak premises and lack of knowledge.

Looking at History

Besides discussing personal experiences, I wanted to introduce something about immigration history. I gave the students a handout that explored the role Chinese workers played in helping to build the railroads in America.

By reading about the way the Chinese immigrants labored to build our American railroad system, the students realized some of the difficulties immigrants faced when they first came to America. They were especially struck by the large number of Chinese deaths.

They were impressed with the Chinese workers' ability to persevere under terrible working conditions. The reading about Chinese immigrants gave the students a better understanding of the positive effect immigration had in settling America.

Watching the Film

Before viewing *El Norte*, I told the students that the movie

They developed a more empathetic position toward the culture they were experiencing.

dealt with immigration and the way other cultures worked and lived.

I shared my experiences living in Mexico, and one of the students discussed his time as an exchange student in Nicaragua. He brought photos to class, and we all passed them around, asking him a lot of questions about his experiences there. Then we located all these countries on the map.

I assured the students that *El Norte* was a very true depiction of life in Guatemala, and I reminded them that often this is not the case with romanticized Hollywood films.

Finally, the students were shown the film *El Norte* in two segments—each lasting one hour and eight minutes each. The students had been told to take notes on anything they found interesting or curious about the film, but I also handed out a short list of teacher-generated questions to help focus

their attention. Some of these questions included: *What was different between life in the US and life in this country? What was the same? What was admirable about the people shown in the film?*

After the complete showing of the film a discussion period based on the student notes and the teacher-generated questions followed.

Finally, the students were requested to write a five paragraph essay on the one aspect of the movie that affected them the most.

Changes in the Students

As they watched *El Norte* I could actually see their perspectives begin to change. They

developed a more empathetic position toward the culture they were experiencing. The students were about the same age as the young people in the film. This helped them identify strongly with the main characters.

There is no question that the students gained an enormous amount of understanding from viewing *El Norte*. A new respect for another culture is easily seen in the more respectful way they talk about people from other countries. They seem less ethnocentric and want to learn more about other cultures.

Connection to Curriculum Frameworks

The following learning standards that were covered in this

Continued on page 20

Integrating Community Activism

A Review of *The Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook*, edited by Andy Nash

BY DAVID J. ROSEN

The Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook is a set of resources for adult learners and teachers who are interested in building community. As editor, Andy Nash and her group of advisors explain: "We believe. . . that to really have a voice in the decisions that affect our lives, we need to go beyond voting to more direct forms of participation, such as community education, advocacy and organizing."

Tools for Teachers

The *Sourcebook* includes two kinds of tools: a collection of narrative accounts, mostly by teachers; and preparation and practice activities that focus on skill—and confidence—building. Most of these tools were gathered from past issues of *The Change Agent*, also a publication of the New England Literacy Resource Center, or from other documents.

The *Sourcebook* also includes a matter-of-fact set of challenges that teachers have faced in doing this kind of learning with their students. Balancing these challenges is a list of practical strategies for overcoming them including among others: students, especially teens, 'apparent lack of community interest; how to balance civic participation learning with the need for specific skills development; inconsistent student attendance; and how to deal with a topic of action that is very emotional.

The pieces in this collection are about real and serious community issues and how adult learners have tried to address them, for example: homelessness in Pulaski, Virginia; reforming welfare reform in Massachusetts and in Vermont; the rights of immigrants in Massa-



Illustration by Joanne Wheeler

chusetts to food stamps; reversing a new, and unreasonable, policy requiring that food stamps be picked up in person in St. Charles, a small coal mining town in Virginia, and many others.

Resources and Activities

The *Sourcebook* is full of helpful resources and activities for learners and teachers including a list of resources in print and a Webliography of materials for incorporating civic participation and social justice issues into lessons; examples of rights such as the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Rhode Island Adult Student Bill of Rights enacted into law in 1999; some great community organizing and social change drawings to elicit

writing and discussion; and others. For those of you who like standards and skills lists, in the beginning of each major section is a list of Equipped for the Future skills and activities addressed in that section.

I like many, many things about the *Sourcebook*, among them that it includes a wide range of activities from getting started activities to sophisticated and sustained community and political change projects. I also like that it balances specific, structured learning activities with more reflective, contextual pieces by teachers who have engaged in civic participation and community action learning with their students. This is a major contribution to the field of adult literacy education. Never have so many well-written and practical pieces been assembled in one easy-to-read, easy-to-use, thoughtful and provocative collection. This is for any adult educator anywhere in the United States who believes that civic participation and activism are important, and who is looking to see how colleagues do this work well.

The *Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook* is available from the New England Literacy Resource Center. Call Kerline Auguste Tofuri at (617) 482-9485.

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How Do You Think About Community?

A Review of *Building Communities from the Inside Out* by John Kretzman and John McKnight

BY LISA DEYO

How do you think about your community? Do you first see your community in terms of its capacities and strengths? Or do you see it in terms of its needs? In *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, the message is clear. John Kretzman and John McKnight, both experienced community developers, begin with the premise that the community development process starts from a community's capacities and potential, not its needs. What Kretzman and McKnight call an "asset-based community development" process builds on the special skills, resources, and strengths that communities—their members, local associations, businesses, churches, government agencies, and more—have to contribute to their own development.

Deficiencies or Strengths?

The authors believe that how we perceive our communities—by their deficiencies and needs or their strengths and capacities—determines how we take care of problems in our communities. Deficiency-oriented policies and programs can end up creating "client neighborhoods" that deepen dependence on external assistance. The community development process, instead, should start from the "inside out" as an "internally focused" process. Community members and organizations that successfully engage in locally-driven development are more likely to see themselves as being capable prob-

lem-solvers and are stronger and less willing to become dependent on outside resources and assistance. Starting the community development process with an internal focus will also help communities at a later stage to more effectively leverage and use external resources and define their own agendas for change. Integral to this process of asset-based community development are the relationships developed between individuals, associations, and institutions that become the impetus for change.

Taking Inventory

The book focuses on ways in which the key assets and resources of community residents, special interest groups, citizens' associations and nonprofits, publicly funded institutions, and the private sector can be identified and mobilized, beginning with a "capacity inventory" and the mapping of the community assets identified in these inventories. For example, the capacity inventory for individuals details the skills that people have learned in their personal and public lives that can be connected with other associations and contribute to the community development process. Particular attention is paid to the gifts and talents of groups normally labeled, such as welfare recipients or the elderly, in society. The last two chapters of the book focuses on rebuilding commu-

nities' economies and examples of policies and guidelines that support asset-based community development.

Building Communities from the Inside Out was written for people who are looking for ways to strengthen their communities and foster the growth of effective community building partnerships. Its audience would include community leaders, community planners, and organizations interested in developing or regenerating partnerships in their communities.

The book was written to be used as a resource or guide, not to be read from beginning to end. Readers are encouraged to review the sections that are most relevant to their own context.

Whether or not you follow the process that they suggest, the many ideas and examples found in this book can broaden your way of thinking about community members and organizations' assets and the possibilities and potential in the community development process.

Additional information on capacity-building community development can be found in the Asset-Based Community Development Institute Web site at

www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html.

Lisa Deyo works as a community planning resource person at SABES West. She can be reached by email at lisa_deyo@yahoo.com.

Building Communities from the Inside Out can be ordered from ACTA Publications, 4848 N. Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois 60640, or by telephone at (800) 397-2282.

What's It Like to Be Different: Part II

BY MARIE HASSETT

The Winter 2000 issue of *Bright Ideas* included an article written anonymously by a student, "What Is It Like To Be Different? Being Gay in an Adult Education Class." I decided to use this article in my Wednesday night class to address both the specific issue of homophobia and the more general issue of prejudice. This class is part of a World Education grant called Collaborations for Active Communities, and its purpose is the development of student leadership and activism. We have been discussing, reading about, and seeing videos that address the social history of our country and our community. The rationale for this is simple: Effective leaders and active citizens understand their communities in context, as they are now, and as they have been.

Thinking About Biases

As part of our exploration of communities, I wanted the class to think about types of biases—many subtle and covert—most of us harbor. The article, "What Is It Like to Be Different?" provided a catalyst for examining these biases as well as examining the issue of homophobia.

Homophobia is a more subtle, more pervasive form of prejudice than racism or sexism. People who are horrified by racism or sexism may still admit without apology that gays/lesbians make them uncomfortable.

We read the article aloud, taking turns, and then discussed the experience of the student who wrote it. We spent extra time discussing one of the last lines in the article, "You could be hurting people by making comments in class that imply that being gay is bad or wrong or disgusting." We also discussed the ways in which some kinds of prejudice

that it may be a choice. The bottom line, unspoken fear is that associating with gays or lesbians will "turn" them gay themselves. No one is afraid of "catching" Black-ness, or Asian-ness, or Hispanic-ness, but they are not as sure about why some people are homosexual, and others are not.

Teachers' Responsibility

While there are many things I do not (and cannot) know about the impact of racism, sexism, and homophobia in people's lives, I would be reneging on my responsibility as a teacher if I were unwilling to address topics that affect my students' lives and the lives of

our communities. Any teacher who is willing to speak honestly and sensitively about difficult issues, respecting each individual without necessarily agreeing with each individual's position, has the power to create important and meaningful dialogue. The student who wrote the essay we read left his adult education program because he felt threatened. We should all assume that when he decides to return, the classroom he chooses may be our own. We are all responsible for creating a climate that will make him feel welcome.

Marie Hassett is a consultant, writer, and ABE instructor in Boston. She can be reached by email at <prof_grrl@hotmail.com>

*I wanted the class to think
about types of biases...*

are accepted, or at least tolerated, in different communities.

In our discussion, one student talked about a recent experience that had led him to reevaluate his own attitude. He had to go in for some medical tests, and the nurse who performed them was a gay man. "That made me uncomfortable, and I don't know why," he said.

The class peppered him with questions: If it had been a straight man, would it have bothered you? A woman? He admitted that either of those options would have been more comfortable.

What finally came out in our discussion was the profound uneasiness some people feel about homosexuality based on the notion

Beyond Skills Levels: Using EFF Categories to Place ESOL Students

BY NANCY SHERIDAN

I have recently assumed the position of Project Coordinator for the newly created Stoughton Adult Basic Education Program. The Program serves ESOL students in Stoughton whose ages, length of US residency, and native countries vary greatly. One of my job responsibilities includes participating in the student assessment and placement process.

After conducting our very first assessment/intake interviews for the ABE Program, the staff sat down and placed students in leveled classes according to their English speaking, writing, and reading abilities.

I quickly became concerned about these students who would find themselves in classrooms with 15 or so classmates. While on paper they seemed to have similar language skills, the variability of these students' backgrounds and life circumstances would later convince me that the placement process should include more than skills level; it should primarily consider students goals, needs, and purposes for using English.

Having taught the first few ESOL "level 2" classes as a substitute, I quickly experienced the challenges faced by ESOL teachers who work with multi-level, multi-cultural classrooms. Just because 15 students can speak, read and write English at comparable levels (as their assessments indicate), it doesn't mean they should be grouped together.

It seems to make more sense to first determine the students' predominant need for English, taking into consideration their education level in their native country, then to group them by skill level within those classes. For example, an almost-retired man with four years of schooling in his native Azores who has lived in the US for more than 25 years probably has very different goals and needs for English than a newly immigrated middle-aged Russian engineer with 18 years of schooling. Even though they might test at the same English ability level, they most likely have different goals for learning and using English in their everyday lives. These differences deeply affect the way an ESOL classroom would be taught.

Using EFF Categories

An alternative to the "English skill level" placement method could be to group students by predominant life roles as the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Equipped For the Future (EFF) Framework suggests. While EFF proposes using the life roles of worker, citizen, family, and community member to develop relevant authentic curriculum, I think students' current life circumstances and therefore needs for English usage should inform the placement process. By specifically asking students at intake relevant questions about their circumstances and lifestyles, they can be

grouped accordingly. They can then be further grouped by skill level in the classroom. At least this way students in the same classroom would have a little more in common than the results of language assessments. Even though addressing different skill levels within the classroom would continue to pose a challenge for the instructor, students and teachers alike would be more likely to focus on student-relevant topics.

I think it is reasonable to figure out what students want from their education before they are placed in a classroom where goals and needs are as variable as cultural background and academic abilities. When there are too many differences in a class, attrition rates can soar.

Grouping students with current life roles and English language needs will not necessarily sacrifice the multicultural experience of the ESOL classroom, which deserves to be celebrated. It will, however, offer a supportive environment and many opportunities for students to share the life experiences and circumstances they would have in common.

Nancy Sheridan is the Adult Literacy Coordinator at the Stoughton Public Library and the Project Coordinator of the Stoughton Adult Basic Education Program. She can be reached by email at <Sheridan@gis.net>.

ABE for the Homeless: What I Learned

BY COURTNEY BLUM

Eight months ago, I stepped through the door of MainSpring House for the first time. I was there to embark on a one-year journey of post-graduate volunteer work. My service placement was MainSpring house, a homeless shelter in Brockton. Having limited knowledge of the Boston area or the problem of homelessness. I was slightly apprehensive but ready to start this journey.

As my first few weeks passed, I was continually drawn to the education room. Never picturing myself as a teacher, I was surprised at my own interest in the education programs. The life skills class was different from any class I had been exposed to, and I was intrigued. I worked closely supervising the men in the transitional program on the street. Consequently, I recognized the complexity of their problems. While I could only offer a listening ear, the life skills class was an attempt to help solve some of the problems. It was here that I met Teddy and learned more about the value of the program.

Teddy

Teddy (not his real name), a 55-year-old male alcoholic, was just about as different from me as you can get. He had not been sober for longer than five months since he was a teenager. He had a complex family history and was hardened by years in prison and programs like this one. Due to his past, he was

headstrong, arrogant, and manipulative. Because it was difficult to communicate with or understand him, I was not looking forward to dealing with Teddy in the classroom.

As time went by, though, I saw a change in Teddy. He spoke less but had more to say. He would make references outside of class to things



we had learned in class, like tools for managing anger. It was amazing to see these changes: Teddy became more respectful and sincere toward others, and he seemed happier. Three days before Teddy was to graduate the life skills course, the class discussed "the next step." Teddy elaborated on what he learned. He spoke about the new way in which he dealt with people by showing them the respect they deserved and by recognizing his own right to have dignity and respect. He spoke about his desire, hope, and belief that this time sobriety would last. It was awe-inspiring.

The next day I came to work and saw Teddy in his regular clothes, not in his normal work uniform, and he

had a number of bags and suitcases nearby. He said he was leaving the program. I was taken aback and confused. He was so close to graduation and he had changed so much.

Then I heard what happened the night before. Teddy had become upset with another program member and, in a single moment of forgetting what he had learned, physically reacted. Because of his previous problems in the program, Teddy was asked to leave. In a matter of minutes, Teddy was gone.

Measuring Success

When I think about Teddy and hear that he is still sober and doing well, I realize the success in this story. Teddy stuck with the program longer than he had with any other. He participated in class and internalized many of the tools and lessons he learned. He had made great strides.

But he wasn't perfect; he was going to occasionally forget what he learned. The best part is that I saw the change in Teddy and I know he is using what he learned here. The worst part is that I can't physically see his continued growth or progress. I can only have faith in the life skills the shelter provided him.

Courtney Blum graduated from The University of Notre Dame in Biology and Anthropology. She is doing a year of postgraduate volunteer service with the Holy Cross Associates program.

Preparing Students for an INS Interview

By LYNNE WEINTRAUB

Emphasize Speaking and Listening

- ◆
- ◆ Put off note-taking until end of class;
- ◆ Repeat key words/questions frequently so students can hear them as many times as necessary;
- ◆ Encourage students to tape classes/practice interviews to practice later;
- ◆ Minimize paper & pencil exercises (if you use a text, it must have a strong audio component);
- ◆ Bring in guest "examiners" so students practice hearing voices/accents different from your own.

Teach Listening Strategies

- ◆ Focus on listening comprehension rather than rote question/response activities;
- ◆ Teach "key" words rather than memorizing every possible way a question might be asked;
- ◆ In practice interviews, vary the wordings of questions/commands each time.

Beware of Sensitive Personal Information

- ◆ Try to get a copy of students' N-400 before starting class to avoid asking about sensitive issues;
- ◆ Wait until you can offer one-to-one practice in private to coach students who have special issues.

Stay Up-to-Date and Strive for Authenticity

- ◆ Join a local immigration advocacy group (if possible) to get updates on naturalization issues;
- ◆ Stay in touch with a well-informed Congressional office (if possible);
- ◆ Use the N-400 as a guide;
- ◆ Do "mini" practice interviews for each section of the N-400;
- ◆ Debrief every student after every INS interview; use information to practice interviews

Help Students Build Confidence

- ◆ Provide as much practice as students want;
- ◆ Offer individual practice interviews before a real INS appointment;
- ◆ Make sure students know exactly what the interview process will consist of and how to respond;
- ◆ Offer (or encourage students to get) native language translations of likely questions;
- ◆ Reward any success no matter how small;
- ◆ Let students know that perfect grammar and understanding are not necessary for a successful interview;
- ◆ Express confidence in students' abilities ("You answered my questions very well just now. I think you will be able to answer the INS examiners question well, too.")



- ◆ Invite students who have recently become citizens to answer questions your class may have about the process;
- ◆ Go over the Oath of Naturalization (it's on the first page of the N-400) so students know what they are promising. Language is complex and archaic so you will have to have a translation or simplify/reword a great deal.

Advice to Offer Students

- ◆ Be calm and polite;
- ◆ Know how to say: "Yes. That's right."/"No. That's not right."/"That's not correct."/"Excuse me, I don't understand."/"I didn't hear you."/"I have a question";
- ◆ Speak clearly;
- ◆ Look at the examiner.

Commands to Practice

- ◆ "Follow me";
- ◆ "Remain standing";
- ◆ "Take out your green card and passport";
- ◆ "Read this sentence/write this sentence": _____;
- ◆ "Write your _____ (phone number, name, address)";
- ◆ "Sign your name."

Important Vocabulary/Phrases

- ◆ "Since you became a permanent resident, have you ever. . .?";
- ◆ "Do you promise to tell the truth. . .?";
- ◆ Current/currently; present/presently; previous/previously;
- ◆ Former (address, employer, spouse);
- ◆ "Have you ever failed. . ." (to register for selective service).

Resources for Teachers

The INS Interview: Will They Pass? Video of mock interviews and information to help teachers and students determine whether the applicant is likely to be approved for citizenship. Available from New Readers Press (800) 448-8878. Web catalogue: <www.newreaderspress.com/>.

INS: A Guide to Naturalization. Free booklet available through local INS offices, on the Web <www.ins.usdoj.gov/forms/download/n-400/n-400.htm>, or through the INS Forms Line: (800) 870-3676. An on-line practice test is also available on the INS Web page.

The Basic Sequence of an Interview

Note: Interview procedures may vary from office to office; this is an example.

1. Applicant enters waiting room and puts appointment slip in a box.
2. Examiner pulls appointment slip and file and calls applicant's name.
3. Applicant is told to go to room #_____.
4. Applicant is instructed to remain standing, raise right hand, and promise to tell the truth. (Applicant must answer "yes" or "I do.")
5. Applicant is asked to show green card and sometimes a passport or other ID.
6. Examiner reviews each section of the N-400 Application, adds any new information, and has applicant sign application.
7. Examiner asks civics questions, gives a dictation (and sometimes a reading test.)

If an Applicant Passes

1. Applicant is asked to sign a certificate processing sheet and also sign on the side of his/her photos.
2. Applicant is scheduled for swearing-in ("Oath Ceremony"), usually a week later.

Lynne Weintraub teaches Citizenship at the Jone Library in Amherst. She can be reached at (413) 256-8037 or by email at <lynneweintraub@hotmail.com>.

The Changes Project

Continued from page 4

nicate, improved their literacy and English language skills, and helped them develop job-related skills. Being involved in the project also affected the future plans of several team members, influencing their goals and aspirations. The teachers who were involved noted how participation in the Changes Project taught them to be better teachers. One said: "It's changed the way I think about how knowledge gets made."

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Changes Project, we offer the following recommendations to teachers and programs who wish to better support learners facing these three issues. (The full report of The Changes Project also makes recommendations for policy makers and learners.)

Involve students in investigation and action around these and other issues they identify as important. Such investigation will not only answer questions, but support students to develop the confidence and skills necessary to manage these issues.

Assist learners in accessing accurate information about the constantly changing regulations that accompany welfare reform and immigration reform. Support immigrants and refugees in learning English and in understanding how US systems (like health care, education, employment and immigration) operate.

Integrate information about these issues into the curriculum.

Provide flexible programming so learners' complex schedules can be best accommodated. This includes a diversity of class times, as well as flexible attendance policies that recognize students' needs to respond to the requirements of the Department of Transitional Assistance, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and their employers.

Look beyond academics when doing assessment and intake with learners: ask questions that will help understand the complexities of learners' lives. Provide specialized counseling that addresses the specific needs of welfare recipients, newcomers, and workers. Learning about the ways students' are managing and the gaps in their networks provides opportunities for teachers and programs to offer responsive programming.

Integrating Research into the Classroom

Adding an investigative component to adult basic education curriculum does not have to be on the scale of the Changes Project. There are many resources that can aid teachers and learners to develop projects and curriculum that feature classroom-based investigation. The work of the Changes Project might offer a starting point for those interested in welfare reform, immigration reform, and the changing nature of work.

A full report about the Changes Project will be published that details findings, recommendations, and process. The report will be available online at www.sabeswest.org.

Resources on Participatory Research

Goshen, R. *Introduction to Participatory Approaches and Methodologies*. Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, UK. www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/intro/introind.html

Hurst, J. (1995). *Popular Education: A Powerful Tool* www-gse.berkeley.edu/Admin/ExtRel/educator/Spring95texts/popular.educ.html

McTaggart, R. (1991). "Principles for Participatory Action Research." *Adult Education Quarterly* 41 (3), 168-87, 1991. (ERIC document No: EJ428045)

Park, P., et al. eds. (1993). *Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada*. Toronto: OISE Press.

Pretty, J. N., I. Guijt, J. Thompson, I. Scoones (1995). *A Trainer's Guide to Participatory Learning and Action*. International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

Web Sites on Participatory/Action Research www.goshen.edu/soan/soan96p.htm Excellent resource listing and links.

Alex Risley-Schroeder is an Associate Coordinator at SABES West, Holyoke Community College, and coordinated the Changes Project. She can be reached at 413-552-2066, or email arisleyschroeder@hcc.mass.edu

The “N” Word: the Power of Language

BY LOUIS MARBRE-CARGILL

Nigger. Over the years, this word has been an assault—scathingly dehumanizing—against a race of people in America. Meanwhile, those very people have been trying to settle on a term that really describes who they are: black, Afro-American, African-American, people of color. . .

However, a resurgence of what many now refer to, with reticence and distaste, as the “N-word” has been ushered in with the new millennium. Newly coined as “nigga,” it has been revived, so to speak, by a contingent of its targets:

rap and hip hop musicians, a contemporary substream of black culture. Emanating from this source, the N-word has circulated incessantly, and very publicly, among black youth and young adults.

What has all of this got to do with adult basic education? Some of us “people of color,” staff and students at WAITT House, a multi-cultural, diverse ABE school in Roxbury, have obtained a special grant to investigate the possibilities of the N-word as a focus of unity, rather than the prong of division it has become among black generations. We hope to bring together a

representative group—youth, parents, rap and hip hop professionals, veterans of Civil Rights era and seniors—to explore: what differences, overt and subtle, should we perceive between “a nigger” and “a nigga”; and through this approach, what possibilities might there be for bringing about more intra-racial compatibility.

Watch for research results in future issues of *Field Notes*.

Louis Marbre-Cargill has taught for several years in Massachusetts public schools and now teaches ABE at WAITT House.

Mark Your Calendar

July 6-8

7th International Conference on Adult Learning of Mathematics: *Adults Learning Mathematics*
Location: Medford, MA
Contact: Mary Jane Schmitt (413) 967-3505
Web: <www.euronet.nl/~groenest/alm/index.htm>

October 4-7

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), National Conference 2000:
Show Me the Future
Location: Kansas City, MO
Contact: LVA, (315) 472-0001
<www.literacyvolunteers.org/conference/index.htm>

October 25-26

Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE), Network 2000
Location: Marlborough, MA
Contact: MCAE, (800) 339-2498



Learning from Inclusion

BY ERIK JACOBSON

While the inclusion of students with special needs is not often discussed in the context of adult education, there are opportunities for this type of instructional model. I am currently teaching an inclusive ESOL class at the Haitian American Public Health Initiative (HAPHI) in Mattapan (as part of a collaboration with the Center for World Languages and Cultures at UMass-Boston). In this class, “traditional” ESOL students are joined by participants from HAPHI’s Young Adult day program, which offers vocational and social skills training for young adults with special needs.

Goals for Inclusion

In keeping with the goals of inclusive education, our expectations for the class are that all students will increase their English and literacy skills, that the day program students will gain confidence in their interactions with the larger community, and that the “traditional” students will develop a heightened sensitivity about the strengths and needs of individuals with disabilities.

Since we just began the class a little over a year ago, we’re still learning about how to make inclusive adult education work. Some of the most important lessons we have learned are noted below.

Focus on Specific Abilities

Teaching this inclusive class is difficult at times because of the mixed-level student population. However, when thinking

tion (e.g., about safety) to the day program students. In this way, specific student strengths and needs drive the curriculum, rather than their labels (e.g., special needs, high or low level ESOL).

The Power of Labels

During an evaluation in which we asked the older students how they felt about sharing the classroom with the students with special needs, a man who had been in the class for two months said, “What? When are they coming to join us?

Did they already start?” Although we had explained the inclusive nature of the class to him when he began, he apparently had not labeled the students he had been working alongside as “students with special needs.” To him they were just fellow class members. This was remarkable, considering that one of the day program students is diagnosed with autism, and communication with him is sometimes difficult. I believe that since the students in the class are not arranged in fixed and labeled groups, this student had not come to think of the day program students as defined by their special needs. He had never shown any reluctance to work with them, and seemed to view them as equals.

Continued on page 19

*“Madame, kijan ou si
‘mwen vle rete’ an
Angle?”*

about a class as mixed-level, it should not be assumed that students can be placed in single, fixed categories (such as Advanced or Beginner).

For example, a “high-level” student might have strong literacy skills, but not very strong conversation skills. The reverse can also be true. In our class, respecting variations in students’ skills provides an opportunity for all learners to act as resources. For example, because several of the day program students have stronger English literacy skills than some of the older students in the class, they can take on a leading role in group work that involves literacy. At other times, the older students draw on their life experiences to provide support and key informa-

Learning From Inclusion

Continued from page 18

How different would his reaction have been if the staff had constantly referred to them as the "special needs students," or always began activities by noting their "disabilities?" Analogously, what type of potentially negative labeling occurs in traditional ESOL classrooms?

Respect Different Types of Development

One older student (I will call her Ms. Pierre), was somewhat uncomfortable with the day program students when she joined the class a few months ago. She would laugh nervously when they made mistakes, and she didn't want to interact with them beyond the minimum requirements. Last month, however, there was a dramatic breakthrough. The class was involved in a role play about going to the doctor. The students with stronger oral English skills (including this woman) were taking on the role of the doctor, while the other students were acting as patients. Before any students volunteered to be patients, Ms. Pierre told me that she

wanted to work with the student with autism (who I will call Antoine). I was surprised, but I sent Antoine to her, and the interaction went very well. The next week Antoine was talking to me in a mixture of English and Kreyol, and he was unsure if he was making himself understood. He stood up, looked across the room to Ms. Pierre, and said in Kreyol "Mamdame, kijan ou di 'mwen vle rete' an Angle?" (How do you say "I want to stay" in English?). She kindly informed him how, and he turned to me and repeated the statement in English.

After a single role-play interaction, Antoine had come to recognize Ms. Pierre as a helpful resource. In this moment, all of our expectations around inclusion had been met—the students were learning English, the Day Program students were utilizing important interpersonal skills, and the older students were becoming sensitive to the issues facing the students with special needs. This potential for a variety of growth is a key element of any class.

By focusing on skills rather than labels, and by being sensitive

to interpersonal dynamics, I think our attempt at inclusion has been successful. As a final example, one student began the class by expressing both his desire to be in the class and his fears that he would be hit or bitten by the day program students. Three months later, one of the day program students had an epileptic seizure in class. For the next class we scheduled a workshop on the nature of epilepsy, and HAPHI staff answered student questions about the condition.

At the end of the workshop, I asked the students how they felt class was going, and if they still had any concerns about the students with special needs. When the same student who had been worried about being attacked said in English, "No discrimination, no discrimination—we're family," we knew we were on the right track.

Erik Jacobson is on the staff of the Center for World Languages and Cultures at UMass-Boston, and teaches at HAPHI. He can be contacted by email at <jacobser@gse.harvard.edu>.

The Massachusetts Adult Literacy Hotline

The Hotline is a statewide information and referral service. It serves adults who want to find a basic education program, volunteers who want to tutor, and agencies who want to obtain referrals for their clients.



field notes

Habits of Mind

Continued from page 8

activity are located in the Social Studies ABE Framework:

Environment & Interdependence

Learn patterns of interdependence in our world;

Geographical features can determine an area's economic health, political stability, and historical significance.

Production, Distribution & Consumption

The relationship between patterns of production, distribution, and consumption;

The influence of production, consumption, and distribution on individual decision-making.

Perspective & Interpretation

The difference between fact, opinion, and interpretation.

Cultures & Identities

How cultures vary and change;

How cultures affect identity and change.

Habits of Mind

By completing all of the supported activities, the students had developed the following habits of mind as defined in the Curriculum Frameworks. They were able to:

Look at the way other cultures view life in America;

Create empathy for immigrants;
Learn to appreciate cultural differences;

Be able to compare & contrast social, political, and ethical differences;

Understand how immigration has traditionally helped our labor force;

Develop a better appreciation for our American systems of work and law;

View how families in other cultures relate to one another;

Learn about materialism and how it affects individual lives;

Begin to know the difference between myth and fact;

Learn to question their own beliefs;

Learn what symbolism and metaphor means.

Teachers can also connect other videos to Curriculum Framework standards and Habits of Mind.

Resources for Teaching Video

Allen, Margaret. (1985). *Teaching English With Video*. Essex, England: Longman.

Stempleski, Susan, and Barry Tomalin. (1990). *Video in Action: Recipes for Using Video in Language Teaching*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Summerfield, Ellen. (1993). *Crossing Cultures Through Film*. Maine: Intercultural Press,

Salazar, Pat. (1999). *Her Not So Brilliant Career: My Not So Brilliant Idea*. Mini-grant report on a women's film series for ESOL students. Includes sample lesson plan and excellent links to useful Web sites. Find her report at: www.brown.edu/Departments/Sweaver_Center/Literacy_Resources/esol.html

Carole Ann Borges, a published journalist and poet, teaches in the at the Wellspring Adult Learning Center in Hull. She can be reached by email at <caroleann1@yahoo.com>.

Upcoming Issues of *Field Notes*

If you have an idea for an article, please call Lenore Balliro, editor, at (617) 482-9485 one month before submission deadline to reserve space. We especially encourage articles about classroom practice and practical tools teachers can use. These dates are always negotiable if timing permits!!!

Fall 2000: Reading

Deadline for submission:
June 30

Winter 2001: Assessment

Deadline for submission:
September 30

Fostering Independent Learning

By TOM LYNCH

One of my biggest challenges over the last ten years has been motivating students to become more responsible for their own learning. While some students relied almost completely on the teacher for direction, were frequently absent or late for class, neglected homework, or forgot their books at home, the more successful students not only managed their assignments, but did additional work and always seemed to be one step ahead of everyone else. The successful students are what I want so much to teach all my students to become: motivated, independent learners.

As teachers know, we cannot "teach" passive learners to become independent learners. We can, according to Paulo Freire,¹ create and support the conditions where teachers and students share power in learning rather than the traditional "teacher as the expert" model. Creating these conditions helps promote independent learning. I believe two areas are crucial to motivating students to become independent learners—teacher preparedness and student learning-to-learn strategies.

Teacher Preparedness

Self-learning is socially formed and culturally framed.² The differences in class, culture, ethnicity, personality, cognitive style, learning patterns, life expe-

riences, and gender among adults are more significant than the fact that they are not children or adolescents³. In a traditional setting, teachers plan, teach, and evaluate their curriculum. They set goals and objectives ahead of time. The

*Self-learning is socially formed
and culturally framed.*

collaborative classroom is different. The teacher does not develop goals and objectives before considering student needs and goals. Curriculum development requires constant negotiation between teacher and students. This collaboration encourages students to make meaning for themselves, based on their understanding of why and how new knowledge is related to their own experiences, interests and needs.

Learning-How-to-Learn Strategies

Teachers need to help students learn how to organize learning. Students most often need assistance in three specific areas:

1. Managing Time: Students often have difficulties remembering to include all of the activities in their lives when organizing their time. A discussion of time management should emphasize the role of a students' commitments, study and

leisure activities in planning their day-to-day schedules. It is also important to illustrate for students the different types of management organizers, such as a planner or a day timer. Students need to develop a strategy that works for

them and understand that people having different needs, use different approaches. Teachers can integrate time management strategies into daily classroom practice, can offer separate time work-

shops on time management, and can connect with program counselors to make sure that time management strategies are integrated into the counseling component of a program.

2. Managing Materials: Students often lack the necessary organization skills to maintain their binders and notes in some systematic order. Providing ongoing assistance for students in the various techniques of organizing their materials is critical to successful learning. The program may also want to invest in providing students with pocket folders, etc. A regular and systematic review will go a long way to reinforcing its success. For example, teachers can set aside a very short time at the end of each class so students can organize their notes and materials, make notes about what they need to do for the next step, and so on. Teachers can set up a file box in

Continued on page 22

Fostering Independent. . .

Continued from page 21

the classroom with individual folders so students can locate on-going work, thus using "down" classroom time effectively and encouraging independent learning.

3. Utilization of Technology: Computers, the Internet, interactive software, audio and video programs represent significant technological advances. They can be used effectively to help students learn independently.

Independent learning is part of a lifelong process of education. It can be fostered by creating opportunities and experiences in the classroom that encourage student motivation, curiosity, and self-confidence. Independent learning is an interactive process among students and between teacher and students. The initiative for the collaborative process lies with the teacher. In some respects it may require extra effort on the part of the teacher, but in the end the satisfaction of sustaining the success of independent learners is well worth it.

¹ Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press

² McCargar, D. F. (1993). "Teacher and student role expectations: Cross-cultural differences and implications." *Modern Language Journal*, 77(2), 192-207

Tom Lynch has been teaching ESOL for several years. He can be reached by email at <Thomas.p.lynch@worldnet.att.net>

Update on the Massachusetts Family Literacy Consortium

BY KATHY RODRIGUEZ

The U.S. Department of Education granted \$518,000 to the MFLC for the two-year period starting January 1, 2000, and ending December 31, 2001.

The MFLC will use the money in several ways. First, it will design and implement a family literacy longitudinal evaluation. This seven-year study will follow three-four-and five-year-old children enrolled in family literacy programs in Massachusetts through the completion of their first Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exam and compare their scores against those of a comparison group. This study is intended to answer questions posed by state policy leaders about the impact of family literacy.

Indicators of Program Quality

Another key initiative is to develop, pilot, and refine Indicators of Program Quality for Family Literacy, which will then be used as standards and evaluation mechanisms for all family literacy programs in the state.

At the state level, each MFLC member agency will develop a plan to integrate family literacy and support approaches into its core policies and priorities. At the local level, the MFLC will work with five collaborations and award up to \$10,000 for each community to promote and implement widespread family literacy and support services.

In February, Amy Park, formerly of the Lincoln Filene Center, became the MFLC Assistant Coordinator. Since

March, three parent representatives joined the MFLC. Parent representatives give voice to the needs of families and the impact of programs. The MFLC still has

funding to support the participation of one more parent representative in bimonthly meetings.

For more information, or to request a parent representative nomination form, call Amy Park at 781-338-3876.

Kathy Rodriguez is the Coordinator of the Massachusetts Family Literacy Consortium. She can be reached at the Department of Education, at (781)338-3846 or by email at <krodriguez@doe.mass.edu>.



Reflections on My Work in Adult Literacy

BY KERLINE AUGUSTE TOFURI

My story of successes and challenges of teaching English as a second language is dedicated to all teachers in the field of adult literacy. My story is told with two goals in mind: to serve as an inspiration to teachers and adult learners of other languages who wish to become teachers, and to energize and encourage teachers and learners of English as a second language to stay in the field of adult literacy.

Haitian Perspective

I was introduced to the adult literacy field through the Community-University Project for Literacy (CULP) at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. I started as a teacher's aid/mentor at the Haitian Multi-Service Center in Dorchester. I choose this particular center because I was born and raised in Haiti. Knowing some of the facts of the social, economic, and educational situations of my native country, I quickly acknowledged the importance of the adult literacy project.

Every Haitian family values and preaches the importance of a good education, and it is unfortunate that only a small percentage of the population in Haiti has the privilege to attend school. Haitian scholars and others have confirmed that 83% or more

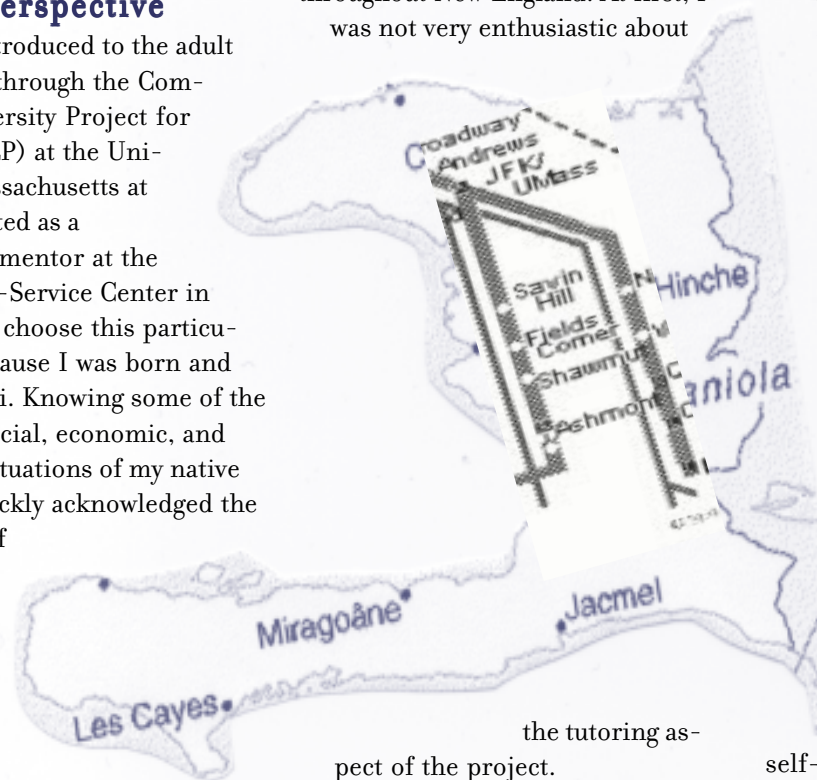
of the Haitian population is illiterate.

Prior to the Community-University Project for Literacy, I had no knowledge of the adult education programs in the greater Boston area. I had no idea that English as a second language and adult education classes were available to immigrants in my neighborhood. Even with a strong interest in cultural anthropology and ethnography, I was not aware of the diverse ethnic groups that exist in the Boston area and throughout New England. At first, I was not very enthusiastic about

positive impacts for both the learners and myself, I realize that I was fortunate to be able to be a participant in the project. I have been and am still intrigued and deeply touched by the desire and determination of the adult learners to fight against illiteracy. From the project, I not only learned more about the English language, but also acquired a deep desire for self-improvement. The project also allowed me to gain enough confidence and experience to become an active and productive member in my community. Thus, I have made the decision to pursue and excel in the adult literacy field as both a teacher and learner. I feel that colleges/universities should continue to provide educational programs for students geared towards adult education. Today, as a teacher I have encountered significant challenges, but have also achieved a great deal of success.

Challenges

As a non-native speaker of English, I have to overcome my own insecurity and fear of the mechanics of the English language. I have to keep my self-esteem and confidence in check in order to boost my students' self-esteem and confidence. I have to learn ways, through constant planning and experimentation with



the tutoring aspect of the project.

As a learner myself, I lacked the confidence in my abilities and skills to positively influence the academic goals of other learners. Today, reflecting back on the dynamics of the tutoring aspect and its

Continued on page 24

Reflections on My Work

Continued from page 23

classroom strategies, and professional development, to help the students reach their educational goals.

Successes

In spite of these challenges, I have achieved a great deal of success in this field, and I hope my success will inspire other non-native speakers of English to continue learning English and to pursue the field of adult literacy as a career. For example, I have been able to maintain consistent and regular class attendance in my classrooms. I have continued to create a comfortable learning environment for my students and to help students of various ethnic backgrounds reach their academic and economic goals. I have helped prepare many Haitian students for a certificate program or high school equivalency. I have also been able to meet expectations of the programs I have worked for. In addition, I have had the opportunity to work with well-known adult programs, teachers, and diverse ethnic groups.

Through all of my work, my language and professional skills continue to improve, and these are my personal successes.

Kerline Auguste Tofuri teaches ESOL at the Cambridge Community Learning Center and is a Staff Associate for the NELRC at World Education. She can be reached at (617) 482-9485.

Where I'm Headed: A Poem

BY RASHIDA GITTENS

I never knew my father since he left our house when I was three. I met him when I was 21. He now feels as though I should give up my life here in the "ghetto" and move to the "suburbs" of Arizona. He asked me one day what I wanted out of life and where was I headed being a young, African-American, single mom living in Boston. I told him, "This ghetto is who raised me."

The Ghetto Is Who Raised Me

I was asked one time, what exactly do I see,
Outside my window, in these ghetto streets.

"I see what I want, it's all up to me,"
but my father couldn't understand that, living in Arizona with **his** family.

"I see success, I see happiness, and I definitely see what's mine,
My life is an endless challenge and as beautiful as a purple rose vine."

My life is what I make it, no matter where I am,
And I refuse to use excuses, like "My father was never there."

So what that he was absent, that doesn't make me less
Of the woman that I am, or the fact that I hate wearing a dress.

I am a mother. . . a single one at that,
And that to me, stands taller than any scientific fact.

I feed my child, I love my child, and I pay her school.
Regardless of where I am, I'm the one she'll run to.

Whether it's in the ghetto or in the suburbs,
My daughter will understand that those are two irrelevant words.

Words some would like to believe, or even plant in my head,
That I'm from the ghetto and I will never get ahead.

To those who haven't caught on yet, I'm sorry you feel this way,
But what you don't understand is, the ghetto made me this way.

Smart, independent, ambitious, beautiful and cool
Oh don't forget my daughter, age four, with a 7- year- old IQ.

I am a single mom, born and raised poor,
Which brings me to my conclusion, Success knocks every day,
heavily at my door!

Rashida Gittens is a former staff associate at the SABES Central Resource Center.

ABE Teachers Certification for Massachusetts

BY CAREY REID AND MARY JAYNE FAY

The statewide ABE Certification Committee has been working steadily since last spring to recommend a process to certify adult basic education teachers in the Commonwealth. The Committee has worked hard to make the process fair, inclusive, and meaningful, and to align this process with the state's Pre-K-12 certification system while preserving the unique characteristics of the adult basic education field.

The Committee members represent particular constituencies—unions, part-time and full-time teachers, and professional organizations—but their work was also heavily influenced by the efforts of prior committees and work groups and by feedback gathered from the field through email and focus groups.

Feedback from Practitioners

In fact, feedback from practitioners has had a direct impact on staff members who have supported the work of the Advisory Committee and on the Committee's specific recommendations. As a result of feedback, for example, the Committee has recommended ways for veteran teachers to receive credit for their knowledge and experience.

The Committee generated a first Interim Report to Commissioner David Driscoll on October 4, 1999. A second Interim Report was recently published and is now out

for public comment. Readers who are not familiar with the Committee's earlier work and relevant publications can visit the SABES Web site at <www.sabes.org> or the DOE Website: <www.doe.mass.edu/acls> to catch up. What follows is a summary of the recommendations put forth in the second Interim Report.

Requirements for Certification

The Committee is recommending that ABE teachers who want to pursue certification must possess either a bachelor's degree or a master's degree. Further, the Committee is recommending that the Department of Education offer support—through information about programs, tuition reimbursement, and leave of absences—for teachers who want to pursue a bachelor's degree.

A second requirement would be to pass the Massachusetts Educator Certification *Communication and Literacy Skills Test* and an Adult Basic Education Subject Matter Test (not yet developed). Finally, teachers pursuing certification would have to indicate proficiency in the ABE teacher competencies.

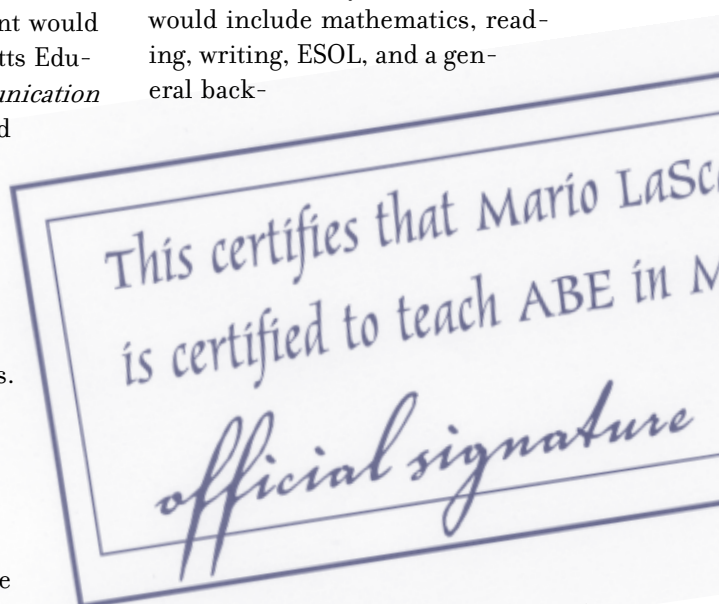
ABE Teacher Competencies

The Committee succeeded in compressing the earlier draft list of 53 compe-

tencies to a new draft list of 34. The competencies are divided into eight areas: Foundation Knowledge, Understanding the Adult Learner, Diversity and Equity, Instructional Design, Teaching Methods, Facilitating the Adult Learning Environment, Student Assessment and Evaluation, and Professional/Continuing Education. In total, this list is a best attempt at capturing what a professional ABE teacher should know and be able to do in order to serve adult learners well.

Form of the Certification

The Committee has recommended that the form of the certification be a general certification that provides a foundation of knowledge in all of the areas that ABE educators are called upon to teach. Most likely, these areas would include mathematics, reading, writing, ESOL, and a general back-



Continued on page 26

ABE Teachers Certification

Continued from page 25

ground in history, science, literature, and social studies.

Routes to Certification

The Committee is proposing four routes to certification. One is for new ABE teachers and another for novice teachers. The report also recommends two "streamlining options" that recognize the knowledge and experience already attained by many teachers in the Commonwealth. For the first tract, teachers with a Pre-K-12 certification and one year of ABE teaching experience (480 contact hours of teaching) will be assumed to have become proficient in eight of the 34 competencies; for the second tract, teachers

with five years of ABE teaching experience (2,400 contact hours of teaching), with or without Pre-K-12 certification, will be assumed to have become proficient in 24 of the 34 competencies. Additionally, the committee recommends that those with five years of ABE teaching experience will be exempted from the Literacy Skills and Subject Matter Tests and from the practicum (see below).

Practicum Requirements

Again, because university-based teacher prep/certification programs do not exist for ABE, the Committee recommends a practicum to be required for new teachers, teachers with no certification, or experienced teachers with less than five years of ABE teaching experience. The

practicum would be in the form of an in-service apprenticeship under the supervision of a trained mentor teacher.

Give Your Feedback

Feedback from the field is still being eagerly sought. Please read the relevant documents online and send all comments to Mary Jayne Fay through mail at MDOE/ACLS, 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, through email at <mjfay@doe.mass.edu> or by fax at (781) 338-3394.

Carey Reid is a Staff Development Specialist at Central SABES/World Education. Mary Jayne Fay is the ABE Certification Specialist at the Massachusetts Department of Education/ACLS.

Mass AAL (Mass Alliance for Adult Literacy) Needs Board Members

BY ERNEST BEST

The Massachusetts Alliance for Adult Literacy (Mass AAL) is an organization of current and former adult learners who hope to advance the cause of literacy among adults in the state of Massachusetts. They have recently received funding from the Massachusetts Department of Education and are now recruiting members of the Mass AAL Board.

The Mass AAL Board will consist of 13 members, ten of whom will be current or former students. Of these ten, MAAL hopes to have two representing each of the five SABES regions so that all parts of the state are represented. Board members will serve one-year or two-year terms, beginning September, 2000. Board

meetings are held eight to ten times a year, in Boston, on a weekday afternoon. Board members receive a \$50 stipend for preparation, follow-up, and attendance at this meeting, and they are also reimbursed for their travel expenses.

Please share this information with as many adult learners as possible, and please encourage good candidates to apply. For more information, and to request an application to become a board member, call Ernest Best at 617/782-8956, extension 13 by July 3, 2000.

Ernest Best is the acting director of Mass AAL. He can be reached by email at <ernest@alri.org>.

(Sort of) Solving a Classroom Problem

BY EVELYN J. BAUM

Mariana (not her real name), a thirty-year-old student, bounded into my intermediate ESOL classroom on day number one with energy to spare. Mariana, a pen tapper and a foot thumper, could not sit still. She'd shoot out of her seat to speak at any given moment although her remarks often had nothing to do with the subject at hand.

One of the greatest joys of teaching adult ed classes for me, besides no cafeteria duty, has been few discipline problems. Yet here it was, in full swing, a first-class humdinger of a discipline problem, staring me smack in the face. The feelings this provoked were unsettling, reeling me back to student teaching days with thirty boisterous third graders.

To Mariana's credit, I confess that she was likable and very funny. I surely didn't want to wrestle with her publicly or alienate her fans by being too aggressive. Nevertheless, the dilemma demanded a response. Besides, her constant babble was not only disruptive, it was downright making me crazy.

The "Withering Gaze"

It was time to chart a course and attempt some classroom management strategies. There was the nonverbal approach: the withering gaze, the arched eyebrow, and the furrowed brow. Next, there was the index finger to lips with no sound, followed by the more obvi-

ous message, the index finger to lips with a "shushing" sound.

Since my success was only moderate and occasional, my next ploy was musical chairs. Yet, no matter where Mariana was seated, she talked on. When I told Mariana she was getting on my



nerves she replied, "Oh, Evelyn, I'm sorry I make you nervous."

Yes, I did speak to Mariana directly and often. I would use a soothing voice and offer praise for the good qualities she brought to our classroom. In measured tones I would continue on, telling her how her behavior interfered with her classmates' learning. Mariana, eyes wide, would nod at my reasonable entreaties. She wasn't malicious, not at all. She just seemed honestly incapable of controlling herself.

It was clearly time to take more dramatic action, so I consulted with a wise friend who has supervised student teachers for

years. She suggested I keep a journal of Mariana's behavior over a period of time; perhaps I would see some patterns and gain understandings about what triggered her outbursts. "Swell," I thought. "This must be the ivory tower approach." I wanted (read: needed) something that would work on Monday morning, not six months from now.

Well, surprise, I did solve my problem—sort of. Actually, it was easy. It works every time, and in adult ed classes, one can count on it. Mariana moved! She relocated to another part of the city and is no longer able to commute to our program. Thus, my dilemma was over, and the remainder of the year slid by smoothly.

True Confession

Yet, here's a true confession: I know another Mariana lurks in my future. Sadly, I don't feel any more confident or equipped to deal with her effectively except that it's likely I'll pounce on the situation quicker, more forcefully, and probably a good deal less politely. Is that the best solution? I'm not sure. What I am sure about, however, is that all the frameworks in the world are shortchanged when the teacher has to give excess time, energy, and attention to one disruptive student.

Evelyn J. Baum teaches ESOL at the New Bedford Adult Education Program. She can be reached by fax at (508)990-3439.

Learning Computers, Speaking English: Cooperative Activities for Learning English and Basic Word Processing by Steve Quann and Diana Satin

This recently published text by local ESOL teachers Steve Quann and Diana Satin gives high-beginning to intermediate level ESOL students practice in English. It also guides them through basic computing and word processing skills. This student workbook includes a disk with ready-made activities, many of which provide job preparation. Since language lessons cover grammar and the four skill areas, this book can provide an entire curriculum, or the teacher can select and adapt activities to fit the needs of the class. Windows 95 or higher is needed. To read more about this book on the Web and to order online: <www.press.umich.edu/titles/o8655.html>.

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WORLD EDUCATION

ESOL Resources

These resources were found on the LR/RI Web site at <www.brown.edu/Departments/Sweater_Center/Literacy_Resources/esol.html>. This comprehensive site, designed and maintained by Janet Isserlis, is well worth visiting on a regular basis.

Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab. Extensive array of listening material, arranged by level of difficulty and complexity. <www.esl-lab.com/>

Hands On! A Collection of ESL Literacy Activities. <halifaximmigrant.andara.com/book.htm>. Practical ideas for vocabulary development, games, and more.

Hands On English. Request a complementary copy and learn more about this practical resource at <www.handsonenglish.com/>

Adult ESL Special Collection. This site is dedicated to providing adult ESL curricular materials and resources, news in the field, and a forum for adult ESL issues. <www.literacynet.org/esl/home.html>.

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