

fall 2003

COUNSELING

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in GED Classes

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System for Adult Basic Education Support

Funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education

Counseling the High School Dropout in GED Classes

BY DIANE C. HILL AND BEVERLY A. HOBBS

Just drop out of high school and get your GED. That's what a lot of 16-year-olds hear from family, friends, and even from their high school counselors. Sometimes this advice makes sense. There are students with poor attendance due to health problems, pregnancy, parenting, and moving from town to town. There are students with such serious social problems that the ensuing stress and mental anguish of getting along with their peers are not worth staying in school. But for these students to pass the GED test, the advice makes sense only if their reading and math assessment levels are at the high school level.

Strategies

First, counselors should ask many questions at intake to assess whether the GED program is appropriate for a particular student who has dropped out of school. Perhaps a visit to the class is necessary. Students must understand that both reading and math must be at high school levels in order to pass the GED test.

In addition, the learning support specialist (counselor) and the teacher should work on establishing short-term goals with the students and not even discuss the GED at first. For instance, a goal might be to learn the multiplication tables up to 10 in two weeks, or to find a solution to his transportation problem by Friday. These small, attainable goals set a base for

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FOREWORD

In the adult basic education programs, teaching and counseling often overlap. When the classroom becomes a safe and supportive environment, students bring life issues with them, and teachers are pulled to respond to a complex set of needs that extend beyond the scope of language and literacy instruction.

When I first started teaching adults 20 years ago, I hadn't thought through the issue of boundaries, dependence, and independence. My earliest students were Southeast Asian refugees adapting to the effects of trauma, resettlement, and serious life stressors. I soon realized I was not equipped to address all of their needs, despite my naive good intentions and genuine compassion. Bilingual/bicultural counselors provided invaluable support: they visited my classes, they directed me to agencies and resources so I could become better informed about my students. And though I never shied away from addressing the needs and requests students brought to the class, I came to recognize when referrals made more sense. Above all, I tried to follow the advice of former ABE counselor Marsha Watson, who wrote in a past issue of Bright Ideas that "Students must be armed to find their own answers, not remain unarmed and dependent on a counselor (or teacher) to listen and solve their independent problems." (Bright Ideas, winter 1997).

Another counselor once identified a distinction between being responsive to, but not responsible for, students (or other people who matter in our lives). This distinction has proven useful to me in maintaining the balance and sustaining the energy necessary for teaching well.

This issue of Field Notes offers the reflections of ABE counselors, some useful tools and resources, and a clarification from ACLS about the roles and responsibilities of ABE counselors. Diane Hill and Beverly Hobbs discuss ABE counseling issues specific to young high school dropouts. Holly Gale Jones and Emily Tang Damiano explore the challenges in counseling immigrants. Michelle Forlizzi expresses the need for a "best practices" model for counseling in ABE. Jessica Spohn offers some very useful checklists from the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project.

Though teachers are not counselors, they shoulder some of the same responsibilities and share many of the same goals. In that light, we hope this issue speaks to classroom teachers as well as to counselors.

Lenore Balliro, Editor

Field Notes Mission Statement and Editorial Policy

Mission

Field Notes is an adult basic education (ABE) quarterly, theme-based newsletter. It is designed to share innovative and reliable practices, resources, and information relating to ABE. We attempt to publish a range of voices about important educational issues, and we are especially interested in publishing new writers, writers of color, and writers who represent the full range of diversity of learners and practitioners in the field.

Field Notes is also a place to provide support and encouragement to new and experienced practitioners (ABE, ESOL, GED, ADP, Family Literacy, Correction, Workplace Education, and others) in the process of writing about their ideas and practice. Editorial support is always provided to any writer who requests it. Teachers, administrators, counselors, volunteers, and support staff are welcome to write for *Field Notes*.

Our Funder

Field Notes is published by the System for Adult Basic Educational Support (SABES) and funded by Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS), Massachusetts Department of Education. The Central Resource Center (CRC) of SABES is located at 44 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210.

Our Editorial Policy

Unsolicited manuscripts to *Field Notes* are welcome. If you have an idea for an article or wish to submit a letter to the editor, contact Lenore Balliro, editor, by phone at 617-482-9485, by email at <lballiro2000@yahoo.com>, or by mail at 44 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210. Submission deadlines for upcoming issues are published in each issue of *Field Notes*.

Opinions expressed in *Field Notes* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editor, SABES, or its funders. We do reserve the right to decline publication. We will not publish material that is sexist, homophobic, or otherwise discriminatory.

Our Reprint Policy

Articles published in *Field Notes* may be reprinted in any publication as long as they are credited to the author and *Field Notes*.

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Counseling the High...

Continued from page 1

student success, and the student can then build on his or her strengths. Further, it's important for teenage students to know that our classrooms are safe environments, and that high school issues are from another place and time. Students need to be respected, and journal writing and discussion comments should be private, unless they reveal harm to self or others.

The Need for Reality

Pre-GED classes are not always a feeder to GED classes. Some of these students might never be able to pass all the GED tests. Perhaps ABE counselors need to visit high school guidance offices to explain what our pre-GED classes can and cannot accomplish.

The academic skills enhancement we offer in ABE programs may meet the needs of older working adults but may be insufficient for teens with limited experience and multiple challenges. When we

school. That was my biggest mistake I could ever go and do. If I didn't drop out I could have been out of school already with my diploma but stuff happens I guess."

Are we ready for the "stuff"?

I wish I never dropped out of high school. That was my biggest mistake I could ever go and do.

read "I am a teenager committed to DYS trying to do what's right in my life," or even "I can't deal with coming here every day because it drives me nuts," we know that we're dealing with youth's special problems. And then when we read "I wish I never dropped out of high

Beverly Hobbs is the site coordinator for Gardner, one of the ABE sites in the Mount Wachusett Community College program. She has 14 years of experience working with GED programs and young adults. She can be reached at <B_Hobbs@mwcc.mass.edu>.

Upcoming Issues of *Field Notes*

Winter 2004: Social Justice Issues in the ABE Classroom

Call by Sept. 10

Submit by Sept. 20

Have you addressed issues of social justice in your adult basic education classroom? Topics could include homelessness, peace work, gay rights, workers' rights, discrimination, racism, immigrants and refugee's concerns, economic justice, or many others.

Please contact Lenore Balliro, editor, if you would like to write about your experiences. She can be reached at <lballiro@worlded.org> or 617-482-9485. We are also interested in reviews of resources (books, videos, agencies) that help teachers integrate social justice themes into their classrooms.



Spring 2004: GED/EDP/ADP Programs

Call by Jan. 2

Submit by Jan. 10

What Does English Taste Like?

By TZIVIA GOVER

Editor's Note: The last issue of Field Notes included a call for student writing. We are delighted that Tzivia Gover, poetry instructor at The Care Center in Holyoke, submitted some of her students' work. We are including some of the students' work in this issue and will publish the rest in the winter issue. Many thanks to Tzivia for bringing us student voices. The Care Center is a program for pregnant and parenting teens who are studying for their GEDs. In addition to academic subjects learners participate in athletics, theater, art, poetry, and computer studies, among others. Every Wednesday morning the pre-GED class at The Care Center in works with poetry instructor, Tzivia Gover. Together they read a poem and discuss it, then write poems of their own inspired by the form and/or content of what they read together.

Recently, we read Julia Alvarez's poem *Bilingual Sestina* out loud, then discussed it. We focused on the first two stanzas. Discussion questions included:

- ◆ How do you feel when you've been hearing English all day, then walk into a room where everyone is speaking Spanish?
- ◆ If English were a food, what would it taste like?
- ◆ If Spanish were a sound, what sound would it be?

After brainstorming and discussing, we settled down to write. Most of the students in the class are Latina, but all of us were able to relate to different aspects of the poem, regardless of our backgrounds. These poems are examples of what we discovered about ourselves, our cultures, and our languages through poetry. (Turn to page 18 to read selected student poetry from this lesson.)

Tzivia Gover teaches poetry and creative writing at The Care Center in Holyoke, and works as a freelance writing consultant for adult basic education sites and other nontraditional educational settings. She is also a professional writer and author. She can be reached at <tz11@aol.com>.

An excerpt from *Bilingual Sestina*
By Julia Alvarez*

Some things I have to say aren't getting said
in this snowy, blue-eyed, gum-chewing
English,
dawn's early light sifting through the persianas closed
the night before by dark-skinned girls whose words
evoke cama, aposento, sueños in nombres
from that first word I can't translate from Spanish.

Gladys, Rosario, Altagracia—the sounds of Spanish
wash over me like warm island waves as I say
your soothing names: a child again learning the
nombres
of things you point to in the world before English
turned sol, tierra, cielo, luna to vocabulary words—
sun, earth, sky, moon—language closed. . .

* The complete poem can be found in *A Formal Feeling Comes: Poems in Form by Contemporary Women*, Finch. (ed.)
Ashland, OR: Story Line Press, 1994.

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Counseling Immigrants in ABE

By HOLLY GALE JONES

Counseling in an adult basic education (ABE) program is a new focus for me. My master's degree was in education, but my counseling background was in a psychiatric day treatment program with a chronic psychiatric population. Ten years later I found myself "laid off" and the hospital closed to make way for a "Super Stop & Shop." I taught for three years in the public school while I job searched.

Before I applied for a counseling job at The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc., in Malden, I never dreamed I would be working in ABE with an immigrant population. It is very gratifying work and much less stressful than my previous work. I have found that different immigrants view mental illness differently; this must be taken into consideration when providing counseling or making referrals. Culture and religion influence views of mental illness. Admitting to mental health problems can bring shame and humiliation to the immigrant. I worked with a student from Vietnam for whom this was an issue. She had a son who was suffering from severe depression. Some Asians do not share the Western biopsychological view of mental illness. They may see a problem as an imbalance between yin & yang or a disturbance in *chi* energy.

Therapy involves self-disclosure, verbalizing feelings and taking a detailed history. This process can create fear in the immigrant that the information may be used in a way that could jeopardize his or her immigrant status. The counselor needs to create a trusting

relationship with the adult learner and a safe environment. It is important to take time to listen and respond in an assuring manner. This does not happen in an initial 15-minute meeting.

living in Hong Kong, and her father was deceased. She was in treatment with a psychiatrist, but not taking the medication he prescribed. I received permission to speak with him and between the two of us she

Difficult life situations, illness, and stressors can interfere with instruction and student learning, and the counselor's role becomes critical in helping to address these problems.

In our program I offer workshops in the classroom on stress management and depression to help educate the students. I have seen students suffering from depression and the stress of leaving their countries to start over. Many students still have family and friends in their countries that they miss. Many have no support system. I have educated students on issues of abuse and domestic violence. Difficult life situations, illness, and stressors can interfere with instruction and student learning, and the counselor's role becomes critical in helping to address these problems.

Short Case Studies

I worked with a young female student from Hong Kong who was in our family literacy class. She was teary and experiencing stress at home. Her in-laws lived with her and her husband. She felt they were critical and demanding of her. She missed her mother who was still

began utilizing treatment. She also gained support from the other students in the family literacy class. She applied for and was hired for a pharmacy job. This helped her confidence and she felt much better.

At another time, I worked with a young, single mother from Brazil who was crying often in class. She was missing her family and feeling overwhelmed as a single parent. She was getting some support from the class but her depression was getting worse. She began to talk to me about feeling suicidal. I sat with her and called a local counseling center to find a therapist who spoke Portuguese. Before she left my office, I had a counseling appointment set up for her. A few weeks later, I met with her and she was continuing in counseling and feeling much better.

A student from Colombia met with me for help with her depression. She had no health insurance,

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Counseling Immigrants...

Continued from page 5

but the language barrier made it difficult for me to help her. I arranged for free counseling in her native language through an area community health program.

Making Referrals

While I offer some individual counseling and stress management to our students, it is important to know when to refer to a professional. Some students need more intensive counseling than programs have the time or experience to deal with appropriately. Counselors also need to be aware of cultural and language barriers. I have heard of ABE programs hiring counselors who speak other languages, but who do not have a background or degree in counseling or mental health. A counselor who does not have a degree in counseling or experience can do more harm than good. The desire to help is very strong; however, there are many mental health centers that now have qualified therapists who speak many different languages. It is a good idea to have a large referral network in your program. I would suggest calling area hospitals and mental health centers to find out what services are available in native languages. Network with other area programs to find out what resources they utilize. Armed with knowledge as well as empathy we can make a difference helping our students lead productive, happy lives in the United States.

Holly Gale Jones, M.Ed., is a certified guidance counselor, and ESL program coordinator and counselor at The Immigrant Learning Center in Malden. She can be reached at <Hjones@ilctr.org>.

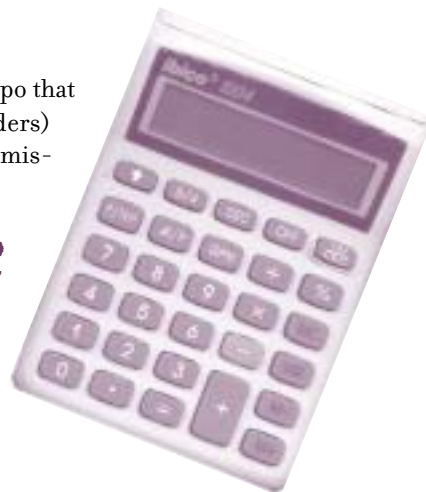
Erratum, or Crunch the Numbers!

A reader called to say he wanted to circulate Linda Werbner's article, "Janitors and ESL Teachers: Kindred Spirits" from the last issue of *Field Notes*. Except for one thing: the math seemed odd. Linda wrote:

Adjunct or part-time teachers are not a minority and our numbers are swelling while the pool of full-time jobs shrinks from year to year. Figures from the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) estimate that in Massachusetts alone there are between four and five thousand adjuncts (compared to only two thousand full-time faculty) teaching at the state's 15 community colleges. In Boston, there are close to 10,000 adjunct instructors working at the community colleges. Clearly, we are a force, a majority, yet a vulnerable and often exploited majority.

When I asked Linda if she made a typo that none of us (editor and two proofreaders) caught, she said, "Whoops! That's a mistake. It should be 1,000."

4 9 1 3²
5 7 6 8



Correction and Apology

In the summer 2003 issue of *Field Notes*, Marjorie Jacobs was incorrectly identified as Marjorie Jacobson. Her correct email address is <mlmljacobs@yahoo.com>.

We deeply apologize to Marjorie for the error.

Bilingual Counselor: The Cake or the Frosting

By EMILY TANG DAMIANO



Any counselor in adult basic education has a responsibility to find out why students have prolonged absences or why they leave class. Students' stories help us understand competing life demands and help us provide better services.

Because of shared language abilities, it is definitely easier for a bilingual counselor to do follow up with students. Bilingual counselors can, for example, talk to coworkers, family members, or fellow students in the native language if they cannot locate a student who is not showing up for class.

Other resources that a bilingual counselor can provide students with are job leads. This is especially important for Chinese immigrants who appreciate contacts in Chinatown. Students' English abilities may not yet be proficient enough to work in English-speaking companies. A counselor who speaks the same language and has contacts with the community can assist students more than a counselor who does not possess those skills.

Success Story

When he was a student at our program, the Asian American Civic Association in Chinatown, Fang got a busboy job at a Chinese restaurant through his bilingual counselor. This job helped pay for his bills. He finished the highest level of the ABE program and went on to Bunker Hill Community College to study computer science. Fang continues to keep in touch with the

counselor and other teachers.

When he has difficulties with his homework assignments, he always comes back to get advice from his counselor and his former teachers.

At the same time, Fang always helps out the agency whenever he is asked to volunteer. Students like Fang can learn the value of volunteering when others have helped them like their bilingual counselor and American teachers.

It is beneficial for programs to have bilingual counselors who can speak the first language of the students, but it is more important to have the right person. Those who have the heart to serve the students, and won't burn out in short time and leave the field, are the anchors of the communities.

Challenges

Even when a program has a bilingual counselor, the challenges in providing support to immigrants with complex lives is often overwhelming. For example, when Yao enrolled in the English as a second language (ESL) class at our program, his teacher told him about the bilingual counselor who helps students with their educational, vocational, and personal issues. Six months after enrolling, Yao had still not talked to the counselor. Due to his demanding job schedule, he dashed out of the classroom every day to catch the bus in Chinatown that takes restaurant workers to one of the large Chinese restaurants in the suburbs. His teacher tried to convince him to set aside a time to meet with the coun-

selor and talk about his educational goals. After numerous failed attempts, both his counselor and his teacher gave up.

When Yao was in class, he was very present, but his attendance became increasingly spotty and he pushed the program limit of seven acceptable absences. His counselor, who speaks multiple Chinese dialects, tried several times to reach him. There was never anybody to pick up the phone in his house. Eventually, Yao dropped out of class and could not be reached at either his work or home numbers.

Yao's story is just one of those that happen every cycle in our program: students drop out and we often don't know why. Yao's case seemed relatively simple: from what we knew from his intake, there were no legal issues, no asylum, no domestic violence, no miscarriages, no drug use, no shelters, and no child care problems that contributed to his dropping out of class. Yao's story reminds us that even with the strongest support services, sometimes students cannot balance the competing demands of their life and continue to study at a particular time.

Emily Tang Damiano is a bilingual ABE counselor at the Asian American Civic Association in Boston's Chinatown. She can be reached at <edamiano@hotmail.com>.

News From the Field

Curriculum Development

Check <http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fob_track2.html> for the September 2003 issue of NCSALL's *Focus on Basics*. The topic: curriculum development. Authors include Jamaica Plain's Charissa Ahlstrom.



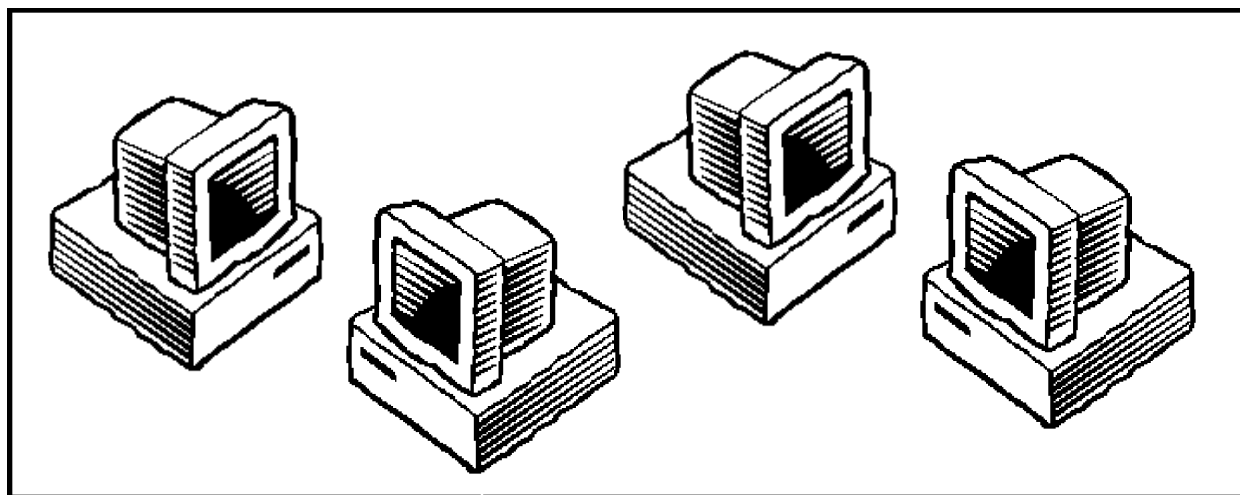
Health and Literacy

The LINC'S Health & Literacy Special Collection awarded mini-grants to student/teacher teams to develop learning activities combining health, literacy, and technology. A selection of final products are Web-published and available online for others to see and use. Visit the LINC'S Health & Literacy Special Collection at <<http://www.worlded.org/us/health/lincs>> and click on mini-grants.

Technology Practices in ABE

The new World Education report "Technology in Today's ABE Classroom: A Look at the Technology Practices and Preferences of ABE Teachers" is now available online at <<http://literacytech.worlded.org/weitechreport.pdf>>. This report presents the results from World Education's technology survey of ABE programs in the northeastern United States conducted during the winter of 2003. The goal of the survey was to examine how technology is being used today by teachers in their everyday practice, what teachers want to use it for, and what kinds of supports and professional development are perceived to be valuable in achieving these goals.

For more information, please contact Jeff Carter by email at <jcarter@worlded.org> or phone at 617-482-9485.



The Need for a Best Practices Model

By MICHELE FORLIZZI

Counseling is one area where you cannot fly by the seat of your pants. I heard Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) was changing the title of learner support services coordinator to counselor while I was involved in designing a program for a five-year grant proposal for DOE. I became encouraged by my known definition of the word "counselor." Through this definition, I envisioned programs that would be all-inclusive, allowing students, regardless of their economic and cognitive abilities or cultural backgrounds, to access community and state resources. I conceptualized the role of a well-trained counselor as that person responsible for ensuring that each student's concerns and goals would be addressed.

I have worked in different settings, advising individuals how to problem-solve around psychosocial issues, how to live with a disability, and how to accommodate personal and emotional needs. I hold a master of science degree, I am certified in substance abuse and rehabilitation, and I hold a counseling license. I am now the manager for supported education at Northern Essex Community College, a program of individualized support for students with psychiatric disabilities. I thought that this extension of my abilities and education would be a plus for those ABE students who come to us with so many concerns.

Now that the program I helped earn the funding for is up and running, I find that being the counselor is not the ideal spot I thought it would be to use my skills and

abilities to help students remain in the program. It seemed to me that DOE did not set clear criteria or guidelines for the position of counselor.

Lack of Clear Guidelines

I say this because my program seemed to associate my job responsibility as a counselor with whatever job most needed attention at that time. These needs could be substitute teaching, following up on attendance, or calling prospective students to fill open slots. The needs could also include calling in speakers or creating reports to route information for the System for Managing Accountability and Results Through Technology (SMARTT) for DOE. Because of these demands, my time for attending to the concerns of the students was minimal. Even less time was allotted for actually offering educational supports, such as students' learning difficulties. Instead of advocating for the needs of the students, I felt I was performing tasks that our paraprofessional could do.

A Frustrating Story

I remember an incident where a student came to me because her daughter was exhibiting negative behavior. This family did not have the necessary medical insurance for addressing this situation; thus, the cost of therapy was prohibitive to them. I referred the family to Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and I began to assist the family with completion of the Massachusetts health forms to apply for state funding. In the mid-

dle of this process, I became busy creating class rosters for the new semester and did not have the time to help the family follow through with appointments or to model hope and tenacity necessary for support with the referrals. Most of all, I was not there to reinforce the fact they have a right to the process.

Need for Best Practices

At this time, DOE has not established a "best practices model" for counselors in ABE programs. Responsibilities are so vague that the term "counselor" just feels like a title. Further, it seems that DOE has yet to foster and reward educational initiatives necessary to perform counseling duties well. DOE may want to consider offering counseling workshops, and support counselors to attend degree programs and conferences. They may also consider requiring a counseling license.



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The Need for a Best...

Continued from page 9

I facilitated several roundtable discussions for counselors. The sessions always turned into question and answer meetings. These questions suggest that there are concerns on the part of ABE counselors to define themselves.

Rehabilitation Counseling

There are many kinds of counselors: academic, personal, career, testing, abuse, and so on. I would like to see the best-practice model for ABE counselors include the philosophy of rehabilitation counseling. The goal of all rehabilitation counselors is to restore each person's ability for independent living, socialization, and effective life management. It is a holistic approach that places the person at the center of all interventions. The goal of the person being served steers the rehabilitation process through working partnerships that are fostered between the counselor and the individual. Effective rehabilitation builds on a person's

strengths and helps a person to compensate for the negative effects of issues surrounding him or her. A rehabilitation counselor is also an advocate—a person to help redress the devastating effects of stigma, poverty, homelessness, and insecurity that many of our students come up against in their daily life.

If a program adopts this model, the role and skill set of the ABE counselor becomes clearer: he or she should have knowledge of the students—personal and cultural. The counselor should understand the criteria necessary to participate in the programs offered by the state, and should be willing to try diverse counseling approaches. Maintaining strict ethics is critical. In addition, the counselor should adhere to the principles and philosophy of the program.

If a program cannot afford a well-trained counselor, a paraprofessional can do intakes and other kinds of work that do not require specific counseling training. In this case, the program should clarify the limits of the paraprofessional

to maintain the necessary boundaries to protect both student and paraprofessional. Though a paraprofessional can offer valuable support, a paraprofessional is not a trained counselor. Counselors recognize the importance of the community in which one lives and works, the community of one's peers, and the essential network of community supports. A counselor, most of all, watches for and modulates the growth an individual must go through to bring about change in his or her life, and calculates the right time for a student to take flight.

Michele Forlizzi MS, CRC, LMHC, CPRP, is a counselor at the Notre Dame Education Center in Lawrence, MA. She can be reached by phone at 978-556-3677 or by email at <mforlizzi@necc.mass.edu>.

Congratulations!

The Hampden County Sheriff's Department was one of two nonprofits in the nation awarded a 2003 Points of Light Foundation National Family Volunteer Award in June 2003. They received the award for their Mother/Child Connection family literacy program coordinated by the department's education program and women's unit.

How Are Counseling Services Defined by ACLS?

By ANNE SERINO

ACLS requires that counseling be provided to students in adult basic education programs. The primary function of counseling is to provide learners with the support services that will assist them in successfully meeting their educational goals. Counselors often do the following tasks:

- ◆ Intake, assessment, and follow-up
- ◆ Referral to other community resources/agencies
- ◆ Assistance with "next steps" (i.e., postsecondary education, job training)
- ◆ Attendance monitoring and follow-up with absent students
- ◆ ADA Accommodations
- ◆ Assistance overcoming barriers to attendance (childcare, transportation)
- ◆ Record-keeping

ACLS supports counseling by funding the component in the rates system.

The formula of 2.5 percent of the total amount of a program's student instructional hours provides the funding for the required amount of counseling in a program. Programs are encouraged to use matching funds to strengthen and enhance the counseling component.

ACLS recognizes that the counseling function is carried out differently depending on a program's mission, structure, and the needs of the students. However, in recognition of the important role that counselors play in supporting students, ACLS strongly recommends that programs have a designated and trained counselor. At a minimum, ACLS requires that each pro-

gram designate one staff member to coordinate all counseling and support services, even when those duties are shared by a number of staff. Students should be aware of who provides counseling services and when those services are available. Additionally, counseling services should be accessible to students during class hours.

ACLS does not have a set of required qualifications for counselors, but encourages programs to employ staff members that reflect their student population (i.e., bilingual, bicultural).

For more information about counseling and support services, contact Anne Serino <aserino@doe.mass.edu> at the Department of Education, ACLS.

Educate for Change with *The Change Agent*

By ANGELA ORLANDO

Each issue of our 24-page newspaper is a flexible, creative educational tool that is helping people become more informed and active members of their local and global communities. Topics are explored through a variety of writing styles, genres, and graphics that provide many entry points for learners at different levels. You'll find articles written by teachers, students and community activists; poetry; interviews; book and film reviews; and more. The paper is designed for use in intermediate-level ESOL, ABE, GED and adult diploma classes. Each issue focuses on a different topic that is relevant to adult learners' lives. Classroom tools include pre-reading and reflection questions, short activities, quizzes, graphs, charts, cartoons, and illustrations. In addition, we publish complete lessons that are ready for classroom use. You'll also find print, video, and Web resources for further exploration of the topic. Annual subscriptions are \$10 (2 issues). For more information, call 617-482-9485 and ask for *Change Agent* subscriptions or subscribe online at <www.nelrc.org/changeagent>.



The New England ABE-to-College Transition Project

By JESSICA SPOHN

The New England ABE-to-College Transition Project was launched in January 2000 by the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC) with funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. Its goal is to enable adult literacy program graduates to prepare for, enter, and succeed in postsecondary education so as to help them improve and enrich their own and their families' lives.

The project is aimed at GED graduates, Adult Diploma Program graduates, and adults who have been out of school for some time. The program of study is free and consists of instruction in pre-college reading, writing, and math skills, as well as computer and Internet skills. Students also learn study skills, receive educational and career counseling, and enroll in higher education. All programs work directly with colleges in their community to make the transition process as seamless as possible.

Checklists

The New England ABE-to-College Transition Project recognizes the critical role of counseling in assisting adults to transition to higher education. They have developed some checklists that help students and counselors work together to identify goals and follow up with progress. In addition, they have designed a financial aid planning guide to help demystify the process of applying for financial assistance. Taken together, these forms, when completed by student and counselor, also serve as a documentation system for students as they move toward their goals. Jessica Spohn, project director for the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project, has given permission to reprint the checklist forms on the next page.


For more information on the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project and for tools to help develop or strengthen a college transition program, go to <www.collegetransition.org>.

Jessica Spohn is the director of the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project at the New England Literacy Resource Center at World Education. She can be reached by email at <jspohn@worlded.org>.



This folder illustrates how the checklists, shown on the following pages, can be used as part of a planning and documentation folder system for students transitioning to college.

Tools for the Classroom

		
Financial Aid		DATE
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete financial aid form(s) FAFSA & the college's own form Document <u> </u> ✓	Oct. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Receive Student Aid Report (SAR); correct if necessary Document <u> </u> ✓	Nov. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Aid Administrator designs and mails your FA award letter Document <u> </u> ✓	Nov. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Return your award letter	Nov. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete student loan forms if accepting a student loan Document <u> </u> ✓	Dec. 2002	
ENROLLMENT		DATE
<input type="checkbox"/> Select a career goal Computer technician	Sept. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Select an educational goal Associates Degree in Computer Technology	Sept. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> College Search & details Bristol CC, UMass Lowell	Oct. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete admission Application(s) Document <u> </u> ✓	Nov. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Request Transcripts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HS (guidance officer) - GED (state E.D. Dept) - Previous College(s) registrars office Document <u> </u> ✓	Nov. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> College Interview	Dec. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Placement Testing Document <u> </u> ✓	Dec. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Admissions Acceptance Bristol CC Document <u> </u> ✓	Dec. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Return acceptance card	Dec. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Immunization requirements Document <u> </u> ✓	Dec. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Residency requirements Document <u> </u> ✓	Dec. 2002	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dates for orientation	Jan. 2003	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dates for registration	Jan. 2003	
<input type="checkbox"/> Date tuition bill is due	Feb. 2003	

Resources for Counseling in ABE

Special thanks to Web stars Jenny Horsman, Janet Isserlis, and Mev Miller who comb through resources and highlight the unusual, the practical, and the stunning.

Articles

"African Americans and Self-Help Education: The Missing Link in Adult Education"

ERIC Digest No. 222

www.ericave.org/docs/dig222.pdf

ERIC Identifier: ED448290

Publication Date: 2000-12-00

Author: Michael L. Rowland

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education Columbus OH.

"Culturally Sensitive Career Assessment: A Quandary"

ERIC Digest No. 210

www.ericave.org/docs/dig210.pdf

ERIC Identifier: ED434246

Publication Date: 1999-00-00

Author: James T. Austin

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education, Columbus OH

"Adults with Learning Disabilities"

ERIC Digest No. 189

www.ericave.org/digests.asp

ERIC Identifier: ED414434

Publication Date: 1998-00-00

Author: Sandra Kerka

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education, Columbus OH

"Creating Self-Portraits"

Creating Self-Portraits is an individual and/or group career development tool designed to assess without testing.

www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed404586.html

ERIC Identifier: ED404586

Publication Date: 1995-00-00

Author: Dave E. Redekopp et al.

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services, Greensboro, NC; Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation Ottawa, Ontario.

"Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher"

M. Atkins, B. Sample, & D. Birman

www.cal.org/ncle/digests/mental.htm

"Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner"

(2000)

Janet Isserlis

www.cal.org/ncle/digests/trauma2.htm

"Adult Education and Gay, Lesbian, and Transgendered Communities" (2001)

Sandra Kerka

www.ericave.org/docs/tia00089.pdf

"A Guide to Learning Disabilities for the ESL Classroom Practitioner" (1994)

Christine Root, Harvard University

www.kyoto-su.ac.jp/information/tesl-ej/ej01/a.4.html

Online Discussion Groups

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) has several online discussion groups (forums/listservs) to deal with issues critical to the literacy field. NIFL sees this as the beginning of an information exchange network that will allow the field to share more easily and extensively about major issues in the field. Many of these discussion groups are relevant to counselors in ABE programs, including:

- ◆ NIFL-LD: Forum on Learning Disabilities
- ◆ NIFL-POVRACELIT: Poverty, Race, & Literacy Discussion List
- ◆ NIFL-HEALTH: Forum on Health Issues
- ◆ NIFL-HOMELESS: Forum on Literacy and the Homeless

Send your subscription request to listproc@novel.nifl.gov.

Books

Stress (2000)

Laurie Gould

Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press

Cultural Adjustment, Mental Health, and ESL: The Refugee Experience, the Role of the Teacher, and ESL Activities (1999)

M. Atkins, B. Sampole, & D. Birman
Denver: Spring Institute for International Studies

Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners (1999)

L. A. Daloz
San Francisco: Jossey Bass

How to Feel Good: Learning to Relax and Exercise: An Invitation (1998)

Wai Ming Chan, Rosalba Torres, Mayra Villalta, Miralta Campos Virgilia Guzman, and Lee Hewitt
When you are a new arrival in a country, you may feel strange because it is a place that you don't know very well and everything is different! This can make you feel sad or depressed. We know how that feels because it happened to us. On these pages we want to share our experiences and how we overcame those bad moments. We found ways to relax by doing things that we enjoy like exercising, crocheting, reading, and fishing.
<www.alri.org/feelgood/>

Where There Is Life, There is Hope (1995)

The Samaritan House PAR Group
Available online in PDF format, this workbook written by women literacy students describes how they used participatory action research to discuss discrimination and to write this book. 43 pp., 8 1/2 x 11, Level: 5-8.
<www.nald.ca/CLR/lifehope/cover.htm>
Toll free: 800-262-3930

Conquering the Beast Within: How I Fought Depression and Won... And How You Can, Too (1998)

Cait. Irwin
New York: Times Books

The Woman's Comfort Book: A Self-Nurturing Guide for Restoring Balance in Your Life (1992)

Jennifer Louden
New York: HarperCollins

Managing Stress (1994)

The American Institute of Preventative Medicine
Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press

Too Scared to Learn (2000)

Jenny Horsman
Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum

Drawing the Line: Dealing with Affective Issues in Literacy (2001)

Jenny Horsman
Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Literacy Network
Toll free: 888-511-2111

The Relationship Book: A Resource of Social and Legal Information (2003)

Laurie Ann McCardle and Women's Network PEI
Topics include: different kinds of relationships; the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships; how to handle disagreements or conflict in relationships; what you can do if you are in an abusive relationship. Spiral bound, 71 pp., 8 1/2 x 11, \$8.00 US.
Grass Roots Press
PO Box 52192
Edmonton, Canada
T6G 2T5
Toll free: 888-303-3213
Email: <www.literacyservices.com>

De Madre a Madre/ From Mother to Mother Photonovels, "Stories for Life" series (2001)

Susan Auger
Durham, NC: Aprendo Press
<www.aprendopress.com>
The booklets use simple language, large print, and has Spanish on one side and English on the other. They are well suited to ESOL classes and low-literacy audiences.

Videos and Tapes

Together We Bloom: Women Speaking Out Against Domestic Violence (1998, video and guide)

The Literacy Project
Greenfield, MA: The Literacy Project Inc.
Order from The Literacy Project, PO Box 1461,
Greenfield MA 01302, 413-774-3934

Who Helps the Helpers? Supporting Counselors in Adult Basic Education

By CATHY COLEMAN

This article was excerpted from a longer piece in Focus on Basics, Volume 6, Issue A, October 2002. You are encouraged to read the complete article online at <<http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/job/2002/coleman.html>>.

One of the first challenges for (ABE) counselors is defining their role: "What exactly is it that I am supposed to do?" In discussions with eight counselors from around the country, this question stood out as crucial. The role of counselor differs from program to program, as my conversations revealed. "I help students with whatever problems they have that get in the way of their learning," says a counselor from a Massachusetts school system-based evening program. Another counselor, from a community college ABE program, describes her job as giving people the TABE or the BEST [placement tests] when they come in, and letting teachers know who is in which class. Yet another described her work as keeping track of students' goals and maintaining records of what goals they have accomplished. One counselor is responsible for all the aforementioned tasks: "My job as a counselor is to make sure that our program is doing all it can to make coming to class possible for each student. That takes in a lot of territory from correct placement in the first place to helping them get housing, food stamps, or a job."

Clarifying Roles

Problems arise when the role is not well articulated within a pro-

gram. A program director explains: "The ideal role of the counselor is to support students, to get into the classroom and find out what the issues are, to find out why people are leaving and follow up with them, and to bring in speakers on

in which counselors are also teachers and in programs where the counselor is also doing much of the administrative work. "It's hard to balance it all being the counselor and the resource person, being the nitty gritty detail person, and being

Not only do counselors get confused by these myriad hats; students do, too. They aren't always sure what the counselor's main role is or what issues they should talk about with the counselor.

special topics that are about supporting the students.

Unfortunately, that isn't always the way it works. In the past what has happened is the counselor does everything. In a large program like this one, with several smaller sites, the counselor had to do all the administrative work as well as all the counseling. There were so many hats for the person who was the counselor. That role is in transition now and is closer to what we had envisioned as ideal where support of the student is the focus."

Not only do counselors get confused by these myriad hats; students do, too. They aren't always sure what the counselor's main role is or what issues they should talk about with the counselor. This seems especially true for programs

the stern follow-upper person," says a Massachusetts counselor. "It's a real mix of different kinds of skills."

Clarifying a counselor's role may be the easiest form of support a program can offer a counselor. In Massachusetts, attempts have been made to help clarify the role of counselor and to provide support for it. In the early 1990s, focus groups for counselors were formed, facilitated by the System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES). According to Cathy Gannon, facilitator of the Central SABES counselor sharing group, these groups examined the role of counselors in programs, looked at what was initially required in the 1990 mandate for counseling to be included in

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Who Helps the Helpers?

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programs funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education, and sought ways to support counselors in performing their jobs.

Learner Support Specialist

A 1994 report entitled "Learner Support Services: Adult Basic Education Counseling Focus Group: Final Report," recommended a change of job title from the vague term "counselor" to the more specific descriptor "learner support specialist." The report defined the purpose of counseling in adult basic education as "providing learners with support services that will assist them in successfully meeting their educational goals" and listed these tasks as part of the job:

- ◆ Participating in intake, assessment, and class placement of learners.
- ◆ Meeting with students and with classes to explain program services
- ◆ Helping set individual goals, and listening to concerns or issues of students
- ◆ Checking attendance and working with staff to follow up on absences
- ◆ Meeting with teachers, staff, and students to identify problems and needs as they relate to academic performance and educational planning
- ◆ Assessing the need for outside services, researching these services, and making appropriate referrals
- ◆ Assisting in developing strategies to address waiting lists and/or recruitment of students

In 2002, a group of counselors in southeastern Massachusetts, facilitated by Southeast SABES, revisited this list. They believe that

the National Reporting System requirements for follow-up on student goal attainment and measurement of educational gain that meet validity and reliability standards have led to an increased emphasis on the role of counselor in programs.

The Counseling Sharing Group of Southeast MA is also discussing and studying areas such as transitioning General Educational Development (GED) students into community college settings and increasing student retention. According to Betty Vermette, the facilitator of the group, "These were needs that came up in a survey we did last year. Many of the topics that people listed fell under the counselor role: recruitment, student retention, the intake process, goal setting, placement, transitioning to college, etc. Based on this, we initiated the Southeast Working Group for Educational Counselors." In revisiting the definition of the role of counselor, this group hopes to help counselors deal with the issue of lack of clarity.

Cathy Coleman has been teaching GED and pre-GED for 14 years. She now works as the curriculum and assessment coordinator for Central SABES in Massachusetts. She can be reached at <cathyc@qcc.mass.edu>.

Focus on Basics: Counseling Issue



Focus on Basics, Volume 6, Issue A (October 2002), focuses on counseling in adult basic education programs.

This issue is available online in two different formats.

Find the text version at
<<http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fob/2002/fobv6ia.htm>>.

Find the PDF version at
<http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fob/2002/fob_6ia.pdf>.



The Massachusetts Adult Literacy Hotline

800-447-8844

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

What Does English Taste Like?...

Continued from page 4

The following authors are offering poems they wrote after reading Julias Alvarez's poem, *Bilingual Sestina*. In response, they wrote about their feelings about Spanish and English. The students are all teen mothers or mothers-to-be. All are in the Pre-GED class at the Care Center in Holyoke.

The Sound of Spanish By Christina Ayala

The sound of Spanish to me is
like my family reunion.
All that happiness and the
music in the room. The taste
like *quenepas* sweet or sour or
peril con arroz con gandules that
go down real
smooth. That's my language.

The sound of Spanish
when you go to the beach and you
feel the heat and that beat
that's the way I like it to be.

The Sounds Of . . By Kathy Krstyen

The sound of English to
me is bland like the snowy
white skin of white people. It
is also beautiful like their blue
eyes. The sound of Spanish
to me is soothing like the
sound of the ocean. It is
also warm like the sun
shining down. English is
good like the taste of French
fries. Spanish is beautiful
like Puerto Rico. English is
calm like the motionless music.
Spanish is exciting like the
rhythm of Spanish music.

Bilingual Poem By Vanessa Rodriguez

The sound of English to me is strong like a shark's jaw. It won't easily let you go.
The taste of it is like shrimps and oysters that rich people eat.
The touch is rough and hard like a rock sitting on the cement road.
It's important like the president and royal like the Queen of England.

The sound of Spanish is loud like the salsa music my sister hears.
The taste of it is like rice and beans my mother cooks.
The touch of Spanish is smooth like the desk I'm writing on.
It's fun like the huge roller coaster in Six Flags.

Mark Your Calendar

October 22–23, 2003

Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE), Annual Conference

Network 2003

Location: Marlborough, MA

Contact: Michelle Chaikin, 800-339-2498; Web: <www.mcae.net>

October 22–26, 2003

Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), Annual Conference

Surfing New Waves of Information, Leadership and Technology

Location: Anaheim, CA

Contact: AECT, 877-677-2328; Web: <www.aect.org/events/default.htm>

November 13–17, 2003

ProLiteracy [merger of Laubach and LVA], 1st Annual Worldwide Conference

Celebrate Literacy!

Location: Washington, DC

Contact: ProLiteracy, 888-528-2224; Web: <www.proliteracy.org/conference>

November 15–19, 2003

American Public Health Association (APHA), 131st Annual Meeting

Behavior, Lifestyle and Social Determinants of Health

Location: San Francisco, CA

Contact: APHA, 202-777-2500; Web: <www.apha.org/meetings>

November 19–22, 2003

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), 52nd Annual Conference

It's a Great Time in Detroit

Location: Detroit, MI

Contact: Merry Malfroid, malfroid@triton.net; Web: <www.maace.org/AAACE2003.htm>

March 29–April 3, 2004

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), 38th Annual Convention

Soaring Far, Catching Dreams

Location: Long Beach, CA

Contact: TESOL, 703-836-0774; Web: <www.tesol.org/conv/index-conv.html>

April 12–16, 2004

American Educational Research Association (AERA), Annual Meeting

Enhancing the Visibility and Credibility of Educational Research

Location: San Diego, CA

Contact: <2004annualmtg@aera.net>; Web: <www.aera.net/meeting>

Field Notes

"One of the best ways that we adult educators can help our students handle stress is by taking care of ourselves emotionally, psychologically, and physically. By controlling our own stress, we can be more present for our students and give the compassion, kindness, and quality instruction which they need."

—MARJORIE JACOBS, FIELD NOTES, VOLUME 13, NUMBER 1

See Marjorie's complete article, "Helping Adult Learners Handle Stress," online at www.sabes.org/resources/fieldnotes/index.htm.



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