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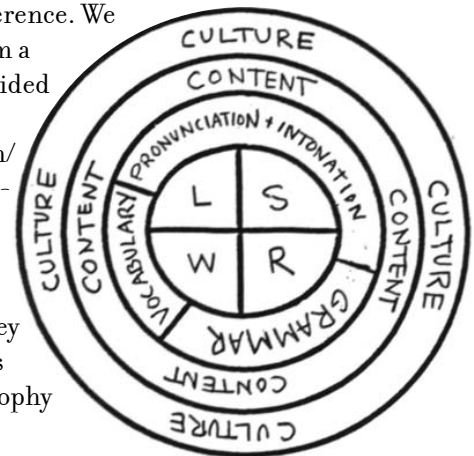
Look Ma, No Text!

BY ALEXIS JOHNSON

For 20 years people have asked me "What text do you use?" I've learned not to say "We don't use texts!" right away, as that is sometimes seen as arrogance, ignorance, or a combination of the two. I now try to begin with something like "Well, although we have many books and use class sets from time to time in the classroom, and certainly as reference, we prefer not to use a specific text for a specific course. We don't want to set up the dynamic of "It's Tuesday, we must be on page 56."

Viewing the use of one specific text as constraining and as not necessarily meeting the students' varied needs, International Language Institute (ILI) uses an organic curriculum. Of course, every level has a guideline and general structural hierarchy for language acquisition. For example, we teach the present tense before the past tense since this is how we learn our first language.

We have had to train students in adapting to the organic curriculum concept. Sometimes at the beginning of a course students say that they would feel more secure with a text. At times we give them a text to use as a reference. We always, however, give them a notebook that we have divided into categories: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation/intonation, readings, writing and misc. This becomes their text as teachers give them hole-punched handouts and they take their own notes. ILI's teachers share this philosophy



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F O R E W O R D

Most teachers agree that it's impossible to teach an ABE or ESOL class based on one or two textbooks. Even if we start out with the intention of following a book, our students bring real-life language and literacy questions, needs, and interests into the classroom, and these topics catapult us into unplanned lessons or curriculum units. A cousin's funeral, a termination from work, a car accident, a television show, anything can provide motivation for language and literacy learning. While moving away from a pre-designed text is liberating and responsive, it is also a lot of work, and can be intimidating and confusing to new teachers. How do you structure this kind of teaching? How do you pull it all together? I have found over the last twenty years that teachers who are the most successful at veering away from the text have in place—implicitly or explicitly—a framework for guiding their teaching. The ABE curriculum frameworks, for example, give teachers a scaffold for using real-life content while integrating language and literacy structures and behaviors. The Equipped For the Future (EFF) frameworks also guide teachers by providing standards and activities while still allowing teachers to choose authentic materials as a basis for teaching and learning.

This issue of Field Notes drew such a large number of submissions we had to expand it to 28 pages, and even then, some articles have spilled over to the summer issue. The articles printed here offer a glimpse of the ways ABE and ESOL teaching can reach far beyond the text. Alexis Johnson shares a framework for using authentic materials while systematically attending to all aspects of language learning. Lisa Garrone describes how her program ties advocacy to language learning, community building, and confidence building. The use of drama, fables, family trees, pottery, and scavenger hunts are explored as rich sources of teaching material. Cynthia Zafft provides a glimpse into the use of portfolios as a way to document students' work and progress—an important element when diverging from a prepackaged curriculum.

Learners and teachers often express the need for an anchoring text—a grammar book, reader, or skills builder. Providing students with a text need not prevent teachers from drawing from the wealth of real-life topics and materials around us, from survival skills "realia" to discussions about current events. We are lucky to live in a print-rich and culturally-rich location, an area where speakers will readily come into our classrooms, where museums welcome us with educational guides, where the internet provides us with late breaking content on issues that critically affect our students, where television shows, films, and DVDs promote laughter and glimpses into popular culture. In fact, I miss having my own class just so I can teach, using, say, an episode from The Simpsons or Six Feet Under. So go ahead...use what's out there!

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

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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 <lballiro@worlded.org>, 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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of learning. We have monthly in-service workshops to keep ourselves on track.

Using a Wheel

So what does it mean to teach without a text? At ILI we use a wheel that shows the components of language—the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing)—surrounded by the tools (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation/ intonation) based in content and context on a bed of culture. If a lesson addresses all the categories in the wheel, we feel we are doing integrated activities in the classroom. Content-Based Instruction (CBI) operates on this principle. Other methodologies, such as Community Language Learning (CLL) and Silent Way, also incorporate integrated activities.

Theme-Based Classes at ILI

Here's an example of the wheel applied to the classroom. Taking the theme of the elections, October's classes often revolve around upcoming elections. The four skills revolve around the theme. For example:

- **Speaking:** Debates, group opinions, paired discussions
- **Listening:** Invited speakers can talk about candidates and referendum questions; taped radio reports, videos of news reports or specials. (The movie *Thirteen Days* works for advanced classes)
- **Reading:** Newspaper articles (headlines work for lower levels, *News for You* articles, mock ballots, candidate profiles;
- **Writing:** Sentence opinions (I like ___ because ____ ; political ads and essays.
- **Grammar:**
Lower Level: If ____ wins, s/he will ____

Intermediate: If ____ won, s/he ____

Advanced: If ____ had said/done ____, s/he ____

- **Vocabulary:** Political terminology, basic to sophisticated.

activities can help solidify and deepen a student's understanding of a particular point in grammar or structure. For example, at ILI, we have found that *Grammar in Context* and *Grammar Dimensions* (Heinle

At ILI, we have found that we can use authentic materials 100% of the time for classroom activities and still cover all the modalities of learning.

- **Pronunciation:** You can get a lot of mileage out of terms like *pledge*, *politician*, and even the names of the candidates so students understand what people are talking about.
- **Culture:** Compare our electoral process to the one in students' own countries.

Using speakers and authentic materials helps bring the community into the classroom.

The Place of Texts

While studying a particular grammar point (conditional is mentioned above, but a teacher could introduce or help students practice the simple past, future, comparative, etc., students can use texts to practice a structure. While there is no need to rely on a text to introduce a structure that arises through the content of the lesson, extra practice through text-based

and Heinle, 1996) are useful grammar workbooks when grammar practice is solidly based in content.

At ILI, we have found that we can use authentic materials 100% of the time for classroom activities and still cover all the modalities of learning. We can also address the various learning styles of students.

By basing instruction in authentic materials, not only will students end up learning and using new grammar structures and vocabulary, they will be also able to discuss important events that are happening around them.

Alexis Johnson is cofounder and executive director of International Language Institute and a master trainer for School for International Training TESOL Certificate Program. She can be reached at <alexis@languageschoolusa.org>.

For another way of looking at frameworks while teaching with authentic materials, check out Equipped For the Future's (EFF) content standards, role maps, classroom activities, and purposes for learning at their Web site:

<http://eff.cls.utk.edu/fundamentals/default.htm>

The Best of Both Worlds: Student Portfolios

BY CYNTHIA ZAFFT

One of the major drawbacks to using workbooks alone is that they do not address local curriculum and instruction needs. Portfolios can be tailor-made to focus on a wide variety of important student outcomes. For example, take a look at the Transition Student Portfolio Model, one of the Promising Practices on the National

inees are getting the credential in order to pursue further education, only 30-35 percent obtain any postsecondary education. NCTN supports ABE staff, programs, and states in establishing and strengthening ABE-to-college transition services through technical assistance, professional development, collegial sharing, advocacy and

Portfolios can be tailor-made to focus on a wide variety of important student outcomes.

College Transition Network (NCTN) Web site (www.collegetransition.org and "click" on Promising Practices).

Promising Practice 2, by Pat Fina of the Community Learning Center in Cambridge is created for adult students in the ABE-to-college transition program. The portfolio created during the course becomes the transition "book" and contains copies of key documents, such as the student's college application, acceptance letter, and financial aid form, as well as assignments that demonstrate their math, computer, and writing progress.

While 65 percent of CED exam-

increased visibility for this critical sector of the adult basic education system. Visit our Web site for a wide variety of resources and consider joining this free network. Keep college in your students' future.

Cynthia Zafft is the coordinator of the National College Transition Network at the New England Literacy Resource Center located at World Education. She can be reached at <czafft@worlded.org>

For more information on ABE-to-college transitions and portfolios, go to www.collegetransition.org.

Sample of Items From College Transition Portfolio

Here is a *partial sample* of the categories and items found in the College Transition portfolio described by Pat Fina on the ABE College-to-Transition Web site. Find more at www.collegetransition.org.

College Preparedness

- Library card from city where student lives
- Diplomas/GED certificates
- Photocopy of application(s) to college(s)
- Recent course catalog from college of student's choice
- College acceptance letters
- Photocopy of scholarship applications
- Copies of letters of recommendation

Computers

- Computer skills inventory
- Resume
- Email address
- Budget
- Data project and graph
- Business letter

Math

- Study notes and exam from each unit: numbers and numeration, arithmetic, fractions, etc.

Writing

- Personal/Reflective Writing
- Summary of Short Story
- Descriptive Writing
- Expository Writing
- Research Paper
- Oral Presentation
- Copies of all tests and quizzes

Making Plates to Honor Women in History

BY SUSAN HERSHEY

The room is quiet except for an occasional plea for help and a brief discussion about design. The women in the Foundations class are busily rolling out clay, imprinting clay with rubber stamps, or in some cases fashioning shapes by hand. The assignment is to write a one-page paper on a woman from American history and then to make a ceramic plate to honor the woman and her accomplishments.

The class is made up of 12 women, ranging in ages from 19 to 50. The course is Women in Leadership: Remembering the Past. The teacher is Nancy Schwoyer, executive director of Wellspring House in Gloucester. Students have chosen, among other notable women, Sakajawea, Clara Barton, Rosa Parks, Georgia O'Keefe, Mary Cassatt, Susan B. Anthony. . . You get the idea. Women in Leadership is a two-part course. The first part focuses on women in society today. The students learn about government and how it can affect their lives. They learn that they can have a voice and make a difference. The second part of the course teaches about extraordinary women in American history; this is where the plate project comes into play.

The students are given four weeks to write the paper. Once the paper is completed, the fun begins. One afternoon of class time is



set aside to roll out the clay and do the decorating. Another is for painting the plates. And the final part of the project is the Women in History luncheon when the students and faculty of the program gather to share a meal. Each student talks about the woman about whom she wrote and shows her plate.

Foundations, a 17-week education and training program for low-income women in Gloucester, runs twice a year, once in

September and once in February. It is a part of Wellspring House, a nonprofit organization that provides housing for homeless families, education, social action opportunities and affordable housing. Foundations teaching techniques are based on Popular Education as developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Each student's life experience plays an important part in how she learns and constant dialogue is critical to the learning process.

Because every student has a different learning style, teachers in the Foundations Program make every effort to reach all students by using different methods of teaching. One very successful way is kinesthetic-tactile learning or using your hands.

Susan Hershey, a potter, is the program coordinator for Foundations at Wellspring House in Gloucester. She can be reached at <shershey@wellspringhouse.org>

Dancing the Meringue: Partying to Promote Conversation in the ESOL Class

BY PEGGY RAMBACH

*I*t's hard enough to make conversation in someone else's living room, let alone in someone else's language. I mean, invite any number of adults into a small, enclosed area and the first thing one of them might say will be, "Anybody got a beer?" After all, what makes for lively conversation, but loud music and a free bar?

Which was something I began to consider after about the fourth week of attempting to get my ESL 2 class to talk. Instead, I sweated it out (literally), placing them in my "innovative" circle configuration and hoping against hope that at some point, one of my brilliant topics would hit like a slot machine. But no. It was more like:

Me: So, what holiday do you like most in Vietnam and Cambodia?

Most of Class: Shrug.

Me: New Year's? Do you like New Year's?

Most of Class: Nod.

Me: When is New Year's in your country?

All of Class: Silence.

Until, of course I'd long for it to be my New Year's so I

could pop a

cork and put myself out of my misery.

But not one to rely on such means to solve a crisis, I had to finally face the fact that cultural holidays, what you do on the weekends (sleep, buy groceries), what you do in the summer (sleep, work, and buy groceries) and how you like your supervisor (very nice, fine) were not going to evoke the kind of conversation I was after.

So I had to ask: What exactly was I after? Indeed, what was a good conversation? Answer: A free-flowing, spontaneous, exchange of ideas. And why, I thought, is making good conversation often referred to as an art? Answer: Because it's really hard. It takes imagination and skill. We even identify those who have the skill as "good conversationalists" and invite them to our dinner parties. So I asked: What makes a conversationalist good? Answer: Confidence, lack of self-consciousness, and the ability to ask questions and convey genuine interest in the answers.

So, I concluded, the key to making good conversation was not in the choice of the perfect topic, as the textbooks would have

you believe, but in creating a classroom atmosphere that resembled a really great cocktail party (minus the cocktails, of course). That is, I had to design

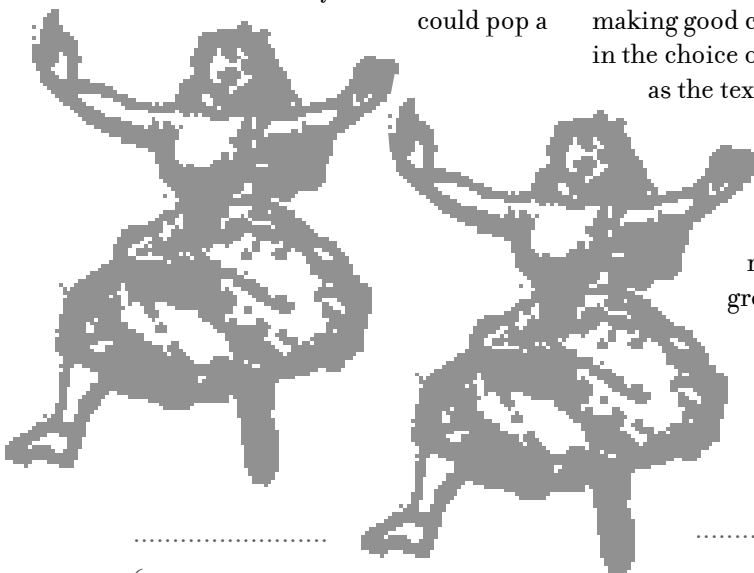
activities that did what cocktails do, that would make my students relax, shed their inhibitions, make them want to ask questions and want to hear the answers. Most important, I had to create an atmosphere that made them have fun. Because if they were having fun, everything else would follow.

And, yes, I agree, cultural exchange is important in an ESL class, but there are ways to do it that are a lot more lively than asking someone, "What do you do on New Year's in your country?" Instead, I asked the Dominicans in my class to teach the Asians the meringue dance. I asked the Asians to teach the Dominicans their traditional dance – all in English of course and so the classroom was in fact filled with music and laughter and a lot of talking and dancing. In fact, it sounded, not like a class, but suspiciously like a party.

And rather than force my students to dredge up their past continually by demanding that they tell an autobiographical story, we played make-believe. My students assumed fictional roles, but always in pairs and sometimes in response to a fictional situation. For instance, they witnessed a crime ("This is a crime," I said and stole a student's purse.) Then, one student played "witness," one the "interrogator."

I gave the witness a 3 by 5 card with the "criminal's" name written on it, which was the name of another

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Dancing the Meringue ...

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er student in the class. The witness, in response to the interrogator's questions, had to describe the student whose name was written on

the real thing? So I asked a car salesman to visit my class and sell my students assorted models of new and used Matchbox cars.

Sure enough, I found an affable car salesman (most of them are) willing to donate his time, and the

Next came a friend who taught my class CPR. And now I'm thinking of asking one of those friendly, techie guys who work at my local Radio Shack to come in and sell my students a DVD player. There are any number of possibilities.

And how has my role changed? Well, as you can see, I just play the host, wandering around the noisy classroom like I'm carrying a tray of *hors d'oeuvres* offering a canapé of a vocabulary word here, a Swedish meatball of encouragement there. And I always lead the celebratory toast.

So, I concluded, the key to making good conversation was not in the choice of the perfect topic, as the textbooks would have you believe, but in creating a classroom atmosphere that resembled a really great cocktail party (minus the cocktails, of course).

their card, and describe that student well enough for the interrogator to eventually be able look around the classroom and identify who it was.

This gave the student/witness a reason to talk, and the student/interrogator a reason to ask questions. I realized that if students had a purpose for speaking, other than, because-the-teacher-asked-me-to, students will actually want to speak.

More common to ESL classes, I also had my students play real-life situation roles like interviewer/job applicant, grocery store checkout clerk/ patron, eye doctor/patient, always in pairs and always preceded by a demonstration and list of necessary vocabulary.

And then one day, when I was introducing a unit on car buying, I thought, I've never bought a car without agreeing to a deal I regret for the full seven-year term of the loan, so how can I, in good conscience, teach this subject to my students? I thought then, why not just import

whole exercise produced that same party atmosphere. In this case much of the class playing the spectators who called out suggestions to the pretend buyers, everyone laughing, and everyone having fun, including the salesman, who, of course, left me with a stack of business cards.

Peggy Rambach the author of Fighting Gravity, a novel published by Steerforth Press, has compiled and edited three anthologies of writing from the Asian community in Lawrence. She lives and writes in Andover, and teaches ESOL in Lawrence, at the Asian Center of Merrimack Valley Inc. She can be reached at <prambach@aol.com>.

The Massachusetts Adult Literacy Hotline



Want to volunteer to tutor in an adult basic education program? Need to link an adult learner with ABE or ESOL services?

800-447-8844

Call the Hotline! Referrals in English and Spanish.

Inspiring ABE Writers Using Objects and Images

BY ANDREA O'BRIEN, JANE SCHWERDTFEGER, & JANET FISCHER

As ABE teachers, we are excited by the possibilities that art-images, objects, photographs hold to inspire learners to write. Art is a wonderful prompt for writing, because we all have unique experiences that come to mind when we write, and each of them is valid, valued, and personal.

The Power of Personal Photos

For Andrea, the power of a personal photograph for evoking writing cannot be stressed enough. At our Network 2004 workshop on inspiring ABE writers, Andrea illustrated a powerful technique. She began by sharing a video clip of a midwestern town taken after a tornado had passed through and destroyed many homes and buildings. We saw an auditorium filled with tables, covered with hundreds of photographs, scattered remains of the tempest. As the townspeople walk up and down the aisles trying to recover their memories, viewers were left wondering, what would happen if our own personal photographs were lost or destroyed? Andrea stopped the clip; she then shared photographs of her parents and grandparents. Using an intriguing photograph taken before her parents married, Andrea led the group into an exercise of observation, asking:

- Where are these two people?
 - What are they doing in the photo?
 - Who took this picture?
- As she shared the story behind the photos, Andrea modeled a guided writing exercise she has used with her ESOL learners. Using their own per-

then be expanded upon for more detailed writing.

Pre-Writing: Gathering the Details

The questions below provide a framework that allows even the shyest writer to respond, and

reduces students' fear of having to come up with something completely "out of the air" to write about. Andrea then models a first draft of her favorite photograph, sharing with us the writing she shares with her learners.

By taking the responses to the question in the

Pre-writing: Gathering the Details	
When was the picture taken?	
Where was it taken?	
Who took the picture?	
What do you think they can hear?	
How do you think they feel?	

sonal photos, learners begin by answering questions in a graphic organizer (see chart below). The chart helps students focus on specific information to questions that can

first chart, the information can be turned into complete sentences that form the foundation for the writer's

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First Draft of Favorite Photograph	
My favorite photograph is a picture of my mother and father.	It was a warm day in the summer. The wind was blowing and the sun was shining.
My aunt took the picture at her house in the summer of 1942.	They look very happy, but I think they were a little sad, too.
My aunt was having a party because it was the day before my father left to fight in WWII.	My mother did not see him for four more years. They were sad and lonely for four long years.
My mother and father are sitting together on the grass.	The picture is always in my mother's bedroom next to her bed. When she looks at it she remembers when she was happy and sad.

Inspiring ABE Writers ...

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ideas, while providing lots of opportunity to add extra detail and information in the writing revision stage.

For our learners, personal photos invite them to "tell their story" and start from something familiar. Students can choose to include information that they feel is relevant and "safe" to share.

Every Object Is Full of Story

Jane's background as a museum educator is the inspiration for using objects (both familiar and unfamiliar) to inspire writers. At the Network conference, she began by asking participants in our workshop to think of a special memory—one that evokes our senses—and asked *What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What does it feel like? Does it have a special taste?*

These questions framed our curiosity for the object she brought out to the audience. We began by examining the object closely. As we passed the object through the audience, we had a chance to feel it, play with it, try to open it, look inside, see if it made a sound. Through reflection and responding to a series of questions about the object, we learned that the object Jane passed through the audience is a barn lantern that was used in the early 1800s, and we came to understand the design and functionality of the lantern for its original users.

For Jane, questioning strategies are a great way to engage students actively in the learning process. The teacher facilitates a dialogue between the student and the object. The questions posed to students can help build skills in critical thinking, writing, and reflection.

Different questions have different purposes, depending on the response you intend to elicit. For example, asking questions that use one's senses elicits descriptive information about the object. Asking students questions that build on the descriptive, as well as prior knowledge), and applying that information for other purposes, encourages student to process information, make inferences, summarize, and organize what they know. Finally, asking questions that have students using higher-order thinking skills encourages students to develop new ideas, make predictions, formulate hypotheses, or support an opinion about the object.

These questioning strategies represent a hierarchy of questioning roughly based on Bloom's Taxonomy, but there are other levels of thinking skills that can be drawn upon, too.

(Editor's Note: Jane has developed a detailed chart illustrating her questioning strategies. You can examine it online at www.sabes.org. Click on *Field Notes* and then *Lantern Chart*.)

The Truth of a Photograph

To illustrate her use of photographs in teaching writing at the Network conference, Janet hung a variety of pictures from magazines and newspapers around the room. She began by asking participants what they noticed as they entered the workshop room; what caught their eye? Everyone noticed the collection of pictures on the wall, aware that the room looked physically different from most of the conference rooms. She then asked them to stand by a nearby photograph on the wall, and to begin by simply describing what they saw in the picture. She reminded partici-

pants that simple observation must prevail at that initial observation point, and to beware of the temptation to leap into judgments and speculations about who the people are, what they are doing, why they are doing it, or how they are feeling.

As participants began to share information about their pictures, Janet asked them to reflect on what struck them, and asked: Did the picture remind you of anything in particular? In what ways does it relate to your own experience? As participants shared this information with a partner, the room became abuzz with conversation. A spark had been lit, interest increased, and excitement flowed as people eagerly engaged in discussion and reflected on their observations and experiences.

Using Pictures

In the ABE/ESOL classroom, photographs can serve the same powerful purpose as they did with teachers at the Network conference. They provide a starting point for rich discussion and many activities. The rich imagery of a picture evokes not only students' interest but also provides a stimulus for writing in response to it. A picture can catch us in the moment and still allow us to transcend it. Using pictures also encourages students to think creatively and critically.

Using pictures students can:

- tell the story behind the picture;
- give the picture a title and explain it;
- write from the perspective of a person portrayed in the picture;
- prepare a debate on a theme evident in the picture.

Using pictures, teachers can

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- teach compare and contrast strategies using more than one picture;
- teach simple vocabulary and descriptive words;
- teach letter writing skills by encouraging students to write a letter to one of the characters in the picture or write a letter to the editor about an issue depicted in the picture.

In addition, pictures can be adapted for many activities, including pair work, small group and whole class cooperative learning, making them particularly suitable for multi-level classes.

Objects and pictures can provide a common or shared experience for adults to explore together. They are easy to collect and transport, they can reflect the individual interests of teachers and students. They are free or low cost, and they can be used over and over again!

Andrea O'Brien is the staff developer at the Lawrence Public Schools Adult Learning Center. She can be reached at <aobrien@lawrence.k12.ma.us>.

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Scavenging in Multi-Level ESOL

On page 23, Suzanne Speciale and Sr. Nancy Simonds offer a lesson plan for a neighborhood scavenger hunt. Here are some other ideas for adapting a scavenger hunt activity for a multi-level ESOL class. Teachers need to do a little research first by walking around the neighborhood where classes are held to discover what businesses, found items, services, graffiti, etc. are likely to be found nearby.

1. Create a list of items and information you think students are likely to find in a clearly delineated area near your program. For example: a gum wrapper, the price of a load of laundry, the price to rent a trailer, a feather, a pine cone. Spend time explaining what you want students to do, and give them a simple map of the area they should search.
2. Put students in pairs, give them the list, and give them a timeframe. Tell them they can ask people for information (for example, if they do not know what a pine cone is or what it looks like, they can ask another teacher in the program or they can look it up in a reference book or on the Web if they are advanced enough).
3. Send them out to collect the information and objects.
4. When each pair comes back, check their work.
5. The first pair to find everything gets a prize.
6. Review the answers and findings together. Turn some observations into questions and points for further discussion about the neighborhood.

Lenore Balliro

Playwrighting in Prison

By IRIS BROUDY

This beautiful and moving story begins in a small town in the Dominican Republic called *El Rincón de la Soledad*, or *A Lonely Spot*. In this town resides a humble family made up of José Fercarelu (the father), Refugio (the mother), and two sons, Chelo and Ramón. . .

So begins Act I of *The Family Fercarelu*, a play produced by my women's ESOL class at the Hampden County Correctional Center last year. When the selfish, abusive José isn't around, explains the narrator, the Fercarelu house is peaceful and harmonious. But when he comes home, it becomes a small hell.

Now Irma C., a diminutive Mexican woman, staggers onto the "stage" wearing a straw hat and an embroidered vest over her orange prison suit. The women scream with laughter as her gray faux-fur mustache keeps slipping into her mouth. *José!* shouts at the long-suffering Refugio:

Where are you, you good-for-nothing useless person? Is my dinner ready, and my clothes, because I'm going back out with my friends—and with better women, not like you good-for-nothing!

Yudelka R., a level-one student wearing an apron and head scarf, responds:

Here I am, pancho! I was just making dinner. I knew you'd be home soon, and I wanted to have it ready.

These few lines are difficult for Yudelka, who resists speaking

English and finds pronunciation challenging. *Am* comes out *ang*, and *just* comes out *hoost*. Her classmates gently model corrections. The scene continues. José yells at his two sons, then Chelo, the elder, ends the scene with a brief soliloquy:

You are the most despicable man I have ever met . . . I'm gonna go very far away from here and make money to help my mother and brother, and I'll leave you to rot in poverty!

I am running the video camera,



Students at Hampden County Correctional Center act out the play they have written in Iris Broudy's class.

and a few minutes later I play back the tape. The women hoot with delight. I hear random comments about how they might improve the scene.

A Diverse Group

My women's ESOL class was a small group with widely diverse backgrounds and language competence. The two Yudelkas, both from the Dominican Republic, had come to the facility more than a year earlier with zero English but had taken different paths in language acquisi-

tion. Yudelka R., 38, whose education is limited, tended to seek instant translations from her friends, rather than make the effort to learn. Yudelka L., 26, who had completed three years of dental school in the D.R., was bright and driven: Her SPL in English had leapt from 1 to 6; she loved to discuss grammar points, and she sought opportunities to practice English.

Except for Irma C., the others were Puerto Rican. Omayra C., 30, could speak and write rapid, though fractured, English picked up on the streets of New York. Ana Ana F., a 62-year-old great-grandmother was comfortable in English in limited contexts but needed to stretch both her vocabulary and her confidence. Irma, 45—mentor, counselor, and class clown—was the English star until Jacquelyne S. came in partway through the project. Jackie, 31, who is

bilingual, enrolled in the class only to work on developmental reading and writing.

It was a constant challenge to design classroom activities that could serve such diverse needs. When a role-play activity went over especially well one Friday, I suggested that the students might enjoy writing and acting out a skit, a little *telenovela*. A brainstorming session elicited topics around family issues, love relationships, and life in jail.

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Playwrighting in Prison

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Budding Playwright

The following Monday, Yudelka L. showed up with a five-act play—in Spanish—that she had written over the weekend. It was called *The Family Fercarelu*—the name was a composite of the surnames of the class members. It was a morality tale about a Dominican man of humble origins who immigrates to America, becomes a rich and arrogant drug dealer, then finds deep faith while he is incarcerated. Yudelka was telling her own story, but it resonated with all the women in the class.

It's wonderful, but this is English class, I reminded Yudelka. The resourceful playwright then found someone in her living unit who could translate the play into English. A few days later, I found myself with a 23-page handwritten script. It could be a great project—one with enormous potential for learning—but also, I feared, for disappointment. If we took this on, it was essential that we see it through.

Thus began a three-month process that ultimately would build community and trust in the classroom, produce great leaps in language acquisition, and foster much needed self-esteem. We began "rehearsals," taping and correcting, taping and correcting. At first the readings were flat and labored, but as the students became comfortable with the language, they began to use more natural intonation.

Adding "costumes" allowed the women to let go of inhibitions. By taking on new personas, they could take risks; they could sound "English." For security reasons, we couldn't use makeup, and costumes could not be too concealing, so I

collected hats, shawls, vests, and jewelry that would suggest various roles. We cut out a lot of mustaches. I brought in two old sheets to cover one wall of the classroom. The women created "scenery" with

mentoring role. Omayra became more a part of the classroom community. Afterward, she wrote: "I feel so happy everybody work hard in the drama. I never imagine is good experience in the classroom."

Fue como un sueño realizado porque fue algo que salió de mi misma, y ver las personas actuar algo que tu escribiste te da una satisfacción muy agradable.

simple drawings on easel paper, which we taped to the backdrop with each scene change.

For our audience, we invited some staff members from the women's unit to the performance. On the big day, the women were nervous and excited. The play lasted 30 minutes. It wasn't perfect, of course, but the audience cheered. They laughed at the comic antics and grew teary at the right moments. Even if they didn't understand every word, the effect was powerful.

What They Learned

The women worried afterward if they had been good enough. The point, of course, was how they had grown from the experience. Our playwright, who had the demanding lead role, vastly improved her pronunciation; she developed natural rhythm and intonation. The other Yudelka gained self-confidence and comfort using English. After the play, she became more engaged in class and has made remarkable progress.

Ana, the grandma, improved her reading skills. Irma acquired new vocabulary and thrived in her

Yudelka L. wrote, in part, "*Fue como un sueño realizado porque fue algo que salió de mi misma, y ver las personas actuar algo que tu escribiste te da una satisfacción muy agradable.*" [It was like a dream come true because it was something that came out of me, and to see people bring to life something that you wrote gives you great satisfaction.]

I had wondered what Jackie, who really didn't need to learn English, would gain from the project. Her comments spoke for them all: "[This play] gave me the opportunity to share in a different way with the other girls . . . I am proud of participating in this drama because it was totally produced by inmates, and it gave us the opportunity to express one of the ways we become criminals and drug dealers. It's not always because we want to be bad. Sometimes poverty and misery take us to do the wrong choice. But there is always a good side inside of us . . ."

Iris Broudy teaches ESOL at the Hampden County House of Correction. She can be reached at <iris.broudy@sdh.state.ma.us>

A Voice for Immigrants

By KAREN OAKLEY

A young couple says good-bye to their extended family, leaving their children behind as they prepare to move to the United States. A father worries that his young son won't remember him after a two-year absence. A new arrival to the United States struggles to understand a nurse's questions.

These are some of the situations that students in the Immigrant Learning Center's ESL Theater class chose to explore and include in their first production *If You Could Hear My Voice*. This ESL theater program was created by playwright and ESL teacher Kathleen Klose. Their first live performance took place at the Malden Public Library in August 2003, and their first video was produced at the Malden Public Access TV station in October 2003. The video has since aired on Malden TV and has been made available to community cable channels around the country. Other productions followed, and the class continues to work on learning English and producing theater that inspires and informs audiences about the experience of immigrants in the United States I recently interviewed Kathleen about her experience creating the theater class, her methods, and her plans for the future of this unique group.

Karen:

How did you get the idea to start a theater group for immigrants?

Kathleen:

One of the inspirations was a playwriting class that I took, which just got me into the whole frame of mind of using theater. The other motivation came from working with adult immigrant students for four or five years and becoming familiar, as we all do, with a lot of the issues in

their lives, and a lot of the difficulties they experience. I thought it would be nice if students could use theater to express some parts of their lives that Americans who are not immigrants aren't aware of. Most of the students who signed up originally were initially just interested in another way to practice conversation. But once we got started, they became very involved in using theater to express their experiences, and that became a driving force for them. Then, after the first production, there was a sense that their self-esteem was stronger and that it had been very therapeutic for them to express what they were going through. These were things that many of them had been holding inside, trying just to grin and bear it and get through.

Karen:

What are some of the themes you've explored with the class?

Kathleen:

One thing I really wanted American audiences to understand was that people don't leave their homes, families, countries, and cultures for frivolous reasons. Some people may be going on an adventure, but to really pull up your roots and start over from zero requires a strong reason. If people had good choices in their countries, most would stay there. They've made tremendous sacrifices coming here, and one of the themes was the pain of going away and leaving family members behind, and then the difficulty of trying to maintain relationships when you're separated by such a distance for so long. The other themes all revolved around learning how to cope and survive here.

People come and they have to learn not just the language, but also all of the systems, all the customs, all of the things that you and I just take for granted. Then there are also culture clashes, and dealing with being condemned or judged for being different, for example, Muslim women wearing scarves, and trying to maintain a certain sense of your own identity. Another important theme was breaking through barriers, reaching through to get people to change their attitudes.

Karen:

What are some of the methods you use in class and how are the scripts developed?

Kathleen:

All of the stories were based on very specific true incidents in students' lives. In the first month or two, we did a lot of talking and writing about their experiences. I took the experiences they talked and wrote about, as well as others that I knew about from former students, and for the first production, I wrote the scripts and they learned them. It's difficult working with immigrants and theater because pronunciation is such a huge obstacle. In theater, it's pointless if people can't understand you, so we do a lot of work on pronunciation and voice projection. Since the class has evolved, we developed a lot of different types of activities and projects. For instance, we watched some of the scenes from the video and we analyzed expression and body language and saw how much was communicated without words. That led to them getting together

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A Voice for Immigrants

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in small groups where they told each other about first-time experiences such as first job interviews. They then developed pantomimes portraying these situations. One student acted out her experience at the airport where she was carrying lots of heavy luggage and she encountered her first escalator. She did a wonderful job with it, and there were lots of other great silent performances as well. I realized right away what a huge difference there was between giving them a script that was written and letting them act something out without words because all their energy and creativity could go into the expression of what was happening. They didn't have to worry about *Is this the right word? Am I pronouncing it the right way?* and all those things. We added words to some of them, and the difference was like night and day. That's what we chose to demonstrate at the MCAE Network presentation our group gave this past October: how to go from improvised silent pantomimes to scripted vignettes. When students perform my scripts for the first time, the result is usually very flat expression with no intonation and dreadful pronunciation, so I've learned how important it is to have students working on developing scripts all the way through.

Karen:

How do you think this class differs from the typical ESL class or from other classes you've taught in the past?

Kathleen:

I think the main difference is that we're using language as opposed to studying language. After about a month in the class, after the class had whittled itself down to those who had decided that this was really a good way to learn, they began to work very well together. Students are speaking much more to communicate, to accomplish something, rather than to practice talking about their families for the umpteenth time or things like that. What I found is that they became very comfortable with offering their opinions and making suggestions. During rehearsals there were a lot of suggestions about where people should stand or other sorts of directorial things. Of course, in a theater production, it's possible to have too many directors, but as a teacher it was wonderful. We were working together as a team, and I didn't feel so much that I was teaching as that I was facilitating this interaction. The creative suggestions were coming from all of us. Another great thing about theater is that, if your group has the right chemistry, you develop a very trusting, cooperative environment. You can talk about emotions, which after all, are the tools you need to use in theater. In everyday life, you may have to swallow your anger or ignore your frustration, but actors are only effective if the audience understands the human emotions being portrayed.

Karen:

Can you talk a little about the social action aspect of the theater

group? What are some of the projects planned for the future, and how do they fit in with the Immigrant Learning Center's mission of educating the public about the realities of immigrants' lives and their contributions to US society?

Kathleen:

In December 2004, we're doing a presentation that shows some of their experiences, but it starts and ends showing some of the common complaints that you hear if you listen to AM talk radio programs about those awful immigrants. Immigrants don't pay taxes and they don't want to learn English. But the play has scenes showing that actually immigrants pay a lot of taxes and they want very much to learn English. They're cleaning buildings at night, they're delivering our newspapers, they're working in nursing homes taking care of our elderly, they're paying a lot of Social Security taxes that also help support our elderly. In the spring we're planning to work with students from Social Studies classes at Malden High School to develop a dialogue between American teenagers and immigrants. We also hope to develop an oral history project with some nursing home residents in the area. We're also planning to make another video production through Malden TV to keep getting our message out to the community.

Karen Oakley has been teaching and working with ESOL students for about 20 years. She can be reached at <karen.oakley@hotmail.com>.

If You Could Hear My Voice

The Immigrant Theater Group's video described in Karen's article is available from the ALRI library or the Northeast SABES library. Copies can also be purchased for a small fee through the Immigrant Learning Center. Contact Marcia Hohn at 781-322-9777 for details.

Using Fables in the ESOL Class

By MARY ANN SLIWA

The three levels of students at the Norwood Adult ESOL Program where I teach responded enthusiastically to a unit on fables. I secured the easy reader version of *Aesop's Fables*, retold by Tana Reiff, with an audio-tape from the Minuteman Library Catalog. (See details at the end of this article for locating resources.)*

Using Fables: Step by Step

First, we read the fable aloud and worked out any new vocabulary. Then we listened to the tape. The next time we listened to the tape, the students spoke the words with the narrator as a language lab activity. Since fables are told about the past, we learned about irregular past participles and the different pronunciations of the final "ed".

In the initial lesson, we took time to reflect on individual learning styles; students raised their hands to fill in a class chart on "How I Learn Best."

I then asked each student to tell a traditional tale from his or her own country.

This was a great exercise because it allowed different talents to shine. One of our timid students shared three Russian folktales that she told to young children in her country.

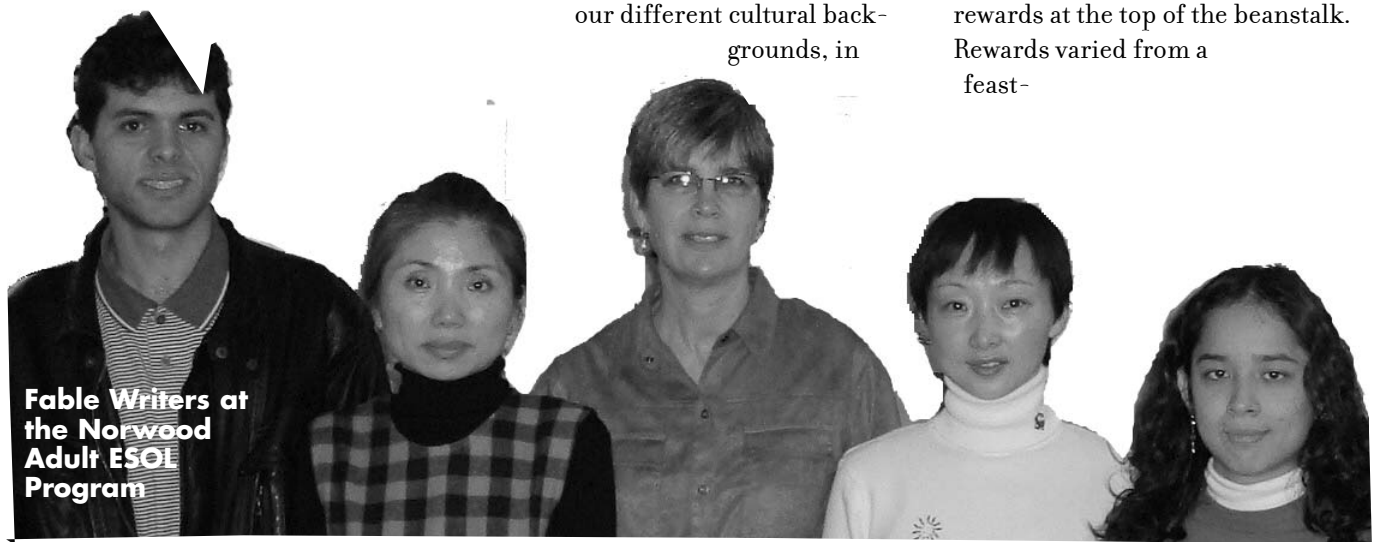
Writing Our Own Fables

As a group, we wrote our own fable. Each student contributed a sentence or two. The advanced beginning class created a new story with all the elements of a traditional fable. The intermediate class decided to tell the Cinderella story and commented on how much of it was from the Disney version! Our advanced students modified some traditional tales: they substituted the names of family members or groups of people who use the "rabbit/hare" or "turtle/tortoise" approaches to life. We ended up with a philosophical discussion of the variations and similarities in human nature and the possible causes of these. We ended up wondering if we are really that different from one another, despite our different cultural backgrounds, in

grounds, in the end. Next, we went to work writing our own individual fable-like stories in the advanced and intermediate classes. Students either wrote a story they had heard as a child or told their children, or created an original tale. Again, it was a great pleasure because one intermediate student, who agonizes when she writes (mostly phonetically), put her pencil to the paper and didn't stop for 25 minutes! She was so absorbed and proud of her work. One advanced student used the opportunity to parody this literature form.

Students Working Together

I then worked with the intermediate teacher, Marie Kelley; We had intermediate students read their writings to the advanced beginners. This was a very dynamic class as many stories, such as "Jack in the Beanstalk," are common across cultures. We heard divergent ways Jack acquired the beans and very different ideas about the rewards at the top of the beanstalk. Rewards varied from a feast-



Fable Writers at the Norwood Adult ESOL Program

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Listening: A Powerful ESL Editing Tool

By MARY JO MOORE

I have been teaching a high-intermediate to advanced ESL writing class for about five years. During the first year or so, I tried to persuade my students that peer editing in the form of reading each other's writing was a very good thing . . . but they were skeptical. So I developed a form of "guided group editing" in which I presented small groups with copies of one group member's writing along with a suggested list of editing points specific to that piece of writing. These small peer editing groups looked wonderful from a distance, and for a brief but golden moment, I thought I had stumbled upon the Holy Grail of ESL writing activities. Eventually, however, my students let me know, gently but firmly, that they had been suffering through "guided group editing" to please me . . . but had not felt it was particularly helpful to them. For one thing, most of my students felt vulnerable about letting their classmates see their writing. And guided group editing was more or less walking all over their vulnerability with muddy boots. So I let group editing go and began to focus on self-editing.

But ESL students need help to self-edit. During a year or two of trying various ways of helping my students self-edit, I began to realize that they didn't seem to mind if other people heard their writing as long as they didn't actually see it. It's so simple. "Read aloud to someone or to yourself," I might hear myself say. "See if you like the way your writing sounds. Your ears have been listening to English for

quite a while now. Maybe it's time to trust them."

"Read aloud with a pencil in your hand," I might also hear myself say. It is quite common for the ESL writer reading aloud to use her pencil before she gets to the end of her first sentence. "I've got to fix that," I hear my students say. "I've got to come back to that

can come over and read his writing to me, or he can come over to ask a specific question or two about his writing. When you're listening to the writing but can't see it, you are limited to checking pronunciation and responding to content and perhaps occasionally an aberrant verb tense or word choice. This is wonderfully different from a student's

When they read to me, I record any words they mispronounce on a Post-it and then go over these words with them. I also give them the Post-it so they can practice the words later.

later." Since she is the one brandishing the pencil, the writer is in charge whether she is reading to someone else or to herself.

Reading aloud to another person does seem to heighten the power of listening, maybe because two people are involved in the editing process instead of one. But it is also productive to read one's writing aloud to oneself. Either way, listening has become the editing tool of choice in my class and the first line of defense.

In-Class Office

I have begun to set up an "office" in the corner of the room when we have writing and editing sessions. My office consists of two chairs (or desk-chair combinations) facing each other. A student

writing a rough draft and then handing it to me to fix. It's very important, I think, to keep the student in charge at this stage . . . and the fact that the teacher is simply listening (without seeing) or responding only to specific questions the student has asked about grammar, punctuation, or vocabulary helps keep the power in the hands of the writer. I would recommend that ESL teachers not worry about whether the editing that results from listening to student writing or responding only to specific questions about the writing is totally accurate or wholly comprehensive. It's a viable goal, particularly at the rough draft stage, sim-

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Listening ...

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ply to observe and rejoice that the process of editing is actually going on.

Since every language has its own set of pronunciation issues for the learner of English, and our students tend to come from all over the world, a difficult sound for one might not be difficult for another. So whether they are reading their writing aloud to the teacher or to another student, getting help with mispronounced words is likely to be part of the process. When they read to me, I record any words they mispronounce on a Post-it and then go over these words with them. I also give them the Post-it so they can practice the words later. In this way, reading one's writing aloud to someone else

becomes a way to get a pronunciation check, which helps motivate the use of listening as an editing tool. Everyone seems to feel positive about pronunciation checks.

Writing offers ESL students an opportunity to look at and listen to their own grammar. And editing becomes a second chance to get it right. Whether our students edit a little or a lot, when they listen to their own writing they are involved in a process that conjoins written and spoken English. Listening as an editing tool blurs the distinction between pronunciation and grammar, rendering it a welcome alternative to the unnatural but inevitable separation of pronunciation and grammar that accompanies textbook learning.

Someone wise once said, "Writing is rewriting." Well, editing

encourages rewriting to happen. And listening encourages editing to happen. Listening not only bypasses the vulnerability that seems to be rampant when ESL students peer edit each other with their eyes. It also activates the passive knowledge their ears have accumulated over the many years they've been listening to English. All this listening can't help but deepen the language learner's awareness of his or her own pronunciation. And becoming a better "pronouncer" of English is what our students seem to want more than anything else. Thus listening is quite possibly an ESL student's most powerful editing tool.

Mary Jo Moore is on the faculty of the Framingham Adult ESL Program where she teaches a high-intermediate to advanced ESL class with an

Wiki: A New ABE Online Resource

Excerpted From Literacy Resources Rhode Island

www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/bulletin1.html

Wiki-wiki, a Hawaiian word meaning very, very, quickly, refers to a Web site where you can immediately and easily add to or change text. The best-known application is the Wikipedia, a multilingual encyclopedia, created and modified daily by thousands of people across the world. . . The Adult Literacy Education (ALE) Wiki is not a replacement for electronic lists. It is a complement to, and we hope an enhancement of them. Because a wiki is an easily edited document environment, current or past electronic list discussions can be selectively copied to the wiki, continued at any time, and referenced (and linked) in future e-list discussions. For each wiki discussion topic a summary, glossary, and list of research and other references can be created. We hope the ALE Wiki will become a handy electronic reference shelf of definitions and resources for discussions that take place on adult literacy e-lists, . . .

A wiki, by design, is a participatory environment. We invite you to work on the ALE wiki with us. We are trying to organize this so that lots of people from the field are involved in adding/changing and editing text, but also so that in each of the areas there is a topic manager to help keep things organized. The ALE Wiki is online at http://wiki.literacytent.org/index.php/Main_Page

To set up an account, and add to the Wiki, go to <http://wiki.literacytent.org/index.php/Special:Userlogin>

Please e-mail David Rosen (djrosen1@comcast.net) if you have technical questions.

A Taste of Culture

By LISA GARRONE

I had been meaning to put together a program cook book of students' recipes for months and had come as far as gathering recipes from the learners in all six classes of our program, ABCD South Side Head Start in Roslindale. But I never found the time to edit, organize, and bind them into an attractive finished product. The project was put on a back burner until I started pursuing the idea of hosting Roslindale's first annual Adult Literacy Day through the Roslindale Adult Literacy Community Planning Group. *A Taste of Culture* was the name of the featured event at the Literacy Day; it also became the title for the compilation of student recipes completed in time for the event.

Community Needs

Our comprehensive community assessment had clearly indicated that providing additional free ESOL classes was Roslindale's greatest ABE need. Given the state's current economic recession, it was time to seek alternative funding sources to provide these classes. In order to move beyond the traditional public funding arena, we needed to target public awareness

efforts beyond the circle of adult educators and human service providers and into the private business domain. We had already done some of the groundwork by recruiting business representatives from the community to participate in focus groups. Out of these representatives, a prominent business leader stepped forward to become an active member in our community planning group. Now we had a foothold in the private business domain, and with a day-long event devoted to raising awareness and funding for adult literacy, we could reach other businesses by inviting them to our celebration and by enlisting their support as well.

The group tossed around some ideas about what such a day would look like. Given the size of our community planning group, all were reluctant to bite off more than they could chew; ABCD South Side Head Start Adult ESOL is the only DOE-funded program in Roslindale with a community planning group of about eight to ten members. However, we somehow moved from the idea of a single event to a day full of events with one featured celebration, *A Taste of Culture*.

International food and entertainment were the big attractions at our event. The luncheon featured

dishes provided by local restaurants and bakeries and a full menu of performances that showcased music and dance from Cape Verde, Venezuela, Albania, Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean, representing the cultures of our students and their community. Other events that day included an exhibit of "Art as a Reflection of Culture" at the nearby gallery, a rhythm and blues band at the park in the center of Roslindale, and a slide show, lecture, and book signing by a popular local author at the Roslindale Branch Library. The day was jam-packed. A cookbook was frosting on the cake.

Learner Involvement

We started laying the groundwork for Roslindale Adult Literacy Day months before by marching in the Roslindale Day Parade. We needed to heighten our presence in the community, so people would know who we were when we asked them to participate in Roslindale Adult Literacy Day. Learners created banners they carried while marching along the parade route. One banner read, "We Are Roslindale Adult Learners of ESOL." Students signed their names and wrote their countries of origin on the banner. Another banner read, "We Are Waiting to Learn English in Roslindale." On this banner, the initials of all those on our wait list were written along with the countries represented. One additional sign read, "We Are the Graduates of the ABCD South Side Head Start Adult ESOL

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Roslindale ESOL students participate in A Taste of Culture.

A Taste of Culture

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Program.” Members of our alumni club marched with this banner. Others passed out bookmarks to onlookers and asked them to support English language classes in Roslindale.

language, serves as a window into our cultures. Certain dishes are served during specific holidays or times of the year, and we often associate them with different times or people in our lives. Teachers can ask learners to write about the food featured in a recipe they’ve shared. When do they eat this food? Who

conversations with visitors to the gallery inevitably included talk about their ESL program. When Senator Marian Walsh walked into the gallery and started talking to one of our program representative-artists, I decided this was a very good omen and Roslindale Adult Literacy Day would be a hit.

These letters served as the basis for lessons on the components of writing that are outlined in the REEP writing rubric

Thank You Letters to Sponsors

A show of appreciation to sponsors and other supporters is much more meaningful when it comes from those who benefit directly. With this in mind, each learner was asked to write a thank-you letter to a sponsor or other contributor whose efforts helped to make Roslindale Adult Literacy Day a reality. Teachers laid out the basic structure of a thank-you letter and then instructed students to personalize it by writing a little bit about their backgrounds and how learning English would help them to reach their goals. These letters served as the basis for lessons on the components of writing that are outlined in the REEP writing rubric (i.e., content and vocabulary, organization and development, structure, mechanics, voice).

The PR work intensified as the big day drew near. Reporters from the local papers came to our classes and asked students to volunteer to be interviewed about the program. Some learners found a one-on-one interview to be too intimidating, but enjoyed speaking in a group. Others viewed the one-on-one interview as a good opportunity to practice their speaking skills.

On the big day, learners took on various responsibilities. They greeted guests, sold tickets and cookbooks, transported and served food from restaurants, set up food, and cleaned up after the activities.

makes/made it for them? Why did they choose to share this particular recipe? Do they have any memories associated with this food?

This project also tapped into the artistic talents of one of our students who illustrated the cover.

Art as a Reflection of Culture

Four of our learners displayed their artwork at the exhibit, including embroidered wall hangings depicting Mayan women in traditional dress, a beaded picture of a Syrian Saint, and various watercolors and embroidered linens. As with recipes, artwork can serve as a starting point for creative writing or a glimpse into one’s cultural heritage. At the opening, our students who displayed their work were among those artists who spoke to gallery visitors. Speaking about their own creations gave learners confidence and comfort when conversing with native English speakers whom they had never met. In their dual roles as artists and students, our learners inadvertently served as program advocates. Their

A week or so after the letters had been mailed, I waved my usual, “Good morning” to a local business owner. He waved back and came over to speak to me. He said he had received a thank-you letter from a student and then proceeded to compliment our program and the success of Roslindale Adult Literacy Day. Actually, I encountered this a number of times with other local business people. The learners’ letters had made much more of a lasting impression than mine.

Lisa Garrone is the director of the ABCD Southside Head Start Program in Roslindale. She can be reached at <garrone@bostonabcd.org>.

The ESL of Cooking

Recipe writing was easily integrated into our ESOL curriculum, and this activity can be adapted to other classes as well. Lessons on “count” versus “non-count” nouns, giving directions (i.e., commands), and vocabulary for measurements, ingredients, cooking verbs, and tastes naturally evolved from this project. Recipes can also be a starting point for creative writing. Food, like

Using Fables . . .

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to a golden egg, even in the two Brazilian versions.

Marie also read the beginning of "Little Red Riding Hood" and asked if any one knew the ending. Another student had written the Korean version, which also includes themes from several other tales, and I read it without the ending. Here was another reason for celebration. A beginning student, who never speaks unless spoken to, finished the story for the two classes.

Language Skills

Of course, we were able to practice the vocabulary needed to analyze similarities and differences among the fables so we could discuss the tales read by the students. Also, we gave students a "listening for a purpose" activity: We asked each student to generate one question based on each story he or she listened to. We then had the students listen to the stories intently because we asked one question for each story. So, we were able to practice asking questions, using the past tense.

Later, we illustrated our stories. All of this became the material for a beautiful "story quilt." A couple of students volunteered to create a bulletin board from the printed stories and illustrations.

Resources For Fables

- <http://www.newreaderspress.com>. *Timeless Tales* (including *Aesop's Fables* by Tana Reiff Audiotape available.
- <http://www.mln.lib.ma.us/virtcat.htm> (virtual library)
- <http://library.minlib.net/> and through the Virtual Catalog (The Virtual Catalog allows library cardholders with an online PIN to request items not held by a Minuteman library. Items will be transferred o your local library.)
- <http://www.umass.edu/aesop/ant/index.html>
- <http://www.aesopfables.com/>
- <http://www.alri.org/lessonplans.html>
- <http://www.darsie.net/talesofwonder/>



Everyone participated; students who didn't want to draw made collages.

Using fables was a really heart warming unit and the "buzz" was great with students bragging about their stories and art work to others during break. The students also voted to continue listening to more fables and traditional tales. There are tall tales, adventures, myths, love stories, and legends in the New Readers Press series *Timeless Tales*. I did use the "Johnny Appleseed" tall tale with great success in the advanced class.

I was thrilled to see several of the quieter students blossom. I also deeply enjoyed the universality of the myths and morals threaded throughout what we sometimes see as "different" cultures.

Mary Ann Sliwa is the technology coordinator and computer teacher at the Norwood Adult ESOL/Blue Hill ABE Programs. She can be reached at <masliwa@comcast.net>.

SABES Launches Math Initiative

Watch for a stronger math presence in staff development opportunities in all SABES regions over the next three years. Starting this spring with a series of workshops integrating writing and math, SABES will be devoting resources to an intensive, theme-based math initiative. Intended to help ABE teachers develop confidence in and deeper understanding of math teaching, the initiative will include mini-courses, workshops, intensive training, and other opportunities. SABES is working closely with the nationally recognized organization TERC to implement the project. Contact your regional SABES office for more details.

Spice Up Your Day With Purposeful Dictation

By JOY TUMAN & LAURIE HARTWICK

They seem to love it! That was the conclusion we came to in the lunchroom one day last spring. We had been talking about our experiences using dictation at the Lawrence Adult Learning Center for our adult ESOL students who have ranged in proficiency over the years from beginning literacy through low advanced. Both of us had had the same experience: we would say, “Okay, let’s do some dictation,” and students were immediately engaged and jumping to the task. We asked ourselves why? We had both used dictation more as a supplement to other tasks or for five-minute “fillers,” but now we were beginning to think we could and should use dictation more effectively.

Why and How?

In the past eight years that we’ve taught together at the Lawrence Adult Learning Center, we’ve had classes of all levels of ESOL and classes of mixed proficiencies. And of course, we’ve had mixes of educational experiences, languages, cultures, ages, and interests. If we could integrate dictation activities more purposefully and consistently into our classes, what could we learn that would drive our instruction? We also asked ourselves if there were a way we could develop dictation procedures that would result in students being able to use their dictations for reflection about their own learning and develop self-awareness about what they need to learn.

But what to use if not a textbook?

We decided that both of us would include dictation as an integrated

component of our classroom instruction. Joy opted to use a dictation journal. She would give dictations that used material from the newspaper and then develop subsequent activities resulting in discussions, expressing opinions orally and in writing, grammar manipulations, and vocabulary development. Another method would be to have students give peer dictations. Laurie had been concerned about her students’ pronunciation and auditory discrimination along with spelling and punctuation issues. Because her students seemed to be unfamiliar with literature, she chose to use selections from popular fiction. Laurie decided that students would keep a dictation portfolio with a continuously updated log that would reflect problems manifesting themselves through the dictation process. Both of us also wrote our own material in order to focus on problematic pronunciation. In any case, our selections, whether found or written, are relevant, meaningful, and interesting, and exhibit a range of vocabulary, sentence structures, and English sounds.

Implementing the Process

Once or twice weekly we give dictations. We read the selections, not emphasizing words, but reading strings of words or phrases so that connected speech is maintained. After reading the selections, we give students several



moments to “share and compare” with their neighbors. Discussion is often lively. While students are doing this, we write a punctuation key on the board. The punctuation key gives all the necessary punctuation (such as the number of commas, question marks, etc.) During the sharing and comparing time, students check their own work for punctuation and discuss it with their neighbors. They can make any changes they want to at this point but after a few moments we ask them to put all writing instruments away – no more corrections!

Next, we call on students randomly to go up to the board. Each student must write five dictated words sequentially. We settled on five words because students don’t become overly concerned that they haven’t written a complete sentence. Five words also doesn’t let anyone get bored – they’re never sure who’s going to be called next, so they need to follow along and maintain focus for each group of five words. They have to interpret what the fifth word is that they

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now have to follow – often a challenge!

Students are not allowed to correct on the board or call out corrections to those writing on the board. Again, there is a lively discussion during this time, along with some laughter, as students begin to see some of the words or entire sentences they completely missed or “reinterpreted” with a very different meaning. We remind students to compare what is being written on the board by their classmates with what they have written on their own paper.

Color Coding

Once the completed dictation is on the board, students are asked to take out a different colored pen from what they originally used. Sometimes we help out by passing out red pens. They’re not allowed to erase. Starting with the title we

elicit “suggestions” for corrections. As we go, we discuss the vagaries of the English sound and spelling systems, the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary, and any grammatical functions that come into question. We prompt for punctuation correction. Usually, within a class, the students can correct the entire dictation with only a very rare correction by the teacher.

Extension Activities

At this point Joy, who is predominantly using newspaper snippets, gives an additional activity. Sometimes students are asked to write the end of a story or speculate about what happens next. Or they might have to write their opinion about an issue posed in the dictation. They may be asked to change all the verbs to past tense or change to negative and interrogative sentences. After these extended written exercises, they share their ideas in small groups, thus promoting

interesting discussions. Laurie, who is more concerned with the pronunciation, spelling, and punctuation, asks students to reflect on their errors and then collects their papers. She circles their “critical errors,” returns the papers, and students then enter their critical errors in their dictation logs. After a couple of months, students go back and review their folders, reflecting on their progress.

What Else Have We Observed?

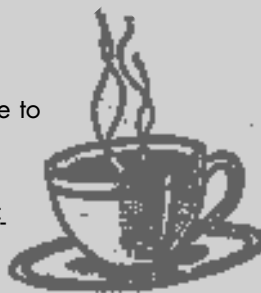
During a dictation students are completely engaged. They’re thinking, listening, writing, imagining, discussing, and becoming aware of what they know and what they don’t know about life, current events, issues, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition to the language learning that’s going on, students are building confidence to talk about language. There’s a lot of laughter and a sense of community building as students realize that no one is perfect in dictation and that each has individual strengths and weaknesses. Dictation engages students at both a cognitive and emotional level. They develop a pride about what they can grapple with. It’s like having an individual self-assessment going on while being a part of a big group encounter. We all love dictation!

Laurie Hartwick and Joy Tuman have been teaching adult basic education and

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in higher education pro-



Get Out of Class!

- If you have a small class, take students out for coffee to practice social English. With a mug in her hands, the shyest student often opens up. Coffee is a good subject for conversation, too, since many students prepare it differently in their home countries, or have a different traditional beverage, like tea.
- If you have a digital camera, send students out into the neighborhood near your program to take photos. Download, print out, and have students discuss, then write about what they saw. Issues and concerns can arise from this project, and it can lead to other activities, like letters to the editor or inviting people into class.
- If you are near a T stop, go to Haymarket (open air market near Fanueil Hall) on a Friday afternoon or Saturday morning, have students explain the fruits and vegetables common to their countries and cuisines. Buy a few samples, take them back to class, and discuss their preparation. Let students be the experts!

A Neighborhood Scavenger Hunt

SUBMITTED BY SUZANNE SPECIAL, TAUGHT BY SR. NANCY SIMONDS

This lesson is intended for:

- Any level. We used this activity in an ESOL level 5-6 class.

The main goal of this lesson

- Students will be able to recognize and describe the neighborhood around their school and the neighborhood they live in.

Materials:

- Teacher-made handouts of vocabulary words with pictures to accompany words.
- Teacher-made list of things to find outside in the neighborhood.

Step by step:

1. Teach students a list of vocabulary words – in our case, we focused on nouns, adjectives, and opposites (library, businesses, churches, schools, parks, streets, parking, handicapped, clean, dirty, safe, unsafe, etc.
2. Show pictures to accompany vocabulary words. After vocabulary words are taught, take students outside and lead a tour around the neighborhood. Teacher can ask individual students specific questions about the neighborhood to see if students understand and can recognize their new vocabulary.
3. On the following day, pair off individuals to work outside together.
4. Give students a list of things to find, and tell students they have a three-block radius to look in. Examples: How many churches are in the neighborhood? What street are they located on? Is there handicapped parking? What businesses are in the area? What services do they provide?
5. Have students return to the classroom and have each team write their findings on the board under categories such as buildings, churches, etc. Have the whole class compare their findings in a discussion facilitated by the teacher.

Follow-up:

Students can be given a homework assignment to answer questions about their own neighborhood. For example, what kind of buildings are there? Who lives there? Is the neighborhood safe? The following day, ask students to use this information to write a paragraph about their neighborhood. Have them explain if it is a good neighborhood to live in and why. After students complete the writing assignment, they can share their information with their classmates. On the following day, students can type up their paragraphs on the computer.

This lesson was taught by Sr. Nancy Simonds, a teacher at Notre Dame Education Center in Lawrence, where she has taught for six years. She can be reached at <specndec@comcast.net>.

For additional ideas on using scavenger hunts, see page 10.

Beyond Textbooks, Without Textbooks: Teaching From the Lives of Our Learners

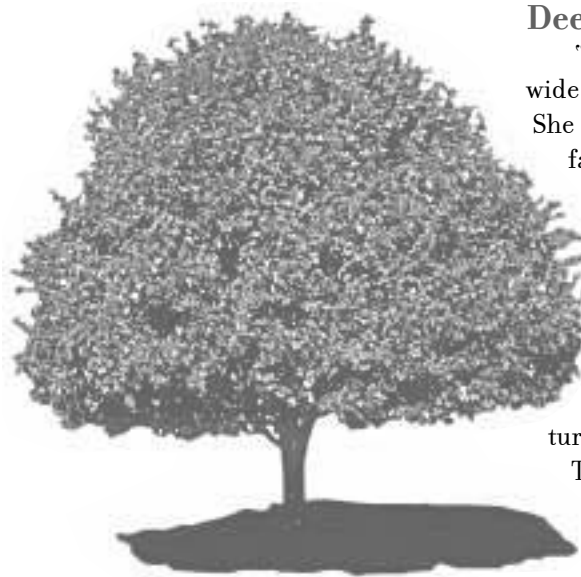
BY SALLY GABB

In my early days of teaching GED, I was reluctant to set aside the ubiquitous GED preparation texts. Of course, for GED students, the prep and practices afforded by the texts is very important. The students often complain if we bring in other kinds of material. But I remember well one class early in my GED teaching career that taught me how “escaping the GED text” can be possible, and in fact turn the “test prep” drudgery into a real learning adventure.

I was an instructor with a specially funded women’s program in Providence, Rhode Island in 1981 at the then-flourishing adult vocational institution, Rhode Island Opportunities Industrial Council. (OIC). The stated mission of our program was to support women in gaining occupational skills that would enable them to move beyond the public welfare system to “living wage” employment. For most, this meant basic skills education, including preparation for the GED test battery.

My class included 25 or so eager, restless, and impatient young women. Despite my best efforts to get them interested in learning, their only interest seemed to be plowing through the books and practice tests. A constant comment, however, went something like this: “Why do I have to read this old stuff anyway?” When am I ever gonna use algebra or biology? Why do I have to learn this grammar stuff— nobody talks like that anyway!

I was cajoling the class through the lessons when I hit the social studies prep text: finally some reading that I could connect in some ways to the lives of my learners. One lesson focused on the concept of family and provided an example of a traditional family tree. I was only too aware that my class included many women with nontraditional families. After we read the selection one student stated loudly: My family don’t look like any of this – I have a whole different kind of tree!



Suddenly the whole class was commenting: Yeah, mine too – I call people family who ain’t even blood, but they’re more family than some of my blood kin!

I was thrilled – finally a topic that excited the class. How could I hold on to it?

Okay, I said to the class, You’re always saying that the GED stuff

doesn’t have anything to do with your lives. Here’s a chance to look at a topic in the book, but do a project that will focus on what is true for you.

I made each student a poster board with an outline of a big tree on it. To identify the concept of a family tree, including the levels and lines that identify how people are related through time, we looked at the illustration in the book related through time. We also read the definitions of family in the dictionary.

Deep and Wide

“I can’t go deep, but I can go wide,” one of my students stated. She explained: she couldn’t go very far back in time with her tree, but she could diagram all kinds of relationships— blood and not blood.

At first, the posters were simply names on charts and diagrams. Then one student brought in pictures, and the project exploded. The posters blossomed with maps, photos, even cloth and buttons. My role became finding other resources for reading and discussion. I found a variety of short selections (magazines, children’s books, etc.) that provided examples of ‘non traditional’ families. For example, we read obituaries and wedding announcements to trace connections in peoples’ lives.

We also connected the “family” members on various posters to

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Beyond Textbooks ...

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places and times: who has someone on their tree who was alive in

The posters blossomed with maps, photos, even cloth and buttons.

1964? What happened that year? (Civil Rights Act, for example). Every time we identified a year, I tried to find some historical events that happened during the time period, and copied a short reading for the class. We read about elections, about weather catastrophes, about music fads and musicians, about sports events. (This project would be much easier today with Google!)

We talked about personal and public history, about who gets to say what history is. We talked about how in earlier times, history was passed down by word of mouth. More than one student talked about how Great Aunt so and so is our family history teller—we have to listen every holiday to those old stories.

This revelation gave rise to the final stage of the project. Through family discussion, the women in the class talked about the strong role of women in their families. I asked each to interview a strong woman family member (blood or not) and write the interview down. (We practiced interview skills and note taking as well.) We published these writings in a family tree newsletter, and completed the project with an open house for family members complete with baked goods identified as family specialties.

I didn't abandon the GED during the project: we had four two-

hour classes a week, and we devoted one hour (on two of the days) to the project. I found that once we got into it, students wanted to get

through the GED prep material to work on the project. They told me: 'This makes me want to come to school'. I also made an effort to connect other GED topics to the concept of family and family history, including biology (genetics) and even mathematics (for example, looking at the ratio of male to female

children, or the percentage of family members living beyond 65).

With every GED class after that I attempted to develop an active GED learning project related directly to lives and interests of the students. I learned how to listen to my learners, and I found I could use GED topics as a jumping off place if I paid careful attention to students' comments and responses. In GED preparation, the "text for the test" was a must, as it is now—but moving beyond the text enabled the learners to celebrate what they knew as well as to gain and practice new skills, insight and knowledge.

Sally Gabb is the coordinator of SABES Southeast. She can be reached at <sgabb@bristol.mass.edu

Ditch the Text, Turn on the TV

Want a break from the books in ESOL class? Turn on the television or pop in a video or DVD. Students get to hear English from someone other than you; they also get to explore culture and to reflect with others on social issues. Humor, as we know, lowers the "affective filter," which Krashen tells us is a must in learning language. So you can even justify watching *The Simpsons*, or *I Love Lucy*. Even the most beginning level students can watch silent films (try Chaplin) and generate language from the scenes. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Preview by establishing a context and reviewing new vocabulary. Use trailers on the internet, lyrics from an opening song, movie reviews, anything to set a scaffold for viewing.

View in very short segments so you don't overwhelm students.

Postview with comprehension activities, reflection questions, discussion, and writing activities.

Check out the following Web sites for more ideas

- ◆ http://eslcafe.com/search/Movies_and_Screenplays/Tif1
- ◆ <http://www.cal.org/caela/civics/AAmon.htm>
- ◆ <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Davis-CaptionedVideo/>
- ◆ <http://lavender.fortunecity.com/banzai/80/>
- ◆ <http://www.script-o-rama.com/snazzy/dircut.html>
- ◆ <http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Tatsuki-Video.html>

Quilting as a Second Language

Story quilts, made from paper or fabric squares, allow students in a multi-level ESOL class to work together on a project, share information about one another, and create a beautiful product. Before approaching the activity, it is a good idea to establish a context by explaining quilts and drawing from students' experience with quilting in their home countries.

- Each student creates a quilt square by cutting and assembling an image around a theme: family, immigration, home country, etc. The teacher can supply different textures of paper and glue sticks; origami paper works well against a solid background. Avoid construction paper, which feels too childish. Fabric can also be glued with craft adhesive to create fabric squares or stitched.
- Each student can explain the square to the class to practice speaking skills and learn new vocabulary.
- More advanced students can also write a paragraph about their squares.
- The teacher or volunteers from the class can assemble the quilt; paper squares can be mounted on poster board sheets or foam core, while fabric squares can be stitched by hand or on a machine.
- The final project can be displayed in the classroom or lobby of the ABE program.

For a description of a successful project using story quilts, see Judy Water's article *Putting the Pieces Together in a Multi-Level Class* at:

<<http://hub1.worlded.org/docs/connections/waters3.pdf>>

Watch for the Summer Issue of *Field Notes*!

The summer issue of *Field Notes* has no specific theme, and this openness has prompted some interesting articles. Watch for the following:

- An Interview With Christine Taylor of Framingham Adult ESOL Plus by Ellen Bourne
- Communiques From a Cold Country by Linda Werbner
- Contributing to Your Profession: Three Ways to Share Your Teaching Ideas by Barbara Ash
- How Learning Spanish as an Adult Helped Me as an ESOL Teacher by Joanne Mason
- A Model GED Program by Andrea Perrault and Tom Mechem

Get back issues of *Field Notes* on line at <www.sabes.org>.

Mark Your Calendar

April 25-27, 2005

National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), National Conference, *Literacy Changes Lives*
Location: Louisville, KY
Contact: NCFL. Web: <www.famlit.org/Conference/index.cfm>

May 4-7, 2005

Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE), National Conference
Making Dreams Come True
Location: Anaheim, CA
Contact: CCAE, 916-444-3323. Web: <www.coabe05.org/>

May 18-19, 2005

Workforce Alliance, 2005 National Conference, *What's the Big Idea? Workforce Development Policy for the Next Four Years (and Beyond)*
Location: Washington, DC
Contact: Carla Ward, 202-223-8891,
Web: <www.workforcealliance.org/conference/twa-conference-200502.htm>

May 26, 2005

Connecticut Adult Training and Development Network (ATDN),
13th Annual Conference on Serving Youth and Adults with LD
Location: Farmington, CT
Contact: ATDN, 860-524-4048. Web: <www.coabe05.org/>

May 29-31, 2005

Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE), 24th Annual Conference
Challenges of Adult Education in the Twenty-First Century
Location: London, Ontario
Contact: CASAE, 613-241-0018. Web: <www.oise.utoronto.ca/CASAE/cnf2005/cnf2005.html>

June 3-5, 2005

Adult Education Research Conference (AERC), 46th Annual
Investigating the World of Adult Education Location: Athens, GA
Contact: Tom Sork, E-mail <tom.sork@ubc.ca>
Web: <www.gactr.uga.edu/conferences/2005/Jun/02/aerc.phtml>

June 27-29, 2005

Centre for Literacy of Quebec, Summer Institute 2005
ABE & Literacy, Media and Technology: Points of Entry, Points of Connection
Location: Montreal, Quebec
Contact: Centre for Literacy, 514-931-8731, x1415, Web: <www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/>

July 14-17, 2005

Alliance for Nonprofit Management/National Council of Nonprofit Associations, Joint Conference
The Communities We Serve: Building Capacity for Impact
Location: Chicago, IL
Contact: The Alliance, 202-955-8406.
Web : <www.allianceonline.org/annual_conference/2005_conference.page>

New Discussion List for ABE Teachers

Are you interested in exploring the connections among literacy teaching, research, and policy? If you are an ABE, ESL, GED, or ASE teacher, you may be interested in participating in an online discussion on these issues. The California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project (CALPRO) and the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN) are cosponsoring the new LPRPConnections discussion list. This discussion list is open to all adult educators interested in exploring the connection of literacy teaching practice, research, and policy. The LPRPConnections discussion list is facilitated by Erik Jacobson, veteran practitioner and research analyst at CALPRO/American Institutes. To subscribe to the LPRPConnections discussion list, send an email message to <LPRPConnectionsrequest@listproc.otan.us> and type "subscribe" in the body of the message.

Upcoming Issues of *Field Notes*

Summer 2005

Open Issue
Submit by April 30

Fall 2005

Workplace Education/
Workforce Development
Submit by June 15



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