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Birth of a Workforce Partnership

BY RICHARD GOLDBERG

How did three of Boston's community-based organizations who often saw each other as adversaries competing for a shrinking slice of the workforce development pie end up as collaborators in a 1 million dollar partnership that is attracting national attention?

For the Asian American Civic Association (AACA), La Alianza Hispana, and the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts, it is a story of communicating on many levels, learning to trust each other, and finding common ground. The result was the Partnership for Automotive Career Education (PACE), a training and career advancement initiative that will help low-income Boston area residents and incumbent lower-level automotive workers move up the career ladder toward economic self-sufficiency and family-sustaining wages. Other key members of the partnership are Sullivan Tire, Bridgestone Firestone, Village Automotive Group, the Massachusetts State Automobile Dealers Association, Madison Park Vocational High School, and Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology. AACA serves as the lead agency and fiscal manager.

From the Back to the Front Burner, Slowly

The idea for an automotive repair training program was first hatched at AACA in 1988 when education staff and agency management believed that Asian men were not particularly well-served by the workforce development system of that time. Asian males, many of whom still work sixty hours a week as waiters or cooks in Chinese restaurants, had few options beyond survival English classes and office skills training pro

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F O R E W O R D

Workplace education. Workforce education. Worker education. Workforce development. What does each of these terms mean, and how to they overlap with one another? The Massachusetts workplace education landscape has changed dramatically over the last twenty years. Globalization, the move from manufacturing to service industries, the decline in unionized workplaces, and the rise in immigrant workers are a few factors affecting the workplace and the workplace education scene. Further, the passage of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 deeply affected the intersection of adult basic education and workplace education, both on the policy and program level.

In this issue of Field Notes, Laurie Sheridan, the SABES statewide workforce development coordinator, gives us a detailed analysis of the workforce development landscape in Massachusetts. She also explains the SABES workforce development initiative and includes contact information for all SABES regions. Andrea Perrault of the Department of Education Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) clarifies the DOE's collaboration with the larger workforce development system across the state. Taken together, these articles give a strong foundation in understanding the "big picture" of workforce development and how it connects with the ABE scene.

Despite policy and economic changes, classroom issues remain constant over the years. In responding to student/worker needs, teachers often focus on understanding workplace culture in North America; understanding workplace rights, including safety and health issues on the job; learning the language and literacy skills necessary for getting and keeping employment, and problem-posing about job conflicts. Teachers' creativity and resourcefulness in connecting workplace concerns with larger literacy, language, and community-building skills are evident in the articles they contributed to this issue. Read about selling flowers to raise program money; about conducting a needs assessment for a workplace education program; read the oral history of a woman who got her GED in a workplace program in a western Massachusetts mill. Read about how one teacher's experience as yoga instructor found its way into the classroom to help students avoid injuries on the job. A lexicon of workplace terms and a resource page listing print and Web based materials rounds out the issue. We welcome your comments and contributions on this, or any other issue of Field Notes.

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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Birth of a Workforce ...

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programs, which attracted mostly women. The idea sat on the back burner until fall 2002 when executive directors at AACA, Alianza and the Urban League found themselves at the same table among five community partners in the new Boston Biotechnology Workforce Partnership, which was aimed at training people for what the industry expected to be a large amount of biomanufacturing jobs. The collaboration that took root over the next year eventually created an adult secondary education course to increase students' grade levels to the point where they could enter an intensive, month-long biomanufacturing training program at a local community college. The interaction and cooperation between senior staff and executive directors of all three agencies would bear fruit in the near future, but there was just one problem. Despite industry expectations, there were very few biomanufacturing jobs opening up in late 2003, and the partnership soon disbanded.

A Giant Step Closer

At the same time, AACA and Alianza were among five Boston CBOs involved in a three-year workforce development capacity building initiative, which helped with strategic planning to strengthen their job training program infrastructure, increase the scale of its existing programs, and build new ones. AACA executive director Chau-ming Lee said, "We had a good level of basic trust." Spring 2003 saw the release of a workforce partnership request for proposals by SkillWorks, a consortium of local foundations led by the Boston

Foundation, with additional money from the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Two small planning grants, totaling \$50,000 each, would be awarded to workforce partnerships that served specific industry sectors. With some powerful industry players, experienced automotive training providers and well-known agencies which served the Boston area Asian,



Latino, and African-American communities, PACE was now on the front burner, making a powerful statement to funders.

From Planning to Implementation

From late 2003 to summer 2004, PACE partners developed the program. Each community-based partner took the lead in a specific area of expertise. AACA was responsible for the ESOL curriculum; Alianza handled case management, while Urban League took the lead for workplace etiquette/job readiness. Key employer partners, the two training providers, and the CBO executives and senior staff formed an advisory committee, which met once a month, while senior staff met weekly (and sometimes more often) to plan recruiting, outreach, assessment and intake. The three CBO executive directors also met separately in what Alianza's William Rodriguez often referred to as a "kitchen cabinet," which helped solidify the CBO partnership beyond the PACE proj-

ect. "The conversations that Chau-ming, Darnell (Williams, the Urban League's president and CEO), and I were having got us into a more collaborative mindset instead of a competitive one. We were showing in practice what people talk about in theory. Our three communities were working together, but first we were able to show that we could work together ourselves." Williams agreed. "The dialogue got richer and deeper and more successful than if we had to do this alone."

In fall, 2004, PACE was notified that its proposal to implement the project would be funded for \$1 million over the next three years. The project features 323 hours of training over a one-year period, two evenings a week and Saturdays. Automotive training totals 287 hours. There are 84 hours of ESOL and 12-24 hours of math for those who need it, 9 hours of computer instruction, four hours of test preparation, and 32 hours of workplace etiquette, along with career coaching and financial counseling. The funders' goals for PACE are to produce "systems change" on many levels. One of these is helping students move beyond entry-level salaries to economic self-sufficiency. This effort has already started to pay off for the CBOs, according to Darnell Williams. "In spite of the challenges that CBOs face in the funding environment, we can work together to achieve a greater good, with three ethnic groups lifting up our communities. That's really huge for me."

Richard Goldberg is director of education for the Asian American Civic Association in Boston. He has been involved in PACE since the planning stage of the project in spring, 2003. He can be reached at <richard@aaca-boston.org>

Getting and Keeping Jobs: The SABES Workforce Development Initiative

BY LAURIE SHERIDAN

Do the adult learners in your program need jobs? Better jobs? Are some or all of them learning English or improving their literacy to find a job or earn more money? Employment is increasingly the main reason for adult learners' participation in ABE programs. But not all ABE programs know how to make their programs relevant to their students' job needs. The SABES Workforce Development Initiative is here to help.

What Is Workforce Development?

Workforce development is a relatively new field designed to address the needs of both workers, potential workers, and employers by supplying high-quality programs and services that train, educate, support, and assist workers in entering and advancing in the workplace. Workforce development utilizes a dual-customer model that tries to address the current skills shortage where large segments of the population lack some of the skills needed to succeed in today's economy.

Workforce development uses several strategies to address this skills shortage. By addressing both the supply side (the skills of the current and potential workforce and their need for good jobs) and the demand side (employers' need for workers with certain levels and kinds of skill), there is an attempt to create a "win-win" strategy. "Labor exchange" and "workforce development" complement each

other by combining the two components preparing workers for, and matching them with, jobs. Many organizations, public and private, have sprung up in recent years to in an attempt to connect these two parts of the equation. Labor market intermediaries try to connect workers with various skills and needs with employers and jobs.

How Does Workforce Development Overlap With Adult Literacy Programs?

Workforce development overlaps with adult literacy programs in several ways. ABE tries to assist learners in acquiring many of the skills needed in the workplace—not only literacy, but also the soft skills and interpersonal skills needed for successful employment. A variety of "wrap-around" services are needed for workers with low skills, low literacy, little work experience, low income, and/or entry-level jobs to be able to move toward "family economic self-sufficiency." Wrap around skills include child care, transportation, counseling and advocacy services, and support while transitioning into jobs and for quite some time afterwards. Adult literacy and ongoing learning are frequently needed not only to enter a job, but to stay there, succeed, and even advance up the employment ladder. Otherwise, workers often get stuck in a cycle of entry-level, low-paid jobs, unable to advance or to move toward family-sustaining wages.

In the words of Massachusetts state legislator Mary Grant, ABE is "the backbone of the workforce development system." Without ABE programs to help adults become more literate and to develop basic skills, employers would have even greater difficulty finding skilled workers, and workers would have even greater difficulty finding and keeping good jobs.

ABE programs can help provide students with a scaffolding for employability or advancement on the job, but only if they know how to incorporate workforce development into their programs. This process involves assisting learners in working with the official workforce development system, and partnering with employers, workforce development agencies, and local job training organizations in the community. By establishing partnerships with other agencies, ABE programs can share the workload and expertise with others. ABE programs mainly need to know how to locate, access, and use access workforce development resources. This is where SABES can help.

Workforce Development Initiative: Resources for You

In 2004 SABES started a new statewide initiative to assist ABE programs in building their capacity for involvement in workforce development. SABES now has a workforce development coordinator in each of the five SABES

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regions of Massachusetts, plus a statewide workforce development coordinator based at World Education, to help adult literacy programs learn to become more involved in workforce development. (See contact information below.) These specialists also serve to educate workforce development agencies and programs about ABE, including how to utilize their expertise in developing sound educational programs and practices; design workplace education programs; hire students from ABE programs; and improve the literacy of the current and future workforce.

Over the past year, the SABES Workforce Development Initiative has begun establishing good relationships with the public and community-based workforce development system statewide, locally, and regionally. The Initiative has also offered workshops to train ABE programs and practitioners to integrate employability, job readiness, and occupational skills into ABE programs. It has also helped to connect ABE providers with the workforce development system in their areas, including the Workforce Investment Boards, the One-Stop Career Centers, and job skills training providers in their communities.

In addition to offering workshops, the Initiative has been collecting promising practices based on some of the excellent work and model programs developing across the state. These practices illustrate the integration of workforce development into ABE programs; the establishment of partnerships that connect ABE and employment/employability, and the devel-

opment of collaborations with local businesses and employers that help low-income and LEP workers connect with jobs or advance on the career ladder.

Over the next year, SABES will be doing even more in workforce development. All SABES regions encourage practitioners to connect with their regional workforce development representative to enhance their program's ability to help ABE students connect with employment and employability needs.

What Is SABES Doing to Help ABE Programs Build Workforce Development Capacity?

In addition to the activities described above, SABES is engaging in a number of other approaches to strengthen the workforce development system in Massachusetts. These include:

- ◆ holding joint orientations for Career Centers and ABE programs to learn about each others' activities and help develop agreements between them;
- ◆ holding workshops to train ABE program staff to develop partnerships with employers, workforce investment boards, develop contextualized curriculum and workplace education programs, and form career ladder projects; providing customized technical assistance to ABE programs that want to incorporate job readiness and/or occupation, industry, or sector-specific content into their ABE curriculum;
- ◆ helping ABE programs learn how to identify and approach potential employer partners, market ABE programs and services to businesses, and locate information on local job openings ;

◆ educating the business sector about the value and benefits they and their employees derive from existing ABE programs, and

◆ involving businesses in becoming champions for adult literacy, participating in statewide advocacy, for policies that help promote resources, education, and support for the integration of ABE and workforce development.

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Check out the new SABES Workforce Development page at www.sabes.org/

Partnering—The Active Verb

BY CHRISTINE POLK

But it's what I want." "But it can't be done." These "buts" were part of the conversation between me, an ABE educator, and a manager who wanted an ESOL program at her hotel. The manager knew the constraints of the business situation: she could provide one hour a week for ten weeks to improve the ESOL workers' language abilities. That's all the time she would allow the workers to take off from their jobs. I knew the time needed to improve ESOL language proficiency: four hours a week for a minimum of 32 weeks, according to research.

The manager and the educator each had a very different idea about language and what it takes to learn it. To make this collaboration work, my educator's view had to shift. The moment I walked through the door of that business, I had to adopt a different view—a business view. Why? Because if we are serious about workforce development in this round of DOE-funded ABE programs, we need to understand the business viewpoint.

"What exactly do you want your employees to learn?" I asked. "Specific vocabulary and functional communication. I want better customer service and increased productivity," she answered. Her answer reflected the workplace language training view, not the educator's perspective, which might sound like: "I want the workers to develop the ability to internalize and use language in new situations and to become more empowered." Still, the two views do not have to be polarized.

Partnerships between businesses and educators can be suc-

cessful if we change the notion of workplace partnerships to an active word: "partnering." A partnering model works because it combines the best of education methods with the best of training principles. It develops a collaborative work environment. It creates a positive and supportive atmosphere. It empowers and energizes both the business and the workers. Everyone benefits.

So, this is the partnering model that I designed, and have pilot-tested with an experienced workplace instructor, Kate Wampler.

Partnering: ESOL Workplace Communication Training

Each instructional module (one hour a week for ten weeks) is focused on one department and its needs for improving specific targeted language and vocabulary. (For example: the Housekeeping Department might want to focus on "Communication with Guests.") The workers are paid 100 percent release time during their regular working hours. The design maximizes the limited classroom instructional time and gives the reinforcement, practice and review to the managers and supervisors. It requires the closest integration of classroom instruction with the workplace environment and it is firmly rooted in learning theory. Even though it's only 110 hours, it provides relevant, focused, contextualized curriculum; a variety of interactive learning activities; plenty of review practice; reinforcement in real-life situations; continuous measurement of learning and improvement; and encouragement of confidence and accomplishment.

Before Classes Start

The instructor meets with the department supervisor/manager to plan the module. The supervisor gives the instructor the exact vocabulary, functional language, and communication patterns she wants the class participants to learn. She also shows the instructor the work site and job tasks. The instructor explains the supervisors' role in reinforcing the language after each class; gives strategies and helpful hints in communicating with limited-English speakers, and ways to informally but regularly help review the learning. The supervisor's role changes. This is the partnering dialogue—each helping to understand and become more skillful with the others' expertise. The instructor meets with each worker individually to assess his or her language skills and needs: 15 minutes out of their work time, scheduled by the supervisor—not too disruptive. So the instructor is not spending valuable class time getting to know each student/worker.

First Class

A bilingual staff member (if the instructor is not bilingual) joins the class to obtain input from the workers about what language they need and to explain the expectations of practicing the new language on the job. She gives the participants specific strategies for learning, practice and review outside of class time to maximize the retention of the targeted language. These strategies stay with the worker/students long after the ten weeks of classes. They have been taught how to learn.

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Workplace Needs Analysis

BY JENNY LEE UTECH

A workplace needs analysis is a systematic way of identifying a workforce's basic skill needs. A needs analysis gathers information and input from all key stakeholders at the workplace through interviews, focus groups, surveys, work site observations, review of workplace documents and other activities. It is a vital step toward developing an effective workplace education program and a curriculum that addresses workers' basic skill needs.

A needs analysis does not involve assessing workers' specific skill levels in English, math, or reading. It's used to identify general areas of need and ideas for curriculum content. A needs analysis can tell you how many workers are native English speakers or not, whether native speakers need to focus on reading or math, or the range of speaking abilities among non-native speakers. But assessing specific skill levels, through standardized testing (BEST, TABE) or alternative assessments, happens after the needs analysis has helped you to determine basic areas of need.

Why Do a Needs Analysis?

A workplace needs analysis will give you important information about what general class types and schedules to offer, and where to start developing curriculum. A needs analysis can build a strong case and provide direction for an education program. You can also build support across the work site for a program by involving as broad a cross-section of the entire workforce and union (when the workplace is unionized) as you can.

But a needs analysis should not only identify workplace issues and problems that might be addressed by improving workers' language and literacy skills. When you are conducting a needs analysis, you should also examine workers' basic skills needs in the larger context of

workplace documents. Committee members also identify work site departments or areas that will participate in the needs analysis. They help to spread the word about the needs analysis (through department and union meetings, newsletters or flyers). The committee also

A needs analysis can build a strong case and provide direction for an education program.

the workplace, and identify other workplace factors that affect workers and their jobs, and that may indicate whether or not the workplace is ready to support an education program. For example, you should ask about communication channels, on-the-job training offered, staffing levels, level of support for a program among front-line supervisors, and potential barriers to setting up a program.

How Do You Do a Needs Analysis?

Typically, the education provider and group of key stakeholders at the workplace (workplace and union leadership, managers, front-line supervisors and workers, union shop stewards, human resources) form a committee to plan, implement, and evaluate the needs analysis. The committee decides how information will be collected – through individual interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and/or examination of

helps to give you access to workers and the work site, and to evaluate needs analysis results.

As the education provider, your role is often to orient the group to the needs analysis; develop focus group or interview questions tailored to the work site and present them to the committee for feedback; conduct the interviews or focus groups; and summarize the information collected so that the committee can analyze the findings.

Your needs analysis plan and activities should take potential language and literacy barriers into account. For example, will you need to translate flyers into workers' native languages? Will you need to hire bilingual interviewers? You should keep all information collected during the needs analysis confidential and anonymous. Make sure that people know ahead of time that you will keep their input confidential; otherwise, some peo-

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Workplace Needs Analysis ...

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ple may be reluctant to participate. Also, interview workers and their supervisors separately—both groups may hesitate to speak their minds if the other is present.

Participation in needs analysis activities should be voluntary. Needs analysis activities should happen during work time if possible, with workers, supervisors, and others receiving paid release time to participate.

Whom Should You Talk To?

The needs analysis should reach each at least 10 percent of the workforce (except when the workforce is very large). It should include a representative cross section of the workforce, including workers (both those who might take classes and those who won't), frontline supervisors, upper level managers, union shop stewards, and union leadership (when the work site is unionized). Needs analysis participants should represent the range of ages, ethnicities, job types, shifts, and levels of seniority at the work site.

What Should You Ask?

The specific questions you ask will depend on the work site, but your questions should address worker's job duties and responsi-

bilities; recent changes in technology or work processes; communication and how it could improve linguistic cultural diversity and its impact; reading, writing, communication, math, and computer skills workers use on the job and how they could improve; current on-the-job training and education opportunities; types of training and education workers might want; promotions or career ladders and skills needed to move up; potential barriers and supports for an education program; goals for the program; when, where, and how to hold classes (class space, release time possibilities).

When the work site is unionized, needs analysis questions should also address: reading, writing, math, communication, or computer skills needed to participate in union activities; how the union communicates with members; how well members understand their union contract, and possible literacy and language barriers among the membership to communicating with the union or understanding the contract. Ask the union leadership about the union's history at the work site. And be sure to ask both management and union leadership what the contract says about education, training, and upgrading for workers, and how an education program would fit into that.

What Should You Keep in Mind?

Improving workers' skills is not the only answer to making workplaces and jobs better. Many factors beyond workers' individual control affect their ability to perform their jobs better, for example work load or work design, poor management, lack of opportunity to use new skills, or health and safety issues. While a workplace education program can address some of the issues uncovered during a needs analysis, it's important to help the committee look realistically at what a program can and can't address. A basic skills program is not a "quick fix" for low worker morale, short staffing, poor management, ineffective workplace policies, or labor-management tensions. But it can be an effective step toward helping workers to improve their job-related and general basic skills, and access higher-skilled jobs.

Jenny Lee Utech works for the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable where she develops workshops and training for workplace educators and administrators. She can be reached at <jennyu@mindspring.com>.

Workplace Education Resource

The Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable has designed a workplace health and safety ESOL curriculum to help ESOL students learn about and exercise their workplace health and safety rights. The curriculum can be adapted for various ESOL levels or ABE classes. The curriculum uses learner-centered activities that engage students in discussion, elicit and build on their experiences as workers and encourage critical analysis and strategies. To view and download this curriculum, go to www.umass.edu/roundtable. The curriculum is based in part on the Workers Rights Pilot Curriculum by the University of Massachusetts Labor Extension Program. The Workers Rights Pilot Curriculum is designed for trainers and other staff of unions and community-based organizations who need to inform workers of their basic rights under Massachusetts law. The Roundtable has designed lessons that make the Pilot Curriculum's information more accessible to ESOL students.

Flower Power: Raising Money and Learning Job Skills

By AMBER ORTIZ

I began selling fresh flowers on Valentine's Day as a fundraiser while in college. I transformed the idea into a learning experience for students of Charboneau Learning Center and Even Start in Greenfield, Massachusetts, where I work as a youth transitions counselor. I geared up this year by reviewing sample business plans offered by the Young Entrepreneurs Society in Orange, Massachusetts, where I had previously worked. I then wrote a simple business plan for the "I Love Literacy" Fresh Flower Fundraiser (FFF) using the basic format. After I had the plan written down, I decided that through a series of workshops, the STEPS (Supporting Transitions to Educational and Professional Success) program at Charboneau could create a model work environment for the students and offer the potential to raise a lot of money for the Literacy Project, the sponsoring agency for the STEPS program. Students could gain work experience transferable to a resume.

I was allowed to introduce the idea of a Fresh Flower Fundraiser to the GED and ABE learners. The main goal of the project was to purchase flowers from a wholesale flower shop and resell them at retail prices at three locations around Greenfield on Valentine's Day, 2005. The Learning Center made an initial investment of \$400.00 to get us started, knowing we would make a significant profit, and we pre-sold flower bouquets before the big event

to generate more cash. We then planned a delivery schedule. The students decided to do research on competitive prices and priced the flowers high, because seasonality allowed market competition.

Since the students and staff both seemed excited and energetic about the idea, I shared some basic business

knowledge with them. The four major components of a business are production, marketing, finance, and customer service. We discussed models of business and finance, including profit and loss statements, cost of goods, profit margins, and break-even analysis. I then went on to explain the job qualifications and the steps involved in taking part in the awesome project, as they called it. I asked them to submit a cover letter

expressing their interest in the project along with their resume if they were interested. I also required everyone to attend a mandatory "employee" meeting.

The mandatory meeting was one of three workshops given in preparation for the FFF project. We invited a human resources manager from a local temporary agency to speak about what employers want from employees. She offered student the same insight she offers her staff when they are looking to be hired permanently from the agency.

Students asked questions, and we even had a student video tape the workshop. A few other students expressed interest in editing video and offered to take the video to the local television station for production.

I started to advertise for a resume-writing workshop. I spent about two weeks meeting with students to review and revise resumes. After their resumes were completed, they started asking me about cover letters. I held another workshop to address their concerns. In all, nine students finished their resumes and submitted them, along with their cover letters, for review and consideration in taking part in this event.

I contacted everyone who was interested in working on this project and asked them to schedule an interview with me; another opportunity arose to deliver an interviewing workshop. We discussed the dos and don'ts of interviewing

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and explored suitable reactions to tough questions. We practiced being confident and how to smile. We greeted each other with firm handshakes and talked about appropriate attire. I then interviewed each student, as his or her individual classmates watched on, for a position on the FFF team. I asked everyone to help with the project and gave them a timeline.

Each person was interested in doing different tasks to help with the project. Some made signs to advertise to other students and staff at the center, to post around town, and to use as human billboards. Students stood out in the streets to lure people into stopping to smell the flowers, if not to also purchase them. Another contacted the media to advertise the event, and another made the financial sheets and sales tracking sheets. A few students got pre-orders for flowers from their family and

friends. One student went with me to pick up the flowers at the wholesale market and then a few more of them helped to pull thorns off the roses and assemble the bouquets. Other students set up at one of the three selling locations in our small town, Greenfield. The students used strategic planning in deciding their locations. Using high-traffic areas as places to solicit business sponsorship, students choose to sell on Federal Street, in front of Even Start, on Main Street near an overpriced competitor, and at a hair salon in a high traffic area.

Students took tables, chairs, balloons, buckets, water, signs, and the paperwork (sales tracking sheets) to each of the three selling locations. A few others sat around selling fresh flowers to men and women alike at each of the three locations. Students also helped with the breakdown of the flower stand and counted money.

The time came to deliver a financial statement to the class. We

invested about \$400.00 in the flower project and sold about \$1200.00 in goods! The students were so excited. For most of them, this project was their only experience working in production and customer service. They each got a choice of utilizing a business fundamental, and most took advantage of all they possibly could. I awarded each student a certificate of participation and provided a few others with achievement awards in specific categories.

This project was a successful way to integrate job readiness with fundraising opportunities in an adult education program. Students gained work skills, raised money, and had fun.

Amber Ortiz works as a youth transitions counselor at the Charboneau Learning Center, a program of the Literacy Project and at The Community Center at Leyden Woods in Greenfield, MA. She can be reached at <amber@literacyproject.org>

Workplace Education Resource

Writing From a Kindred Voice: The Workers Writing Project

The Association of Joint Labor/Management Educational Programs in New York City is sponsoring a three-year creative writing project highlighting workers' voices and promoting lifelong learning. With funding from the Nathan Cummings Foundation, the Association has created a curriculum and online teacher training Web site and has begun to implement writing workshops nationally. A cross-section of industries is represented, including telecommunication, health care, building maintenance, steel manufacturing, and transportation. For more information on this project, please go to <www.workplacelearning.org> or contact Regina Robinson at <regina@workplacelearning.org>. She can be reached at 212-318-6478. Shana Berg of SEIU Local 2020 facilitated one of the workshops in Boston. She will write about her experiences and include excerpts from student/worker writing in the winter 2005 issue of *Field Notes*. Watch for it!



Moving Safely in the Workplace

BY BARBARA REEDER

How our bodies move at work has an enormous impact on how we perform our job. Companies want workers to perform efficiently and accurately and have high expectations for each worker's productivity. However, movements on the job can put every worker at risk for injury. Whether it is walking miles each day; standing long periods of time in one place; climbing stairs; bending to lift fifty to seventy pound boxes; pulling a power jack for eight hours, or repeating the same actions with hands, wrists, or fingers forty hours a week, the worker needs to understand how to move safely to avoid injury. Moving the body safely needs to be taught. ESOL classes in the workplace can give teachers opportunities for teaching safe movements in the context of teaching English.

As an ESOL teacher at the Marshall's distribution Center in Woburn, Massachusetts, I draw from my background as an expressive therapist and yoga teacher to incorporate techniques for safe movement, rhythm, and relaxation. Healthy, injury-free, relaxed workers can also lead to increased productivity for companies.

Safe Movement

In my class, I identify the parts of the body that are used in a particular movement that students do on the job, such as lifting heavy boxes. Then, I have students stand. Just like "Simon Says," I call out "touch your" and name a body part (e.g., elbow) for them to point to. I then point to my own body and have them call out the name. For

reinforcement, I have students become the teacher and play the same game, allowing them the use of cue cards if necessary.

After using pictures to illustrate action verbs such as pulling, twisting, bending, lifting, carrying, and pushing, I have students take turns in the front of the room holding up a sign with one verb on it. Students in the rest of the class say and do the action. Then students in the front do the action and the class calls it out. I make use of



Bhagavati is kneeling.

props such as a large empty packing box with fifty pounds written on it.

Next, I demonstrate how to lift the box (with the back straight and knees bent); how to carry it (close to body, elbows bent), and how to reach for it (turn feet in the direction of the reach and stretch arm from shoulder, bending from hip with back straight). Again, I reinforce this by letting the students act as teacher. One student can

demonstrate and another student can critique, then switch roles. Most importantly, workers need to know that the back should be straight for nearly all actions.

I then encourage students to take pictures of each other doing the actions safely. These pictures can later be made into a poster for the classroom wall as a reminder of safe movement.

Rhythm

Moving the body with a sense of centeredness is not natural for all people. Going right and left quickly with hands and feet can feel awkward and off-balance at times. Thus, doing actions with rhythm in the classroom can be helpful. Music isn't needed but if used it should have a strong, steady beat to match the timing of the actions. Often a count of eight makes the moving easy. For example, four beats right, four beats left. Humming a simple tune can provide the tempo you want; clapping your hands on the eighth beat adds a strong sense of rhythm, too.

I usually demonstrate a variety of actions, such as "step right, step left." Then, I add actions. "Two steps right, two steps left. Bend your knees, walk in place, lift your right knee, your left knee, again." Adding more actions at a quick pace can get the class moving and laughing and add to the fun. Students can also become the leader for this kind of activity. To promote safe movement, I always have the left and right sides move the same number of times so the movement will be balanced. By

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encouraging students to clap with the leader and using arm, wrist, and hand actions as well as the legs and feet, students will be more aware of their joints and how to move their legs and arms safely.

Relaxation

The third lesson I teach is how to relax. When students come to class and sit, they often feel tired and can even doze off. Muscles become tense when on the job. Tense muscles can cause specific or generalized pain and headaches that can lead to time-off, medication, and expensive therapy.

I teach relaxation techniques that can be done easily on the job or at home. Learning how to let the muscles relax results in increased blood circulation throughout the body; this can lead to pain reduction. Relaxation also prevents muscles from becoming so tight that they cannot relax during the off-hours.

There are simple exercises that can be taught in class that require little verbalizing and some great results. For example, I join the class by sitting with a straight back, feet on the floor, with hands relaxed in the lap. I make my breathing become slower and exaggerated, I then say "breathe in, breathe out" several times. Next, I lift my shoulders when saying

"breathe in" and lower the shoulders when saying "breathe out." Sometimes I say "ah-ha" when exhaling and let students feel free to do so also. Having students close their eyes and dimming the lights can create a quiet mood. Initially students may be ill at ease with these approaches, so a teacher can do an exercise briefly at first, then extend the time as the session progresses. If students are lethargic or extremely high energy, breathing slowly can help them to refocus.

Shoulder circles help to engage the neck muscles. Rotations can be done simultaneously or one shoulder at a time, with four forward and four backward. Neck stretches are next. The right ear goes toward the right shoulder as far as possible, holding the position. Don't forget to breathe, then bring the head upright and slowly have the left ear go toward the left shoulder. Hold, breathe, bring head upright, and hold.

Following this, the teacher can model another stretch where the chin comes down to the chest and held, then slowly comes back up. Then the head is turned to right side and held. After a breath, the same sequence is repeated on left side. After a moment, I usually give the class a warning that the lights will come back on. It's amazing to see the results of these actions. I encourage students to do these techniques at home and on break.



Kong is carrying.

When done regularly, it makes a world of difference.

Companies spend millions of dollars to design ways to have the workers increase their productivity and remain safe. Body awareness and knowledge of proper techniques to perform the job are priceless. Even if ESOL teachers do not have a background in movement, they can learn a few basic strategies to incorporate into the classroom to promote healthy movement and relaxation for their students while also teaching English. Both the company and the worker accomplish their goals and feel good.

Barbara Reeder is an ESOL teacher at Marshalls Distribution Center in Woburn, Massachusetts. She has a background in expressive therapies and Kripalu yoga. She can be reached at <barbara_reeder@tjx.com >

Workplace Education Resource

Barbara Reeder is available to give workshops to adult education programs on proper workplace movements and relaxation techniques. Don't miss her workshop at the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE), Annual Conference, Network 2005, in Marlborough, MA, where she will be demonstrating the techniques discussed in her article. For more information, contact MCAE at 800-339-2498 or contact Barbara directly.

News From ACLS on Workforce Development

BY ANDREA PERRAULT

The Massachusetts Department of Education, Adult and Community Learning Services (ACLS) collaborates with the state's workforce development system to build connections that benefit our students in their quest to meet their employment-related goals. Over 60 percent of adults enrolled in ABE and ESOL programs are working, and many who are not employed are

improve their lives. ACLS activities with a workforce development focus include the following:

◆ **Collaboration with One-Stop Career Centers:** ACLS partners with Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIBs) to support collaboration between ABE providers and career centers (Under WIA, adult education is a mandated partner of career centers in the workforce

development involvement and strategies through the five-year grant cycle: ACLS directs 12 percent of the regional funding for ABE programs through the regional workforce system. This, along with our joint monitoring of ABE programs during the five-year funding period, is intended to continue the collaboration that began through the joint review of ABE grant awards in each region. In FY'05, the RFP prioritized integration or coordination with workforce development. Programs might propose to integrate services with an occupational training provider or a career center, coordinate services with a workforce development agency/entity, or integrate work readiness concepts into the ABE/ESOL classroom.

◆ **Workplace Education:** ACLS funds ABE providers to offer workplace education programs at the work site. All workplace education programs result from successful planning grants. The planning process allows providers to confer with the business and union (if there is a union) and to assess the needs of workers for basic skill development classes. It also allows for the assessment of employers' readiness to support that effort. Implementation grants fund classes held at or near the workplace that are contextualized with industry/workplace content. Businesses represent a variety of industry sectors, including manufacturing, education, retail distribution, hospitality, health/elder care, maintenance, and food service.

◆ **SABES' Work-force**

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 formalized the connection of ABE and workforce development ...

looking for work. The correlation between educational level and the ability to get and keep a job is high, as documented by a recent study published by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University. A GED no longer guarantees access to employment with family-sustaining wages. Many ABE students work in entry-level jobs and often hold more than one job to meet expenses. Building basic academic skills is critical for them to achieve their goals of gaining and retaining employment. When ABE and workforce development services are integrated or coordinated, students are likely to get ahead more quickly. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 formalized the connection of ABE and workforce development, and in FY '06, activities sponsored by ACLS will continue and expand that connection because we understand the importance this relationship holds for our students' ability to

system). Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) exist between DOE and the sixteen workforce development regions. The MOU identifies the areas where our systems overlap as intake, assessment, and referral. Out-stationed ABE staff (local ABE program teachers or counselors) work in One-Stop Career Centers to help center clients who need basic skill development to improve their prospects for employment. Out-stationing is offered in 12 of the 16 workforce development regions. ACLS funds ABE programs for this part-time position.

◆ **Appointments to LWIBs:** ACLS works with workforce board directors to appoint representatives of ABE to the WIB Boards, ensuring that ABE has a seat at the table on local workforce development policy-making bodies (as WIA legislation specifies).

◆ **Leveraging workforce**

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Development Focus: ACLS funds SABES and the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable to address workforce development and workplace education by providing professional development opportunities for ABE practitioners. Each SABES center has staff dedicated to this priority area.

◆ **Pilot projects and policy**

Groups: From 2002 to 2005, ACLS participated in the development and funding of pilot projects through interagency collaboration with the Department of Workforce Development, Commonwealth Corporation, the Division of Career Services (then DET) and the Department of Transitional Services. Building Essential Skills through Training (BEST) offered two separate design models: one targeted to incumbent workers to build their basic academic and occupational skills; the other (BEST: Older Youth) targeted the vulnerable older youth population (18–24) with innovative projects to improve participants’ basic academic skills, to develop occupational skills and career awareness, and to assist them in getting jobs in the field that the project addressed. Collaboration in each project relied on the involvement of business, unions, career centers, and education and training providers. Other grants are now offered as the Bay State Works initiative.

◆ **Reach Higher**

and Pathways to Success by 21 :

These are newer statewide policy initiatives managed by Commonwealth Corporation in which ACLS is active. Reach Higher, which includes representatives of ACLS in its advisory team, aims to improve access to community colleges for incumbent workers and to develop more certificate programs in high growth industry areas at the community colleges. The goal of Pathways to Success by 21 is to improve opportunities for vulnerable youth aged 16 to 21 to access education, counseling, job training, and employment.

The link between education and employment is often so critical to the motivation of ABE and ESOL students to succeed. To help students meet the goals they set for themselves, the Department of Education is committed to sup-

porting them by continuing to develop strategic approaches to link the ABE and workforce development systems. For more information, contact Andrea Perrault, workforce development specialist at ACLS at 781-338-3852.

¹ Sum, A., Khatiwada, I., Palma, S. (2004). *Recent Trends in the Levels Distribution and Adequacy of the Annual Earnings of Massachusetts Workers: Implications for the Boston Workforce Development Initiative*. Boston: Northeastern University, pages 9–14

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Why Career Ladders Matter

Career Ladders—systems of support for workers—offer pathways, structures, training, and skill building to advance in employment. They are particularly important for Massachusetts, where immigrants, the only source of growth in the state’s labor force, need skills building and support to advance on the job.

Career ladders offer the following:

- ◆ A source of mobility for lower-skilled workers;
- ◆ A chance for workers to improve wages —job centered training offers more growth than basic skills training alone;
- ◆ A chance to overcome isolation between community and work-based education and training;
- ◆ Greater incentive through chance of advancement;
- ◆ A link ABE to colleges and credential paths

From: *Career Ladders in the Massachusetts Long-Term Care Sector: Building the Bottom Rung and Beyond* Randall Wilson, Jobs for the Future, UMass ABE Conference, June 2005.

The Workforce Development Landscape

BY LAURIE SHERIDAN, WITH INPUT FROM DEBORAH SCHWARTZ

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is the name for the federal law passed in 1998 that established a new national workforce development system. WIA, which went into effect as national policy in 2000, governs much of the federally funded workforce development system. It also provides title I money for ABE funding. Prior to WIA, policymakers and other stakeholders in workforce development suggested that the national patchwork of workforce development policies and programs had been largely ineffective in preparing workers and students for the needs of the current economy and employers.

WIA was passed around the same time as welfare reform (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF) legislation was passed, and together they have governed much of the Bush administration's "work first" policies. The crafting and implementation of WIA represented a total revamping of the federally funded workforce development system, bringing it more into line with employers' needs and making it more demand-driven. In addition to a reduction in overall funding for public-funded job training, the following components of WIA illustrate some of the profound changes in the workforce development system in recent years.

Connection to ABE

In part, workforce development and adult basic education (ABE) are currently funded under one piece of federal legislation though ABE maintains its own title. The Workforce Investment

WIA, in concert with the Welfare Reform Act (the Personal Responsibility Act and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act) of 1996, restructured the way in which the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, and the U.S.

was officially born and ABE was uniquely positioned to work within it. For instance, it is increasingly recognized that a variety of "wrap-around" services are needed in order for workers with low skills, low literacy, little work experience, low income, and/or entry-level jobs

The crafting and implementation of WIA represented a total revamping of the federally funded workforce development system, bringing it more into line with employers' needs and making it more demand-driven.

Department of Education serve the nation's neediest individuals, families, and communities. In effect, this legislation created a new level of federal interdepartmental scaffolding meant to rearticulate the government's response to poverty and to the impact of poverty on individuals, families and communities. In addition to supporting low-literacy adults, native and non-native speakers alike, in their attempts to gain the skills necessary to function in the workplace and in their roles as family and community members, the new legislation mandated that programming for the nation's neediest would focus on job placement and the importance of personal responsibility and initiative. Proficiency in language was seen as a means to an ends.

For better and/or for worse, the field of workforce development

to be able to move toward "family economic self-sufficiency." Along with child care, transportation, a variety of counseling and advocacy services, and support while transitioning into jobs and for quite some time afterwards, adult literacy and ongoing learning are frequently needed in order not only to enter a job, but to stay there, succeed, and even advance up the employment ladder. Otherwise, workers frequently get "stuck" in a cycle of entry-level, low-paid jobs, rotating through a series of entry-level positions but unable to advance or to move towards family-sustaining wages. In other words, our ABE programs assist learners in acquiring many of the skills needed in the workplace—not only literacy, but also the "soft skills" and interpersonal skills needed.

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Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and the Role of Employers

WIA replaced existing regional employment boards (REBs) with locally appointed (WIBs) driven by employers/businesses. Though each WIB does include representation by labor unions, community anti-poverty (CAP) agencies, and an ABE representative appointed by the Department of Education, employers are mandated to represent over 50 per cent of local WIB boards. Each WIB sets local workforce development policy, governs use of local WIA funding, and provides funding for local job training and other workforce development programs.

One-Stop Career Centers

WIA universalized a new system of One-Stop Career Centers, which Massachusetts had recently developed, and which comprise either public entities, non-profit organizations, or a collaboration of the two. These centers replace the former unemployment offices with a new, more "modern" and convenient privatized networks of agencies. The One-Stop Career Centers collaborate in some areas with ABE and ESOL programs, and in several areas of the state have an ABE staff person "out-stationed" at scheduled times to make referrals to ABE/ESOL programs. Career Center staff assesses clients' language and literacy levels and needs. If the clients' language and literacy levels are not high enough to meet job requirements, they are referred to ABE or ESOL programs and often start on waiting lists. In addition, there are now huge disincen-

tives for the Career Centers to serve low-literacy or low-skilled clients, those with limited English abilities, or those with little formal work experience. This population includes, as we know, many immigrants, those without a GED, and those leaving welfare, among others. To their credit, many Career Center staff are conscientious, caring, and sensitive to the needs of these clients. However, all Career Centers are now currently under resourced and understaffed, and cannot typically provide all the services and assistance that clients need. Thus, WIA has shifted the workforce development system away from serving low-income, low-literacy, or low-skilled clients—the typical ABE/ESOL population. And with declining level of funding for WIA, this shift will only become more pronounced.

Universal Services

In addition, WIA instituted a new mandate for universal services: workforce development services, including job training, counseling, job referrals, and placement must be provided to everyone regardless of income. Given decreased funding for workforce development, of course universalizing services means decreasing access for low- and even middle-income clients to services, since existing dollars must be spread thinner.

Individual Training Accounts

Prior to WIA, local job training programs received contracts to provide workforce development services. These contracts have been replaced with a voucher type system called Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). These accounts provide "consumer choice"; eligible workers can use the vouchers at

any qualified programs they choose.

Successful Outcomes

The outcomes measurement system for WIA, including Career Centers and WIA-funded job training programs, are entirely based on successful job placements and, typically, a 90-day job retention after hire. Career Centers' successful performance and future funding is entirely based on placing clients directly in jobs where they can succeed at least for a time. Therefore, there is strong pressure to "cream," that is, to serve those clients who are easiest to place in jobs, and to avoid those with fewer skills or little job history. To their credit, many Career Centers manage to find additional funding sources or partnerships that enable them to serve low-literacy, low-skill, or little-work-history clients as much as possible, but often this is despite WIA, not because of it.

Labor Exchange

WIA is responsible for both "labor exchange" (matching workers up with employers) and labor market improvement (job skills training and job readiness). WIA also funds and regulates job training—the labor market end of workforce development. While labor exchange attempts to match workers with employers, labor market efforts aim to increase the skills and qualifications of the workforce itself. WIA does both.

Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development

In Massachusetts, most of the workforce development system is now placed under the Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development (DWD). This has

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actually been reorganized twice since WIA was instituted. Different workforce development functions are currently divided among the Commonwealth Corporation, the Division of Career Services (DCS), and the Division of Unemployment Insurance (DUI). These are described in more detail below. In addition to public funding, SkillWorks, a collaboration of private foundations spearheaded by the Boston Foundation, to date has raised \$13 million to fund a workforce development initiative focusing on Boston residents. It includes three components: The Capacity-Building Initiative, the Workforce Solutions Group, and Career Ladder Partnerships.

How Can ABE/ESOL Programs Utilize the Workforce Development System and Its Funding?

There are many opportunities for ABE programs to use the workforce development system to benefit their students. Most collaborations or partnerships with workforce development require partnership with an employer or employers, and in many cases the employer is the lead partner and must be the applicant. It is important for ABE programs to be "at the table" in partnerships with employers and/or the workforce development system or job training CBOs to ensure that educationally solid programs and curricula are developed.

What's Around the Bend?

The state budget may soon include additional funding from the Economic Stimulus package, proposed by Governor Romney and modified by the legislature, including \$8 million in additional funding for ABE. It incorporates many of the provisions of the Workforce Solutions Act, proposed by the Workforce Solutions Group (funded by SkillsWorks), which includes a workforce development skills fund. Despite some of the constraints of WIS, ABE and ESOL programs can still be active players in the workforce development arena. It's crucial to become a partner early in the process so that a project is developed that takes adequately into account, for example, the amount of time it typically would take an employee to learn sufficient English. Local WIBs are responsible for knowing the CBOs and ABE/ESOL programs in their area, but this knowledge may not be complete, and it's not usually their priority. So, it's important to get your program known to the WIB as well as to employers. It's also a good idea to develop a relationship with the local Career Center(s), too. All these relationships and channels will enable you help your students better learn skills and become more employable, and move toward jobs that can help support themselves and their families.



- ◆ WIB is represented by at least 51% private sector reps.
- ◆ At least one union representative must be included in the WIBs as mandated by the Department of Education.
- ◆ The WIBs/Mayor charter the One-Stop Career Centers (OSCCs).
- ◆ WIBs and OSCCs build partnerships with other entities in their region.

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Air Waves Make Waves: A Radio Show for Workers' Voices

BY DARIA FISK

Imagine yourself as a janitor at the University of Massachusetts — a seat of learning, heady verbal exchanges, and written words. You punch in at 5 p.m. in the basement of your assigned building, exchange a few words with coworkers or your supervisor, then pad off to solitary work, mopping, vacuuming, sweeping. You take a short break in the middle of the night, maybe with a coworker or two, then punch out again at 1 a.m. and head home.

You may have even come here originally hoping for a step into the world of education and opportunity. But here you are, part of the all-too-invisible work force that keeps the larger institution running. Not part of the dialogue or the lively intellectual interchange that most people think of when they think of a university.

The Power of Radio

But radio is a way in. Radio—listening to it and speaking your mind on it—welcomes you even if you don't have significant literacy skills. If you can talk and enjoy it, you can do radio. Even if you're shy about talking, radio can encourage you, so pretty soon you might find yourself actively saying what you think and asking probing questions. Before you know it, you're part of the larger dialogue and host of issues swirling around the campus. And you're working hard with others to air programs that interest you, all the while gaining important and transferable communication,

teamwork, and organizing skills, and making a quantum leap in self-esteem. Because we believed in the power of radio, The Labor/Management Workplace Education Program at UMass, Amherst, decided to launch a radio project for workers.

UpFront: Our Worker Radio Project

Spurred on by success with leadership, communication, and diversity classes, the Labor/Management Workplace Education Program started its worker radio show in 1996. The show focused on social justice and diversity issues from a worker's perspective, aired through the student/community campus radio station WMUA. We've been airing a weekly half-hour show, *UpFront*, ever since, coordinated by our program and put together by frontline workers on campus: janitors, clerical staff, and dining service employees, all members of AFSCME local 1776, USA/MTA, or SEIU,* the three

labor unions that have collaborated to ensure that educational opportunities are available to their members through our program. Each semester a small crew signs up, some former radio team members and some new, and with paid release time from their work, the team meets to plan and execute the show.

Topics on the show cover a wide range and include the following: looking at what the university is doing about racism; how racism plays out in the workforce; classism and how it's experienced as a frontline worker; violence against women and how to prevent it; and homophobia. Sometimes the show highlights the life and accomplishments of frontline workers, interviewing a person who is a janitor by night and an artist by day, or a truck driver by day and a writer at night. One object is to debunk the stereotype of the frontline state worker, mindlessly using his or her muscle by day and vegging out in front of the TV at night. Sometimes workers taking our classes in writing or English language come on the air to talk about their accomplishments and challenges. This encourages others to venture forth with their own learning and to offer the campus and larger listening audience a window into the fuller lives and experiences of frontline workers. In the words of *UpFront* team member Tom Dworkin, "Maybe hearing us on the radio will give people a little more respect for state workers. Maybe they'll realize we do have

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thoughts and things to say and we're not just mindless robots."

Building Confidence

Radio builds bridges and crosses barriers. Suddenly front-line workers find themselves face-to-face with professors, legislators, and chancellors, engaging them in dialogue about things that really matter to them. Workers come to realize that even people with grand titles and significant power are actually approachable, and they can dialogue with the "suits" as well as anyone. Sometimes we invite community leaders involved in critical struggles to come on the air.

The setting for the show is intimate, and we work to make it feel relaxed, but everyone knows the stakes are high.

Five or ten minutes before air time the team members and invited guests are chatting amiably and exploring the topic at hand, but then when it's one or two minutes to air time, then thirty seconds, suddenly the team members are sitting on the edge of their chairs, backs straight, focused, the air is still, quiet, ready. As food service employee Francisco Segura, noted, "You really concentrate and think about what you are saying and how you are saying it, because now you're on the radio, and everyone is listening, and you really want it to be right."

One of our hopes with radio is that learning becomes more real and has real world consequences outside of the classroom. Our goal is to let learning happen where there are real consequences

involved, where the stakes are high, and where excitement and involvement build as a result. Francisco came back from a recent broadcast to report that he alerted his co-workers in dining services to our last broadcast. They were spellbound and later started offering their own ideas more freely about the issue. Now they tune in every time.

Powerful Shows

One example of a show that really got people's attention was an

Workplace Education Resource

UpFront airs on WMUA, 91.1 FM and live on the Web at <www.wmua.org> every Wednesday from 6-6:30 p.m. from September through May. Daria welcomes your thoughts and can be reached at <dfisk@educ.umass.edu> or 413- 545-1471.

interview with a student from Georgetown University who was engaged in a hunger strike. He went on strike to support a living wage for the lowest paid worker in the Georgetown University workforce, and he won! On another occasion, janitors talked about how they were treated as invisible on campus and how that made them feel. They made suggestions for what people could do to acknowledge each other as human beings. That got people thinking and even acting differently.

Building Skills Through Radio

We also burn CDs of the shows for a few pennies each; this allows us to review ourselves as we work, to improve the shows, and to distribute them beyond the live

broadcast. Participants in the show develop a number of important skills as they organize and produce the radio shows as a team. Timing matters enormously. A 6 p.m. show airs at 6 p.m., not 6:01 or 6:03. It ends at 6:30, not 6:32. Paying careful attention to each other during a show is critical, noting who might wish to speak when, urging the guest to go deeper into a topic, finding the words yourself, and the courage, to say what's really on your mind. There's the challenge of letting the passion you feel for something show. Before the show, there's lining up the guests and topics and ensuring that people know when and where to come. And there's having a back-up plan, always. Team members need to figure out what to do if a guest is late or never makes it. Above all, team members learn to develop confidence and poise to stay focused and unflappable, no matter what goes wrong, so listeners would think that it was all smooth sailing from start to finish. No one can argue that these are transferable skills that can help in work and life!

What difference has doing radio made for team members involved? Several went for the promotions they'd been considering for years but hadn't moved on, and they succeeded. Some launched whole new careers in another field, like the prep cook who went back to school to become a special ed teacher, got straight A's, and now works with seventh graders in Springfield. One's hoping to become a DJ on retirement.

UMass custodian Joel Gomarilo spoke about his radio involvement at last year's Association of Labor/Management Education Programs

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Annual Conference in New York. Standing before the group of mostly white collar conferees, he remarked, "You know, normally I wouldn't think of talking to people like you, you know, suits and all. But I think radio showed me, that, hey, we're all just people. And you're all right. It's given me the confidence not to be afraid to say what I think and to listen to what other people have to say as well. And hey, I'm up here aren't I, and I've come here to New York City to be with you all, and I think that's a good thing. I may be a janitor, but that's not all I am."

Maybe there's a community station or college station somewhere nearby that your program could hook up with. It's amazing how willing people who already know radio are to share their skills. We started knowing nothing and the students at the UMass radio station, WMUA, just took us under their wonderfully skilled wings. We've been off flying ever since.

*American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; University Staff Association/Mass. Teachers Association; Service Employees International Union.

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Partnering ...

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Subsequent Classes

The instructor designs the contextualized curriculum and pre- and post-test assessment with nine more discreet units. The instructor first post-tests and reviews the previous week's targeted language. This gives the worker/students immediate feedback on how well they have learned the language during the week. They compare the post-test to the pre-test scores. They become very confident and motivated with the learning success of the specific language. The teacher then pre-tests and teaches the next unit. *Active Learning: ESOL Communication Training Guides* used as the model. (See citation below.)

After Each Class

After each class the instructor gives the new targeted language that has been taught to the department. This is posted. The participants are expected to practice the language with their managers, supervisors, and coworkers between classes. The managers and supervisors are required to reinforce the vocabulary and language patterns intentionally. This is the active verb—partnering—at work.

Last Class

The bilingual staff member conducts a program assessment, asking workers and supervisors: "What difference have these classes made for you and the business?" "What more is needed?" "How can we improve future classes?" A celebration, acknowledgement, and/or bonuses are a great way to wrap things up.

A partnering model works because it combines the best of education methods with the best of training principles. It develops a collaborative work environment. It creates a positive and supportive atmosphere. It empowers and energizes both the business and the workers. Everyone benefits. So, it *can* be done. It *has* been done. I invite you to do some partnering, too.

*Christine Polk is the workplace coordinator for the South Berkshire Educational Collaborative. She has recently been given a 2005 Literacy Champion Award by the Mass- Massachusetts Literacy Foundation. She can be reached at <CRSPOLK@aol.com>. Christine is also the author of *Hospitality Curriculum and Active Learning: ESOL Communication Training Guide*, by Christine Polk. It is available in each of the SABES regional resource centers and has a wealth of interactive teaching activities with built-in assessments.*

Workplace Education Resource

Don't forget about films, videos, and DVDs when teaching work-related language and literacy. Some movies teachers have recommended include *Roger and Me*, *Silkwood*, *Matewan*, *Blue Collar*, *Norma Rae*, *Modern Times*, *Nine to Five*, *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, *Swing Shift*, *On the Waterfront*, *Clockwatchers*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *Working Girl*. The ALRI has movies and documentaries about work and will lend them to teachers. Call Sandra Darling at 617-287-4074.

After Workplace Education: Linda Cain's Story

TOLD BY LINDA CAIN, CONTRIBUTED BY MARGARET ANDERSON

Linda Cain, 66, took classes with The Literacy Project in the late 1980s, through a grant which funded GED classes at the Erving Paper Mill. After receiving her GED, she served as a tutor, fundraiser, and a member of the Board of Directors. She has lived in Orange, Massachusetts, since 1959, after growing up in a small town in southern Vermont. Here she reflects on work, family, and changes she has seen in her community.

When I was growing up we had eight grades in one room, [in South Newfane, Vermont]. I was the oldest in my class. So I always got to do costumes and things like that, for holidays. That's how I learned to sew. I still sew. I DON'T make my own clothes anymore but I used to. And I used to make all the girls' clothes.

I had one sister and four brothers. We rode in the mail truck, in the back of a pickup truck, to school. In the winter, he used to throw canvas up around the back. It was COLD! I didn't go to high school. We lived too far out, in East Dover. It's about 35 miles the other side of Brattleboro. And the high school was in Brattleboro. There was no bus or anything. So, we couldn't do that.

[We just had] a little country store. When you needed a pair of shoes, the man at the general store would draw around your foot. And take the copy into Brattleboro and get you a pair of shoes. That's the only way we ever got shoes.

There were no jobs there. It was more farms. Gardens. Farms. And then lumber. My mother didn't ever work. My father worked in saw mills. And then in later years he went into Connecticut and he worked at a state mental hospital down near all the farms. And he worked there for like, twenty-five years.

I moved here in the late fifties.



Linda Cain

Moved to Orange. Union Tool was here. So I went to work there for maybe three, four years. That was a tool shop, and I would grind tools. I don't remember what they looked like, but I remember the grinding wheels.

Then I got married. And we moved into a bigger apartment. Then, [my first daughter] was born. So, I went to work at night. At the mill. So that Bill would come home and I would leave. And we did that for, like, twenty years. And we bought a house on Brookside Road.

I worked thirty years in the paper mill. And I did a lot of differ-

ent jobs in there. Machines and placemats and napkins, and converting machines and packing machines and all that for thirty years. And I stayed there until they moved that [division of Erving Paper Mill] out. When I first went there, there was toilet paper and paper towels and everything. But by the time they left, there was just napkins. And then I was out for a year, when they closed.

And, I went down to what was Rule at that time, in South Deerfield. But it's Kennametal now. There was a tool shop. It's where my husband worked. And I worked there for ten years. And I didn't like that as well because it was heavy work. It was tools and saw blades and that kind of stuff. But, I did get my ten years in. Get my retirement.

When I went there, they had bought a shop in Virginia that they moved in. The new buyers were setting up this new factory, in the factory. Which was not too, too easy. Because the people that worked there already felt threatened. So there was a lot against us. But we did get it done. I kind of liked that setting-the-jobs-up year. Because it was something different. And you had to learn as you went.

In the paper mill, I guess I just liked moving around. Kind of not staying at one thing. Like, the supervisor would be out, so I'd take her job for the day. And the foreman was out, take his job for the day. You know, there were some days I could have done without, but that's mostly

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After Workplace Education ...

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people and personality things. You know? But there was nothing that was really bad.

When I was at the paper mill, fifteen years ago, [The Literacy Project] came in and gave a talk. I think, Jim Vaughan. And they came [in to offer classes to workers] I just thought, "Well, maybe it's time I went back and got my GED." Because everybody was talking about it. And there was maybe a half a dozen of us that started. And we studied, at the Usher Plant in Erving. Once a week. And only four of us finished, I think.

I enjoyed it VERY much. I enjoyed learning everything. Except math. I got my GED. And then I wanted to give back something. So I came back to the office [in Orange], and I worked there, for quite a while. I think I helped a lot of people.

I tutored. I tutored evenings. There was a lot of people. There was a lot of people that came. But, there was one guy that we taught to read and write. And he came in one night and thanked us all because he could

leave his wife a note when he left for work. And he thought THAT was really great. So that made us ALL feel good. And, then when I lost my job at the mill, I got a job in South Deerfield. But that was seven days a week. I couldn't do both. So I had to stop.

I was on the board for a while. We did read-a-thons. Two or three years in a row. It was basically to get everybody to come in and read [to raise money]. And we'd set on the step all day and wait for people to show up! But, it worked out pretty good.

I have three girls. My girls all liked school. They'd do their homework blaring with the TV and I don't know how they did it. But they always came out with good marks. And they went to college. And they're doing all right. Although only one of them is doing what she went to college for. That's the teacher, the middle one. But they're doing what they want to do.

The whole way of living is different than when I was younger. We used to walk everywhere. You know, everything was in walking distance.

But now, nothing.. Nothing seems to be in walking distance. You have to travel for everything.

People that don't work in factories, they either have to travel or they have to work like, twenty hours at Cumberland Farms, and twenty hours someplace else. We need more industry. We need more, more jobs. We really do. Couple more stores. It would be nice if we had another supermarket, with Victory gone. It would be nice if they had a place where girls could work in the office. Some clean jobs. Some not dirty tool jobs. You know what I'm saying? Where they could set down at a desk and work and not have to stand on their feet eight hours a day.

[Now that I'm retired], I'm always busy. I don't know when I had time to work.

Margaret Anderson is the volunteer coordinator at the Literacy Project in Greenfield. She can be reached at <margaret@literacyproject.org>

Promising Practices

ABE and Workforce Development Programming

The Jamaica Plain Adult Learning Program has successfully partnered with Jobs for Jamaica Plain Program since 1998. Their collaborative goal is to increase the earning capacity of low-income residents of Jamaica Plain and surrounding neighborhoods by increasing their basic education, language, and job readiness skills. Jobs for Jamaica Plain provides one-on-one employment counseling, resume writing skills, referrals to employees, referrals to JPCC for ESOL and ABE classes, employment retention services, career advancement support, and mentorship. JPCC provides seven levels of ESOL, ABE through GED and EDP classes, tutoring, and computer classes. Their collaboration increases efficiency in delivery of services to residents, bringing together expertise instead of duplicating services. The partnership also allows for a holistic approach to addressing employment barriers, eliminates long waiting lists because of referrals, and expands support services. For more information, contact Linda Hamilton at .617-635-5201.

Note: This information was taken from a presentation by Karla Torrez and Linda Hamilton at the ALRI miniconference on Promising Practices in Integrating Workforce Development and ABE, June 10, 2005.

Creating Opportunities for Students in Bristol County

BY ANDREA PERRAULT AND THOMAS PERREIRA

Collaborations between the ABE and workforce development systems in Bristol County, Massachusetts help meet adult student goals of building skills, finding employment, and earning better wages. This region, including Fall River, Taunton, and Attleboro, now has opportunities for intensive instruction to help students access jobs more quickly.

What does this collaboration look like? Bristol Community College (BCC) uses Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) funds to offer intensive GED instruction; SER: Jobs for Progress provides intensive ABE/ESOL instruction with funding from the workforce development system. Both efforts are funded with money that comes through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998.

Pre-GED/GED: The Bristol County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and its Career Center operator, the Bristol County Training Consortium (BCTC), uses the DOE allocation of 12 percent of regional ABE funds through the workforce system to offer its intensive pre-GED and GED classes at BCC. According to Tom Mechem, the state's GED chief examiner, "One thing we know about GED students is that they want to earn their GED diplomas in the shortest possible time. That's what we want too, and the design of the Bristol program maximizes our chances of success. Experience has shown that a 20-hour-a-week GED program is the most successful in terms of both pace and intensity, and this in turn leads to a greater focus and commit-

ment on the part of the students. The results speak for themselves."

Many Career Center clients lack the necessary language and literacy skills to negotiate the rigors of today's job market successfully. Often, a job seeker wishing to enroll in occupational training programs lacks the basic skills required to participate in such training. Also, many Career Center job seekers receive unemployment benefits that require educational activities or training for at least 20 hours per week.

DOE-funded ABE classes typically meet six to nine hours per week, and programs in the region have waiting lists. The WIB and Career Centers wanted to find ways to meet the need for intensive basic skill development of the workforce. A partnership with BCC was instituted to provide an intensive, 20-hour per week pre-GED/GED class geared toward Career Center Job Seekers. Program features help students meet their employment goals in the following ways:

- ◆ Referrals come from the local Career Center.
- ◆ Close communication between the instructor and Career Center counselors monitors student progress.
- ◆ Program progress reports are shared between BCC and the Bristol WIB

BCC's pre-GED/GED program is now a critical and highly successful resource to its Career Center. In Fiscal Year 2004, class attendance was above 90 percent and 14 participants obtained their

GED. Students advanced to occupational training and certificate programs, and job seekers in the program are more marketable to area employers.

ABE/ESOL: The Bristol WIB and BCTC also increased ESOL and ABE services in the region in partnership with SER:Jobs for Progress. BCTC uses WIA Title I funds for intensive ESOL and ABE services in 20-hour per week, 6-month programs.

Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005 saw many dislocated workers in the Bristol region's manufacturing sector. For example, two Fall River companies, Main Street Textiles and Teleflex, closed, and over 700 workers lost jobs. As workers began to access the Fall River Career Center, they needed to upgrade their educational skills. Intensity of service was critically important for their progress. Using ITA and other grant monies, workers could go to SER Jobs for Progress, for intensive ABE and ESOL classes. With open enrollment, Career Center counselors have flexibility in meeting specific needs of job seekers. Paula Raposa, executive director of SER Jobs for Progress, Inc., attests to the success of this effort: "This grant has been one of my favorites throughout my 26-year career in employment training and education. I admire [the students'] desire to learn, their quest to update their educational level, their faith in the future and their ability to strive for a better education.

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Policy Expertise—You’ve Got It, We Need It

BY ALEX RISLEY SCHROEDER

Policy expertise: It probably isn’t in your job description. If it were, what would it say? “Must be current on all relevant state and federal policies that impact population our program serves.” Or “Needs to be fluent in policy, including, but not limited to, state and federal budgeting processes.” And yet, the way our programs run can be significantly influenced by policy, not just the amount of public money we’re awarded, but also whom we can serve, what services we can provide, and the outcomes that are desired.

There’s a world of public policy out there and too many things to do in classrooms and programs to necessarily know and track beyond the scope of our immediate concerns. State and federal budgets get our attention—especially the numbers. Is there an increase? A cut? But we all know there is more to policy than the budget.

The civic lesson of how a bill becomes law and the understanding that “all politics is local” (as Tip O’Neill said) are foundation concepts to understanding public policy as it affects our work. They are important, but equally important is seeing that policy is informed by actual experiences of what works and doesn’t. This is expertise you already have. You and the adult learners you teach have invaluable knowledge of how policy functions at the service delivery level—the person and program level. You know the barriers learners face in successfully preparing for and landing a job. You know, as one practitioner put it “that helping a learner get a job is easy compared to

helping them to retain it” You know that often learner’s choices are limited.

Grassroots Workforce Development Policy Advocacy in Massachusetts

The local workforce development scene within which your program offers services has many actors: community based organizations, One Stop Career Centers, community colleges, private for profit training schools, workforce investment boards, and associated councils (youth councils, adult literacy councils, skills training task forces, etc.). And in the course of your daily work, you may have a clear sense of how to fix policy that doesn’t work, fixes that would make services more effective for your learners. You probably see possibilities that aren’t fully realized in existing policies.

This perspective that you and your learners have about effectiveness and efficiency is under tapped in policy development and policy improvement. This knowledge is a powerful tool that can be used to help formulate and refine existing policy as well as shape new policies to address issues that are currently unseen or inadequately understood.

The Massachusetts Workforce Alliance (MWA)

MWA is a five-year-old coalition of 10 workforce development coalitions all sharing a conviction that workforce development services offered to low-income communities by community-based organizations are an essential

aspect of the state’s workforce development system. Think of MWA as a big tent. A policy tent that values both the individual policy concerns of the member coalitions as well as the common policy priorities that cut across coalition efforts and the populations served. This is a tent which serves as the rallying point for issues of importance to those within the tent. These 10 coalitions represent over 250 community-based and other organizations and many thousands of adult learners and job skills training participants.

The PEER Project

The PEER project is the grassroots policy advocacy effort of MWA. Fundamental to the PEER project is the recognition that in order to truly understand and help to shape policy, practitioners—teachers, counselors, program coordinators—need to know and value the expertise they have. They also need to come together across services to suggest appropriate changes in policy. The PEER project has two main components: PEER project training and PEER policy advocacy Web site.

Is There Room for Me and My Learners Under the Tent?

Yes, there’s room under the tent for you. The insight and perspective that working at the service delivery level provides workforce development practitioners is a powerful tool when it is used knowledgeably, strategically and responsibly to do advocacy. Policy advocacy is knowing the system and its landscape; having a detailed understanding of the

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Job Readiness for Public Housing Residents Through Computer Training

BY MATTHEW PUMA

The Continuing Education Institute/Creative Workplace Learning of Brighton, Massachusetts, has developed a successful employment readiness program in collaboration with the Resident Services Department of the Worcester Housing Authority. The program—designed for residents of public housing at the Great Brook Valley Housing Development who need skills to enhance their employability—has been running since 2002.

The participants are generally unemployed or underemployed, and many are Spanish speakers. Many students are in a transitional housing program that supports their move from homeless shelters to a stable residence and employment.

The intensive program offers 12 weeks of training, 20 hours per week, followed by a four-week supervised job internship. The program meets at a convenient location for the participants: the Great Brook Valley Homework Center equipped with 14 computers and classroom space.

The computer training covers Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint), Internet and email use, typing skills, Windows basics, and general computer knowledge. All of the computer training is integrated with transferable skill development structured by a weekly pattern of daily themes, which are illustrated below.

Monday: Organizational Skills

Planning skills, materials organization, and computer file organization are explored and practiced

through the use of Microsoft Windows file management, Word tables, Excel checklists, and Access databases. Students use multi-tab Excel workbooks to organize lists and checklists. The first of these is a personal endeavor with lists of exercises, healthy foods, and educational games. Starting with the content of everyday activities is an easy way to begin. Students introduce and demonstrate exercises as the group adds them to their lists. These basic lists are developed with additional columns that allow meaningful sorting by categories. For example, exercises are categorized by muscle groups and games by skills. This activity serves as preparation for both workplace applications of checklists and as an entryway into Access databases.

Tuesday: Language Arts

Writing activities are integrated with the use of Microsoft Word formatting techniques. Students do personal and creative writing using a process approach as well as business writing including letters, memos, and summary reports.

Wednesday: Mathematics

The math instruction is tightly linked to the use of Microsoft Excel applications.

Number concepts involving fractions, decimals, percents, and the use of variable equations for problem solving are emphasized. Real-life applications include budgets for home and office; analysis of nutrition information for fast foods and home cooking; break-

down of the cost of computer systems; recipe conversions with ratios, and planning the cost of a project.

Thursday: Arts and Design

PowerPoint and Word provide excellent contexts for practicing the principles of design. For example, I provided students with structured outlines of information about computers and other topics. Students then create PowerPoint presentations that make these lessons stimulating and visually interesting by adding clip art, photos, music clips, and special effects. Students share their interpretations with each other and the computer “tricks” they used to create them.

Friday Workplace Prep

Special guests discuss workplace themes including interviewing skills and practice; workplace comportment and dress for work; college education opportunities, and seed funding for small businesses.

Keys to Success

We can identify a few keys to the success of the program this year.

- ◆ Collaborative and comprehensive program design, including an advisory team of key participants;

- ◆ A strong support system, including a job counselor and integration of earning processes where computer activities and classroom content are mutually reinforced

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Job Readiness ...

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and mutually stimulating. For example, students use a chart on paper and calculators to derive the fraction, decimal, and percent for each color of M&M in a large bag. Then, they go to the computer, realize the chart in Excel, and make a graph of the data. Thus, the math skills are practiced in three forms— by pencil, with calculators, and with formulas in Excel.

◆ Integration of “professional” workplace skills with “personal” organizational skills. Making a database of favorite songs with information about the artists, musical categories, and years of recording puts a student into the position of collector and organizer. The same skills are then practiced in the design and maintenance of a database to organize the “mess” of marketing documents used by a small company or social service agency. The key activities of indexing, filing, naming, categorizing, searching, filtering, and reporting the information in useful formats are best developed using hobby information because the student is already an expert regarding the information that needs to be organized. Learning Access with unfamiliar information is doubly daunting. A great transitional database has been a list of 400 businesses in the Worcester area; this is useful for working with a larger database and for its utility.

◆ Methodology, including Collaborative work, group computer quizzes, and workplace simulation themes.

◆ Small business simulation, where workplace applications of Microsoft Office software are situated in a pretend small business: Dr. Pacifica Bellaguerra’s Conflict Resolution Workshops. Working from memos issued by the director,

students research the costs of computer equipment, office supplies, and monthly services using the Internet, a field trip to Staples, and telephone research. They create a budget for these costs in Excel. Then, they engage in the process of defining an administrative assistant



position and prepare Word documents needed to hire an employee. The “play” business offers a real context for many projects for exercising computer skills, such as designing a letterhead template in Word, creating a database of potential clients in Access, and preparing educational presentations that illustrate Dr. Bella guerra’s approach to conflict resolution in PowerPoint. Dr. Bellaguerra provides abundant direction initially, but encourages the student to negotiate with her regarding the form of projects that she commissions. This serves as a context for working with an employer and learning to engage in the process of developing the purpose and specifications of a project.

◆ Supportive community for open reflection, where the supportive community formed by the cohort, teachers, and job counselors promotes confidence for entering the world of work, especially for those without much work experience to cite on their resume.

◆ Emphasis on oppositional thinking, where the use of oppositions, paradoxes, and metaphors to

develop flexible thinking provides a unifying theme and a serious, yet playful educational spirit.

Examples for Oppositional Thinking.

Looking explicitly at charged oppositions opens up new ways to understand just about any situation. We used a simple chart format to look at oppositions in terms of their basic meaning and their extreme forms (e.g., good/evil, clean/messy, reason/emotion, male/female, work/play). We then looked for creative syntheses of what a balanced approach would look like. The clean/messy opposition was great for identifying how dysfunctional operating at the extremes of organization/disorganization can be. Students generated examples of people who represent the extremes, then considered personal ways to seek their own healthy balance along this dimension.

This approach to oppositional thinking found an application in themes deriving from a workshop on job interview skills and dressing for success in the workplace. One wants to look good, but not too sexy; one wants to let their personality show, but not divulge matters that are too personal. At the other extreme, one can come off as “too professional” or merely playing a role. Ultimately, the reality of obtaining and keeping employment has to involve a constructive synthesis of one’s personal and professional selves.

Matthew Pumais the CFO program director of Creative Workplace Learning. He has taught and developed curricula for ABE and college level classes for 20 years. He can be reached at < mopuma@charter.net >

Selected Workplace and Workforce Terms

Career Ladders: A system that offers support to workers to develop pathways, structures, training and support for workers to advance in employment.

Creaming: Refers to methods where workforce development programs select applicants most likely to show positive outcomes.

Dual Customer Model: This model is designed to achieve benefits (retention, improved performance, improved worker skills) for businesses as well as opportunities (employment, advancement, education, and training) for workers or potential workers.

Incumbent Workers: People who are already employed and may include recent hires as well as those who have been employed for some length of time.

Labor Market Information (LMI): Information about job openings and their education and skill requirements, job growth projections, and job loss in particular areas.

One Stop Career Centers: These centers, mandated under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), provide employers and workers with resources, information about job openings and available workers, and job search assistance at a single location. They replace state unemployment offices.

Release Time: Time off work provided to employees to participate in education or training. It may be paid or unpaid time.

SCANS: (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) Established in 1990, SCANS identifies five core competencies (resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems, and technology) and three foundations (basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities) necessary to succeed in the modern workplace.

Sector: A major industry (like health care, financial services, manufacturing) which shares many features in common. A sector can include many subsectors (like long-term care, clinics, doctor's offices, hospitals) or sub-industries.

Soft Skills: Nonoccupation or job specific skills that are needed for employment, such as teamwork, punctuality, following instructions, conflict resolution, leadership, negotiation, communication and listening, accepting feedback, showing respect in a diverse setting, and other nonquantifiable and non technical skills necessary for the workplace.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998: Federal legislation designed to coordinate and streamline all components of the nation's workforce development system, including employment, job training, education, and vocational rehabilitation services for youth (ages 14-21), adults, and dislocated workers.

Workforce Development: Can include both incumbent workers and those not working yet—includes ABE, GED, and ESL services designed to demonstrate a strong relationship between basic skills and the literacy requirements of a changing workplace; improves the foundation skills of adults entering the workforce and dislocated workers as they prepare for job training and employment or new occupations.

Workforce Investment Boards: Local government entities funded through WIA to supply needs of the local labor market, workforce, and employers. Each local board sets policy for for implementation of WIA in its local area.

Workplace/Worker Education: Education for workers, often offered at the worksite or union hall. Curriculum can be customized to a particular workplace, employer, union, or company-union partnership. Can include job specific vocabulary and text. Sometimes workplace education offered on-site is very similar to regular ABE/ESOL classes that are not necessarily job focused but offer the convenience of an on-site location for workers.

Wrap Around Services:

Services (like child care, transportation, and mental health support) that are not a part of training or education programs but may be needed to help people continue or advance on the job.

Definitions provided by Laurie Sheridan as well as from the following sources:"

Green, C., Griffen, S., & Sheridan, L. (2003). *Building Career Ladders for Low-Wage Workers: A "How-to" Manual for Workforce Development Practitioners and Partners*. Boston: Boston Workforce Development Coalition

Pennsylvania Workforce Education Resource Center <www.pawerc.org/foundationskills/cwp>

Creating Opportunities ...

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These programs in the Bristol region provide opportunities for adults to get the intensive ABE services they need to move ahead. Joint program efforts strengthen relationships between ABE providers and the workforce system in a region that has critical needs for greater capacity to serve adults in need of basic education.

Of course, the primary benefit goes to adult students who gain greater knowledge and skills in a shorter amount of time. This approach better ensures a fast track to get jobs that will support themselves and their families.

Andrea Perrault is the workforce development specialist at the Adult and Community Learning Services unit at the MA Department of Education. She can be reached at <aperrault@doe.mass.edu>.

Thomas Perreira is the manager of planning at the Bristol County Workforce Investment Board. He can be reached at tperreira@detma.org.

New Immigrants in the Massachusetts Workforce

On June 30, MassINC released a significant new report entitled, "The Changing Face of Massachusetts," which addresses the recent growth and role of new immigrants in the Massachusetts workforce. It has received major media publicity and should attract the attention of policymakers and the public to a large portion of the ABE/ESOL student population and our programs serving immigrants. You can download the report from <www.massinc.org/publications>. An executive summary, the full report, and a transcript of the June 30 event including remarks by Diana Portnoy of the Immigrant Learning Center, are available at that Web site.

From the Web site

<www.massinc.org/publications>

- ◆ The demographics of Massachusetts are changing rapidly. As of 2004, one in seven Massachusetts residents was born in another country.
- ◆ Over the last 25 years, the share of immigrants in our workforce has nearly doubled. Today, 17 percent of our workforce are immigrants—up from roughly 9 percent in 1980.
- ◆ Since 1980 the number of immigrants with limited English-speaking skills has increased from 17.5 percent to 21.5 percent. The ability to speak English proficiently has become a dividing line, separating those who succeed from those who struggle in the labor market.
- ◆ Immigrants with limited English skills are clustered in the state's larger cities. In some cities, such as Lawrence and New Bedford, a substantial portion of the city's overall population does not speak English at all or does not speak it well.
- ◆ As the state's future economic health is increasingly linked to the education and skills of immigrants, everyone has a stake in addressing the challenges uncovered in this research. The long-term civic and economic health of our state depends on our success in meeting these challenges.

I had this student who would always ...

The student who dominates the class. The students who won't sit next to one another during group work. Inter-ethnic conflicts in the classroom. An unusually quiet class. Have you encountered situations like this? What have you done about it? The next issue of *Field Notes* will focus on classroom climate and classroom management. We are looking for **very** short stories about how you have solved a classroom problem. No need to write a full length article. Use the questions below as a guideline and return your thoughts via email by October 30. Share your creative ideas and hear about your colleagues' experiences!

My classroom (ESOL, GED, ABE, etc)

My classroom management problem:

How I solved it (No more than 250 words)

Email to <lballiro@worlded.org>.

Policy Expertise ...

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interplay of policy makers and service delivery actors; having clarity and data about the disconnects, but also the successes of the way that the system is working on the ground for learners and program participants. Policy advocacy is being able to make a compelling, well-supported, argument for specific policy changes or policy development that will address a well-documented need. And, it is about making that argument to the person or agency best suited to support and/or implement change. It is also about volume and persuasion.

PEER Project Training

Through the PEER project training, MWA-trained community educators (all of whom are workforce development practitioners) work with groups of workforce development practitioners to identify policy issues, point to important changes, develop a strategic advocacy approach and implement it. The training is three sessions and offered at no cost to groups across the state. All of this done in the context of the big tent—policy issues identified in one region of the state are food for thought in another area, advocacy approaches of one group inform advocacy work of another. And through it all, the priorities are: bringing the expertise of the field to policy discussions; maintaining a commitment to meeting the workforce development needs of low-income communities and raising the roof of the big tent by working together on behalf of learners and their communities.

What's in It for You

What you'll get by participating is an understanding of the workforce development policy and advocacy

context, connection to other practitioners with shared priorities, and support to use your experience and expertise to make important changes. Specifically, you'll learn how to make compelling, well-supported arguments for policy change and you'll gain the tools to do it persuasively.

PEER Policy Advocacy Web site

To help raise the roof even more, MWA has launched a unique policy-in-the-making Web site: <<http://peer.mwapolicy.org>>. At this site, you can submit policy issues and suggestions for change that you and your learners have identified, and you can read what other workforce development practitioners have proposed. The more voices rallying under the tent, the more powerful we will be when we advocate together for policies that best serve our learners.

For more information about the PEER project training or to schedule an information session for your organization or local group, contact Alex Risley Schroeder through the contact information below. And, please, visit <http://peer.mwapolicy.org> often and add your perspective and expertise. It needs to be heard.

Alix Risely Schroeder is the west/central coordinator for the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance. She has worked in ABE and workforce development for more than 15 years. She can be reached by at <arisschroe@comcast.net> or 413-586-1683.

Member Coalitions of the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance

For complete information on each of these organizations, please go to: <<http://peer.mwapolicy.org/?id=12>>

The Alternative Education Alliance

Contact: Roger Oser, 617-782-7600 x2130, <rogero@crit.net>.

The Boston Workforce Development Coalition

Contact: Sandy Goodman, Executive Director, 617-357-6000 x7530.

The Job Training Alliance of Massachusetts:

Contact: Anne Meyerson, 617-542-1800 x 22 <ameyerson@traininginc.org>

The Massachusetts Alliance for Adult Literacy (MassAAL)

Contact: Ernest Best, 617-287-4077 <ebest@umb.edu>.

The Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations

Contact: Joe Kriesberg 617-426-0303, <joek@macdc.org>.

The Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education

Contact: Kenny Tamarkin, 617-482-9485, <ktamarkin@mcae.net>.

The Massachusetts Association for Community Action

Contact: Joe Diamond, 617-357-6086 <joediamond@masscap.org>.

The Massachusetts Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project

Contact: Sheelah Feinberg 617-536-5651 x107 <sfeinberg@weiu.org>

The Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable

Contact: Connie Nelson 617-983-3667, <connie_nelson@hotmail.com>.

The Massachusetts Youth-Build Coalition

Contact: Rebecca Rethore, 617-741-1259 <mainfo@youthbuild.org>.

Resources: Workplace Ed, Workforce Development, and Workers' Rights

AFL-CIO Working for America Institute (1999). *Worker-Centered Learning: A Union Guide to Basic Skills (revised edition)*. Washington, DC. Order from <www.wirkingforamerica.org/>.

AFL-CIO Working for America Institute (2004). *Getting to Work: A Report on How Workers With Limited English Skills Can Prepare for New Jobs*. Washington DC. Available in PDF format online at <www.workingforamerica.org/>

Auerbach, E & Wallerstein, N. (2004). *Problem Posing at Work: English for Action*. Edmonton, Alberta: Grass Roots Press. Order from <www.literacyservices.com/INDEX.htm>.

Balliro, Lenore (1988). *Workplays: You and Your Rights on the Job*. Video and workbook. Available from Workplace Education Program, Labor Education Center, UMass Dartmouth. Contact Lisa Jochim at <ljochim@umassd.edu> or <www.umassd.edu/workersed/>.

Belfiore, M. (1996). *Understanding Curriculum Development in the Workplace: A Resource for Educators*. Canada: ABC Canada Literacy Foundation. Available in PDF format online at <www.abc-canada.org/>.

Belfiore, M. and Burnaby, B. (1995). *Teaching English in the Workplace*. Toronto, Ontario: OISE Press. Order from <www.heinemann.com/shared/products/002031.asp>

Green, C., Griffen, S., & Sheridan, L. (2003). *Building Career Ladders for Low-Wage Workers: A "How-to" Manual for Workforce Development Practitioners and Partners*. Boston Workforce Development Coalition. Order a copy from <www.bostonworkforce.org/publications.htm> or download a PDF version.

Mar, W. and Webber, A. (2003). *Winning at Work: English for Workers' Rights*. Berkeley: UC Berkeley Labor Center. Available at <<http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/publications/winning.shtml>>

Massachusetts Workplace Literacy Consortium. (1999). *Workplace Education Guide*. Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education/ACLS.

Schwartz, R. (2000). *Your Rights on the Job* 4th ed. Boston: Labor Guild of Boston. Available in most large bookstores.

Utech, J. (2004). *Workplace Educator Training: A Guide to Creating Worker-Centered Education Programs*. Boston: Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable. Available from Worker Education Roundtable at

Work Web sites of Note

www.workingforamerica.org/
Find out about union-sponsored programs, publications, and what organized labor is doing to work for better jobs and to promote diversity. Practical tools, too!

<http://wiki.literacytent.org/index.php/>

This interactive site allows you to get and give information about the field of workforce development and ABE.

www.workrightspress.com/index.html

Listings of books on workers' rights.

http://eff.cls.utk.edu/work_readiness/default.htm

Read about what Equipped for the Future outlines as credentials for work readiness.

www.weiu.org/

Learn about the Women's Industrial Union's efforts for job readiness training, statewide advocacy, and more.

www.detma.org/workforce-home.htm

Learn about the Massachusetts Workforce Training Fund and how these funds can support worker education.

www.bostonworkforce.org/

Learn about career ladders, advocacy for low-wage workers, events, and how to join the Boston Workforce Development Coalition.

<http://adulted.about.com/cs/workplaceliteracy/>

Supported by the California Distance Learning Project, this site offers stories about work that ESOL students can read and listen to.

<http://cpcs.umb.edu/lep/revisions.html>

UMass Labor Extension Program Worker Rights Curriculum. Download these modules with facilitator's notes.

Mark Your Calendar

COMPILED BY LOU WOLLRAB

Be sure to check the SABES Web site <www.sabes.org> for local and regional workshops, courses, and study circles.

October 26–27, 2005

Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE), Annual Conference Network 2005

Location: Marlborough, MA

Contact: MCAE, 800-339-2498

Web: <www.mcae.net>

October 26–29, 2005

ProLiteracy Worldwide, 2005 Annual Conference

Location: Tucson, AZ

Contact: ProLiteracy, 315-422-9121 x319

Web: <www.proliteracy.org/conference>

November 6–11, 2005

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

Location: Pittsburgh, PA

Contact: AAACE, 301-918-1913

Web: <www.aaace.org/conferences>

November 10–13, 2005

National MultiCultural Institute (NMCI), National Conference
Evolving Personal and Professional Identity in Times of Change

Location: Arlington, VA

Contact: NMCI, 202-483-0700, Web: <www.nmci.org/>

March 15–19, 2006

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL),
40th Annual Convention

TESOL 2006: *Daring to Lead*

Location: Tampa, FL

Contact: TESOL, 888-547-3369, Web: <www.tesol.org>

March 19–21, 2005

National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), 15th Annual
National Conference

Location: Louisville, KY

Contact: NCFL, 877-326-5481

Web: <www.familit.org/Conference/index.cfm>

Save December 9, 2005, for the ACLS-sponsored curriculum frameworks conference.

Check for details with your regional SABES resource center.



math
circus

3 3 12 0 9



Sign up for the SABES Math Circus when you register for the Network 2005 conference in Marlborough. Learn about the statewide math initiative and how you can get involved. See stunning take-away tables, math activities, and more.

Coming Soon!

SABES Workforce Development Support

[<www.sabes.org/workforce>](http://www.sabes.org/workforce)

Soon you will be able to access resources for workforce development on the SABES Web page by visiting the url above. Here you will find information on the SABES workforce initiative, frequently asked questions, news and events. You can download curricula, tools for the classroom, handbooks and guidebooks. You can read about promising practices and partnerships. And if you are interested in sponsoring a workplace project, you can get tips on getting one started.

Upcoming Issues of *Field Notes*

Winter 2005

Classroom Climate/Classroom Management
Submit by September 30

Spring 2006

Staff Development
Submit by December 15.

Summer 2006

Curriculum Frameworks
Submit by April 15.

Fall 2006

ABE Math (details to come)

Field Notes is your newsletter. Send us your comments, concerns, and opinions. We welcome letters to the editor. Contact Lenore Balliro, editor, at 617-482-9485 or <lballiro@worlded.org>.



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SABES

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