

Volume 18

Number 1

FIELD NOTES

by and for the Massachusetts
Adult Education Community

funded by the Massachusetts Department
of Elementary and Secondary Education

summer 2009

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Funded by the Massachusetts Department
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Thank You, and So Long

This is the last issue of *Field Notes*, and I want to say thank you. To the writers who have contributed articles over the last (nearly 12) years, thank you for your generosity in sharing ideas and resources for classroom practice. It helps all of us to feel connected in an often fragmented field of work. Thank you, too, for telling us your stories, for encouraging your students to write for *Field Notes*, and for patiently revising your submissions, often more than once.

To the many *Field Notes* advisory board members who have met with me over the years, I thank you for helping to shape the themes of *Field Notes*. I thank you, too, for extending the reach for submissions to all parts of the state.

To my colleagues in the SABES system and at World Education, current and former, thank you for contributing to the newsletter, for helping me edit my own writing, for using *Field Notes* in workshops, and for disseminating it at conferences. Special thanks to Leah Peterson, who snazzied up our database and archive system and whose proactive work style helped so much.

To World Education, Inc, for supporting me in this job (where I kind of got to continue my role as editor of my high school newspaper almost 40 years ago.)

To ACLS, thank you for funding *Field Notes* (née *Bright Ideas*) for as long as you could.

To the exquisitely talented Marina Blanter, for designing the *Field Notes* logo and initial layout template, thank you.

To Debbie Liehs, proofreader extraordinaire, for her talent, reliability, and flexibility over the years. Thank you.

And thank you, perhaps most of all, to the students who attend adult basic education programs in Massachusetts. Your courage, persistence, creativity, resilience, and generosity have taught me more about the world—and all that's important in it—than any classroom or textbook.

FOREWORD

The word “foreword” at the top of this page reminds me to look ahead, even though I am wicked sad about leaving this publication behind. For almost 12 years I’ve been supremely lucky. I got to do a job I love in a field where I’ve grown professionally for over 25 years. I got to read your articles—funny, tender, thoughtful, informative, moving, and I got to research pressing issues and topics affecting our work.

Though many of us like the feel of printed matter in our hands, budget cuts all over the map have prompted a move from hard copy to Web publishing. We are increasingly turning to the Internet to exchange thinking, pose questions, vent, and get information. We can do that among ourselves. Places like Facebook have virtual communities for the likes of us-- ABE practitioners. Or maybe it’s time to resurrect the stinky old mimeograph machines and set up shop in someone’s basement?

Whatever we do to share our thoughts, let’s look forward. Let’s use public space to talk about what we do, pose challenges, solve problems, spray graffiti, hang our laundry.

Oh, and feel free to keep in touch. To paraphrase the great B.B.King, *So, buzz me, buzz me, baby, I’ll be waiting for your email.*

Thanks,
Lenore Balliro
Field Notes editor
<lballiro2000@yahoo.com>



Mission Statement and Editorial Policy

Field Notes was an adult basic education (ABE) quarterly, theme-based newsletter. It was designed to share innovative and reliable practices, resources, and information relating to ABE. We attempted to publish a range of voices about important educational issues, and we were 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 was 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 was always provided to any writer who requested it. Teachers, administrators, counselors, volunteers, and support staff were welcome to write for *Field Notes*.

Our Funder

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

Our Editorial Policy

Unsolicited manuscripts to *Field Notes* were welcomed. If you had an idea for an article or wished to submit a letter to the editor, you contacted 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 were published in each issue of *Field Notes*.

Opinions expressed in *Field Notes* were those of the authors and did not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editor, SABES, or its funders. We did reserve the right to decline publication. We did 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*.

Free On-Line Resources for Citizenship Educators

By LYNNE WEINTRAUB

Thinkfinity Literacy

<http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/tln/content/how-can-i-help-immigrants-prepare-take-us-citizenship-test>

At this site you will find, among other great resources, three self-paced professional development courses, two podcasts, and four short fact sheets.

CitizenshipNews

www.citizenshipnews.us/corkboard.cfm?g=33

This Web site of textbook author Lynne Weintraub offers regular new updates of interest to citizenship educators and advocates (e.g. naturalization policy/advocacy updates, new teaching resources, and other news related to citizenship).

CLINIC

www.cliniclegal.org/resources/translations-citizenship-test

CLINIC has translations of the 100 civic questions in quite a few languages. The site also offers free downloads of two top-notch technical assistance manuals, *Citizenship for Us*, and *Strategies for Naturalizing the Most Vulnerable Applicants*. For these, go to: www.cliniclegal.org/resources/citizenship-us-handbook-naturalization-citizenship-0

SaberHacer

www.saberhacer.com/

This site has seven beautifully produced short videos about the citizenship process in both English and Spanish versions. Sample: videosen.saberhacer.com/index.jsp?fr_story=3bc2272b54f96d30c981225f09c9017fe092bbd0&rf=podcast

The Jones Library

www.joneslibrary.org/esl/citizenship/citizenship.html

Here you can find a series of ten citizenship lesson guides for volunteer tutors and students. The site also offers a plain language step-by-step guide to becoming a citizen and information on requesting a fee waiver.

USCIS

www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb

This site provides flashcards and translations for the 100 civics questions. It also offers two short videos: "A Promise of Freedom: An Introduction to U.S. History and Civics for Immigrants," and "Becoming a U.S. Citizen." Also find "Expanding ESL, Civics, and Citizenship Education in Your Community: A Start-Up Guide." and the official "Guide to Naturalization"

The Minnesota Literacy Council

<http://online.themlcc.org/>

On-line training resources include a self-paced course for citizenship tutors and another for citizenship students.

JFVS

www.jfvs.org/ImmigrantRefugee.htm

A series of Youtube videos posted here explains the naturalization process. There is also an interview involving a medical disability waiver. These videos use complex, rapidly spoken English, so they are not suitable for most ESL students, but

the information is detailed and accurate (Warning! The demo interview has not been updated for the new test).

ALRC

www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/citizenship-pub.html#new

ALRC offers several downloads for citizenship educators, including a "Citizenship Educator Orientation Packet," and "Dictation Techniques for the New Test."

EL/Civics Online

www.elciviconline.org/

Offers a teacher training unit on the naturalization process, however, you must first register and complete the "prerequisite" ESL Foundation Course.

The US Government Printing Office

<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/index.html>

Ben's Guide helps children learn about the three branches of government. But the guide can also be useful for adults studying for the citizenship test. For starters, try the easy picture matching game, or the vocabulary puzzle.

NewCitizen.US

www.newcitizen.us/index.html

This site offers information for students about steps they may want to take after becoming a citizen, such as registering to vote, getting a passport, or sponsoring family members.

Lynne Weintraub is the ESOL coordinator at Jones Library in Amherst. she can be reached at <lynneweintraub@hotmail.com>

Community Building in the Transition Classroom

By LAURA PORTER

The Center for New Americans (CNA) in western Massachusetts strives to meet the needs of a population representing more than 50 countries with students from 18 to 80 years old. In recent years, a new and complex student profile has begun to appear at the Center with increasing frequency: students intent on attending college in the US but who need help figuring out how to get there and succeed. The vignettes that follow give a sense of this new student profile and offer a glimpse into the changing needs of immigrants and refugees in Massachusetts. (Specific details about individuals have been changed to protect student privacy.)



Snapshots

A 37-year old recent GED student from Columbia is interested in attending college. She is a voracious reader and enthusiastic student who devours any work thrown her way, despite fitting it around the demands of home, kids, and work. She's not sure what she wants to study yet and feels like she needs to learn more about using computers before starting college. She also wants to keep improving

her skills while saving money.

A 27-year old undocumented student from Ecuador works in a restaurant in the Pioneer Valley. He is very motivated to learn and hopes someday to attend college in the U.S. He did not complete high school in his country but is eager to learn new

things about U.S. culture. He has completed the highest level of CNA's English language classes and uses a computer frequently for communication and other purposes. He is adept at writing but would like to practice reading and increase his academic vocabulary. He has just begun a GED class.

A 45-year old Cambodian father of two young children won a green card in his country's lot-

tery last year. Now in the U.S., he is seeking higher education to give him greater job opportunities. He completed a Bachelor's degree and two Master's programs in his country but believes having a U.S. degree will serve him better if he decides to stay in the U.S. He comes to

our program seeking support in researching options and completing applications while improving his writing skills.

A 40-year old Taiwanese single mother has relocated to the area after leaving an abusive situation. She worked as a secretary in her country and would like to pursue a career in teaching in the U.S. She is interested in returning to school to complete the required credentials for her degree program but doesn't

have time to attend college regularly yet.

A 32-year old Moroccan man is working full-time at a convenience store. He studied at the university in his country but never finished his degree and is interested in returning to college to get an information technology degree in the U.S. He has taken ESL classes for several years since moving to the U.S.

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Community Building...

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and his speaking skills are quite proficient.

These diverse snapshots represent a small cross-section of students who, in the past year, have asked for help at our Center in moving toward college goals. Responding to student needs is the primary focus of CNA's mission, so it was critical for us to explore ways to meet these emerging needs.

From February 2008 through the present, CNA offered a new program to these and other students. Our goal was to delve more deeply into the challenges facing high-level ESOL students—transitions students—in pursuit of higher education and to help them pursue their goals. We learned that for these students, community building is just as important as skills building.

CNA's Transitions program has faced many challenges in this experimental period, especially the wide spectrum of academic and cultural backgrounds within the student groups. Because of these differences, the beginning sessions of the each

program cycle have been critical in building a sense of classroom community.

Two introductory activities yielded surprising results in bridging the differences in age, culture, and educational backgrounds. In the first, a picture introduction activity, each student selected one or two pictures from an assortment scattered on the tables. These images sparked paired conversations: each student shared with a partner the connection he or she felt to the selected picture. After several minutes of paired discussion, each student presented his or her partner and explained the photo selection. This activity invited the visual association of pictures to inspire spontaneous conversation and greater intimacy.

The second activity, building on the brief photo exchange, was a simple student survey. Students spoke with several other classmates and shared information about their special skills, major subject of study, main reasons for studying English, a favorite place, and the people they lived with. Working in small groups with stu-

dents randomly distributed by age, ethnicity, and educational background, all students had an opportunity to share personal information about their own stories, ask questions, and get briefly acquainted.

Breaking the sixteen-person class into small groups allowed for increased sharing time and more comfortable dialog circles. An atmosphere of equality, curiosity, and common respect was initiated here, then cultivated throughout the development of the program.

The importance of building a sense of community in a diverse setting promotes a safe learning space for students. In a safe environment learners begin to take risks and open their hearts and minds to new ways of thinking and connecting with others. Once trust is established, a program can better address the rigors of college preparation, including strict attendance policies and substantial reading and writing assignments for homework.

Within the Transitions program, CNA has also developed and reinforced community values in class, which model opportunities for students to get involved with community activities in college. The social skills developed in the program are essential elements to foster student confidence, to encourage collaborative spirit within a student cohort, and to promote tolerance in future life pursuits.

Laura Porter, an avid community organizer, is an ESOL teacher at the Center for New Americans in Northampton, MA. She can be reached at <lauraporter@yahoo.com>.

Check out the **SABES** **Math Bulletin**

The *SABES Math Bulletin* is filled with research, classroom ideas, and resources for the ABE math teacher. See the current issues at

w w w . s a b e s . o r g

“When I Knit, the Anger Goes Into My Yarn”: Knitting the Way to English

BY LENORE BALLIRO

As an ESL teacher for domestic violence survivors, Marjorie Forté saw how her students struggled to learn their new language. The women in her class were often distracted, worried, and stressed from the daily obstacles of living in a shelter, tending to their children, and looking for work. While Marjorie’s teaching skill and caring temperament promoted a strong learning environment, she wanted to offer her students strategies for calming themselves and staying present during class time—skills she knew could translate to other contexts in their lives.

As a talented artist, Marjorie decided to draw from her skills to initiate a knitting project with her students. The program sponsoring the class had been exploring project-based learning with an eye toward experiential approaches (such as yoga) that could promote relaxation and wellness while enhancing language learning. Marjorie’s knitting project was the first experiment and proved highly successful.

Marjorie began by discussing the craft of knitting to assess how many students were interested in incorporating knitting into the class. Students were open and willing. Each woman was given her own needles and

was encouraged to pick her own yarn from a large assortment of skeins. As in any good instructional approach, Marjorie modeled the basic skills: casting on, knitting a simple garter stitch, casting off. She then stood behind each student as she began to knit and offered gentle guidance.



Experienced knitters became Marjorie’s teacher when they showed how they learned knitting in their own countries—often through different methods. This sharing promoted a spirit of inquiry and cross-cultural comparisons.

Prior to the knitting project, students often self-grouped by language affinities. When learning to knit, this grouping changed in subtle ways. More experienced knitters became teachers of less experienced, despite first languages. Because text was not necessary to succeed, less literate students had a chance to shine. One non-literate woman knit scarves for her

classmates’ children. She also introduced crocheting as a new skill. Her self esteem soared, and her persistence in learning seemed affected by her new status.

Students typically spent the first 30 minutes of each three-hour class tending to knitting before moving into more structured language work. Of course, they were learning and practicing English during their knitting time. Listening to and describing the steps in a process, asking for assistance, identifying problems, describing their projects—all of these “speech acts” were conducted largely in

English, though drawing from the native languages with each other for clarification was freely allowed. Marjorie also developed vocabulary games, and the Web provided abundant instructional materials—in print and on YouTube—for further reading or listening practice.

Perhaps more important, the tangential conversations that emerged as students were knitting provided opportunities to use English in an authentic way. Bowed over their yarn and needles, the women shared concerns, issues, stories, and laughter as their scarves got longer

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When I Knit...

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and longer.

Students' responses illustrated some of the project's success. "The teacher gave me the idea to just think about stitches and the yarn," one student said. "Then I don't have to think about all my problems." Another student added. "The knitting helps a lot. When I knit, the anger goes into my yarn." "When you knit, you take the thing, the stress, out of your brain," said another.

Marjorie discovered an added benefit to the project. Since many students were bored in their evenings at the shelter, they began to take out their knitting projects. Some students watched the program "English for All" on in the communal TV as they worked on their projects. Research suggests that victims of trauma and violence have difficulty attending to learning tasks and retaining information. Depression and anxiety contribute to learning problems, and it is often hard for learners to trust strangers, such as a new instructor or new classmates. Though ESOL teachers are not expected to be counselors, they can take cues from the field of expressive therapy and integrate some activities that promote well-being and increase learning. A nationally regarded researcher on linguistics and English as a second language theory and pedagogy, Stephen Krashen, (1988) suggests that lowering the "affective filter," that is, helping students relax and unblock their fears about language acquisition, can go a long way toward increasing students' progress in learning a new language.

Scientists and psychologists have been aware of the therapeutic benefits of crafts like knitting for some time. According to psychologist Kelly Lambert (2005) "women were making associations between the manual efforts necessary for knitting and mental health at the turn of the last century. A knitting magazine, *Stitches*, claimed that physicians recommended working on a simple piece of knitting, nothing too elaborate in this case, to counteract 'restlessness and discontent.' It was thought that the quick manual movements and the subtle clicks

Knitting worked well with this class because it was a great match for the interest and skills of the instructor as well as the receptivity of the students. But the benefits of a project like this one can be replicated through many other strategies and activities. Starting a class with 15 minutes of yoga, taking a break for walking meditation, creating group mandalas, stitching story quilts, writing simple poems, painting mural painting—all of these efforts, done well, can promote relaxation and de-stress learners so they are better able to focus on learning a new

Bowed over their yarn and needles, the women shared concerns, issues, stories, and laughter as their scarves got longer and longer.

of the needles had a soothing effect on the 'overwrought' women.'" (Macdonald and Macdonald, 1988). Indeed, research conducted by Barry Jacobs and his colleagues suggests that repetitive movement leads to increased serotonergic activity, which may play a role in relieving anxiety/stress (Jacobs, 1994).

Creating a safe classroom community is the first step a teacher can take to build trust and maximize learning. Gentle music and pleasant, clean surroundings offer a welcoming physical space. Clear and flexible guidelines, coupled with consistent teaching routines, help promote trust. Providing stretch breaks and healthy snacks bring a mind-body awareness to learning.

language. In Marjorie's class, students not only learned new vocabulary: they learned the benefits of creative, therapeutic self-care and community.

Notes

Lambert, Kelly G. (2005). "Rising rates of depression in today's society: Consideration of the roles of effort-based rewards and enhanced resilience in day-to-day functioning" in *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* 30 (2006) 497-510

Marjorie Forte teaches and creates beautiful art. She can be reached at <marjorieforte@hotmail.com>

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Laboring to Learn: A Brave and Passionate Book

REVIEW BY CYNTHIA PETERS

Laboring to Learn: Women's Literacy and Poverty in the Post-Welfare Era
By Lorna Rivera
University of Illinois Press
2009

Lorna Rivera has written a brave and passionate book, *Laboring to Learn*, which follows the women and staff of Project Hope in Roxbury, Massachusetts. By following the stories of the Project Hope women and

is thoroughly steeped in the neoliberal ideology of individual accomplishment over collective well-being.

Democratic Participation

Recognizing these challenges and acknowledging the inherent value of all human beings, Project Hope created an Adult Learners Program (ALP) that they believed would contradict neoliberal messages and ultimately empower participants

10-year period (1996-2006). She collects rich ethnographic data via interviews, observation, and participation with the women in classes. Using a Freirian model of popular education as well as the "Catholic Action Method" (based on the three steps of seeing, judging, and acting [p. 76]), Project Hope teachers created curriculum based on themes generated by the students themselves.

Mahogany's Story

One student, Mahogany, tells the story of how she persuaded a teacher to help the class collect their stories in a book. The process of writing about their experiences helped break down barriers among women in the class; it also taught good writing techniques. Mahogany marvels at how their writing evolved: "It was ... really deep ... and it turned into a lesson ... from writing what your thoughts were to re-writing it, to putting the proper words in it, to punctuation, to how to put in on the paper, to how to type it" (p. 76).

The writing skills generated from exploring the women's personal themes are transferable; they can be used in practical writing tasks like letter-writing and resume-writing. But skills-building was not the starting place here, as it might be in a traditional ABE class where the teacher starts with students' deficits and works to remedy them.

Popular Education Model

Project Hope teachers and

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Rivera makes the case that most adult learners are struggling against more than their own deficits in algebra or English fluency. They're struggling against a system that actively undermines their ability to break out of poverty.

their struggles with poverty, abusive spouses, homelessness, and self-esteem problems, Rivera makes the case that most adult learners are struggling against more than their own deficits in algebra or English fluency. They're struggling against a system that actively undermines their ability to break out of poverty. In particular, poor women with low levels of education face punitive welfare-to-work laws, a job market that rarely pays a living wage, few family supports, an educational approach that treats the student as a vessel needing to be filled with skills, and a society that

not just to get an education but to change the circumstances of their own lives and of their community. In their vision of education, according to Rivera, "literacy is a means of enabling democratic participation in social change, as well as individual advancement; indeed, the structure of the program stresses the value of collective learning, as learners work together to achieve group and individual goals" (p. 27).

To flesh out ALP's educational philosophy and uncover the effect it has had on its participants, Rivera followed Project Hope women over a

Laboring to Learn...

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students, using a popular education model, started with students' strengths – their stories of hardship and resilience. Mahogany explains why this model works for adult students who have survived many challenges and have much to share when she says: "It makes it more like they're not being punished for not doing something that they should have done" (p. 82).

Rivera does a great job telling the story of how popular education works in the classroom. She describes the resistance teachers and students sometimes feel towards it, and she illustrates the powerful humane way it allows the classroom to develop as a holistic learning environment. Classroom teachers struggling on a day to day level with multiple demands will appreciate Rivera's frank stories about what works and what doesn't.

For example, she recounts her own humbling missteps in a citizenship class where she kept pushing the students to follow her lesson plan, all the while missing the cues they were giving her about how they felt most comfortable approaching the material. Her "authoritarian method," she realized was making the students feel "dumb and ashamed" (p. 81).

This richly detailed study of adult learners' lives provides many important lessons and insights. But they are even more instructive because Rivera has firmly located the Project Hope stories in the historical context of welfare reform, the structure of the economy, institutional sexism and racism, and neoliberal ideology. This "context" is the ever-present backdrop to every-

thing that happens in the classroom. It informs what students bring into the classroom (and indeed, whether they'll even make it into the classroom) and manage to persist there. With *Laboring to Learn*, Rivera brings the institutional pressures that, although often are unnamed and invisible, are nonetheless deeply felt and experienced by both learners and programs.

Billie's Story

Consider Billie, who was placed in a shelter in Waltham (15 miles outside of Boston) despite the fact that her child was in day care in Boston. Every day, Billie had to drop off her child at day care, make it back to Waltham for shelter meetings at 9:30 AM and return to her classes in Boston. If she wasn't back at the shelter again at 5:30 on the dot, she was given "points" for being late. Get enough points, and she would be kicked out. By telling Billie's story, Rivera does more than paint a portrait of just one Project Hope student and the multiple stresses facing her – the stress of negotiating public transportation, dealing with rigid, punitive, infantilizing rules, being homeless, and trying to be a mom and a student at the same time. Rivera also locates Billie in a much larger portrait of institutional norms, policies, and laws that have created enormous waves of homelessness and joblessness.

This is perhaps Rivera's most significant achievement. She changes the frame from "what's wrong with Billie" to what's wrong with the system that allows gentrification to drive up housing prices and drive out tenants? What's wrong with a shelter system that increases the stress on women, making it even

harder for them to comply with rules, take care of their children, look for housing, and study for their GED? What's wrong with welfare rules that keep women in low-paying jobs, make it hard for them to attend class, and seem, in fact, designed to keep women in poverty rather than offer a way out?

And perhaps most important for those of us who work in adult education: What's wrong with a system of education that fails to take into account the systemic injustices that actively keep women from pursuing their learning goals and seems intent on keeping them in poverty?

Sister Lois of Project Hope identifies the ways that low-income women are kept so busy (by welfare-to-work, for example) that they don't have time to think. And this serves the system. "When people have time to process things," she says, "then they begin to get connected with other people and, oh my gosh, they're going to organize. This is very threatening to the status quo. Very threatening" (p. 136).

Project Hope offers an adult education experience that allows women time to think, to get connected, and to organize! By telling their story, Rivera makes the case that a popular education model in the adult education classroom can do more than teach basic skills. It can also prepare students to respond to – and perhaps challenge – systemic obstacles they are likely to face.

Cynthia Peters is the author of The Change Agent <www.nelrc.org/changeagent/>. She can be reached at <cpeters@worlded.org>.

The Devil's Highway: A Harsh Landscape

REVIEW BY KAREN OAKLEY

The Devils Highway
by Luis Alberto Urrea
New York: Little Brown and
Company, 2005

This book uses a true story of fourteen men who died during their attempt to cross the US-Mexico border as a springboard for examining misguided immigration policy, greed, political corruption, and the desperation of impoverished people.

Luis Alberto Urrea, a novelist, poet and journalist, knows the Mexican-US border very well. He was born in Tijuana to a Mexican father and an American mother, and he has worked with relief missions serving the poor along the border.

His book, *The Devil's Highway*, focuses on 26 men trying to cross the Arizona border from Mexico to the U.S. in May 2001. The men and their motivations for coming to the US are portrayed sympathetically, which I expected. But what surprised me was Urrea's portrayal of the border patrol workers. Urrea was able to gain their trust while researching this book, and he gives us a very insightful look at their perspectives regarding the complicated and often thankless role they play in the system. Urrea contends that border patrol workers are trapped by the policies that drive immigrants to dangerous

border crossings deeper and deeper into the desert.

Even the coyotes—smugglers who guide people through the desert—are shown in relationship to a larger corrupt system. Though he is not sympathetic to them, Urrea



illustrates how coyotes, mostly young men from poor backgrounds, are really at the bottom of the food chain in the universe of human smuggling. He saves his real scorn for those at the top: the politicians and corporations on both sides of the border who maintain and perpetuate an unjust and unworkable system, and the bosses of organized

crime who exploit poor families and make huge profits by smuggling people across the border (and ruthlessly abandoning them if profits are imperiled in any way).

Urrea's journalism background is evident in the considerable research he did for the book, but his talents as a novelist and poet are what make the book so compelling to read. His prose style is rather stark and austere at times but with a feel for the vernacular of the participants.

His descriptions of the desert make it clear how its harsh landscape came to be personified as the unforgiving and relentless devil of the title. His grim and distressing accounts of the suffering endured by the men who died there and the enormous price paid by those who survived lingered with me for weeks after finishing the book. The broad overview of this book, combined with its many small, telling details, do an unforgettable job of capturing the small ironies as well as the huge tragedies of the people who barely made it here and of those who didn't.

Karen Oakley teaches at the Immigrant Learning Center in Malden. She can be reached at <koakley@ilctr.org>

Short Takes

“USA Learns” Helps ESOL Students Online <usalearns.org>

Do you have English language learners who cannot come to class but are motivated to improve their English? A wonderful new Web-based resource called “USA Learns” at <usalearns.org> can assist them. Learners simply register online and may begin interactive “classes” immediately at either beginner or intermediate levels. In general, learners watch high-quality videos of real-life situations—job conflicts, landlord problems, paying taxes—where they learn vocabulary and practice speaking and writing linked to the unit’s theme. If the learners have a headset with a microphone, they can compare their pronunciation with that provided by “USA Learns.” The Web site is open 24/7 and it’s free!

100 Words Almost Everyone Confuses and Misuses

Editors of *American Heritage Dictionary*
New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2004

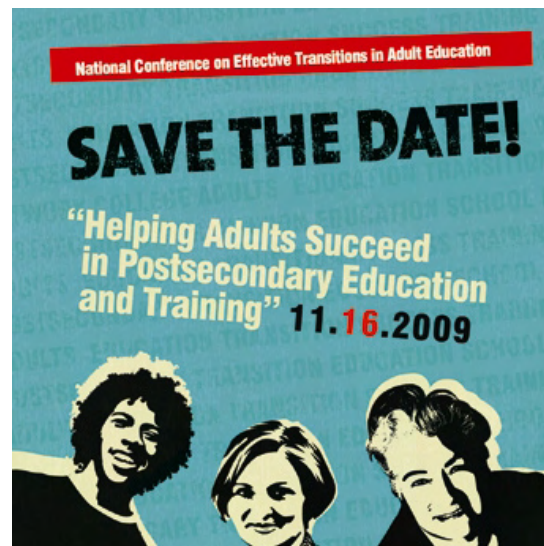
If you always get stuck on words like “effect” and “affect,” “inflammable” and “flammable,” “fact” and “factoid,” spend the \$4.95 and keep this book on your desk or by your bed. It provides entertainment as well as edification.

The editors trace word etymologies and their route to misuse, but not in an elitist way. For example, we know that we should write “all right,” but many people mistakenly use the spelling “alright.” And why wouldn’t they, since we say “already” and “altogether.” The editors explain without judging. How does this connect to our field? If we are teaching English, and especially writing, it’s probably a good idea to know the rules, even if we break them once in awhile.

The Elements of Style Turns 50

E.B. White and William Strunk Jr.
Longman Publishing, 2009

Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style* turns 50 this year, and NPR has devoted some of its air time to discussing its merits *and* limitations. If you teach English, writing, or ESL (or if you speak and write English yourself) check out their Web site at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103140512 for some entertainment and enlightenment. I’m assuming you already have a tattered copy of the book, right?



National College Transition Network (NCTN)
Third Annual National Conference on Effective
Transitions in Adult Education. <www.collegetransition.org/index.html>. See calendar listing on page 17.

Watching Baseball is a True Summer Diamond

REVIEW BY LUANNE TELLER

Watching Baseball: Discovering the Game within the Game

By Jerry Remy

Globe Pequot Press
2004

I love baseball. My Dad was a baseball umpire (minors and college ball), so I knew the infield fly rule before I could read. And of course, living in the Boston area, I love the Red Sox. That's why one of my favorite summer books is *Watching Baseball* by Red Sox broadcaster Jerry Remy.

A quick and easy summer-by-the-pool or beach paperback, *Watching Baseball* is sure to help fans "discover the game within the game." It's filled with explanations that will help the reader understand the role of each position player, pitch counts, and the "unspoken" rules that all players are expected to follow. Remy also shares lots of personal anecdotes about his experiences on the field.

As in our work in adult basic education, there's always more to what's happening in baseball than meets the eye. Sometimes, when the batter is beating out a throw to first, the real action is happening between third and home. That's why there's nothing like being at the ballpark to watch a game. When you're watching at home, it's the camera person who decides what's important to see.

This book explains that there's so much more to watch that impacts the outcome and the fun of the game. Which pitchers meticulously step OVER the first base line on their way from the mound to the dugout? When does the outfield shift,



and why? Who's more likely to pull the ball? What do you need to know about dirty slides, double plays, and pick-offs at first base?

My Dad taught me to hit, to run, to field, and to love baseball, but he never taught me to pitch. Not sure why...maybe because I'm a lefty. I throw like a girl. So, every spring, I retrieve my book—mostly to read the section about pitching. I don't get pitching, and I doubt I ever will. In addition to understanding how each pitch

is thrown, there's the added component of why different pitches are thrown when. Why is it easier to throw a slider than a curve ball? I understand batter's counts and pitchers' counts, but what makes a sinker a sinker and what makes a curve ball curve remains a complete mystery. I keep imagining, though, that if I read the section on pitching just one more time, it will start to sink in.

I can't recall how many summers this book has seen me through. There's beach sand between some of the pages, many of which are stained with both chlorine and salt water. Its bookmark is a note card from Le Merigot Hotel in Santa Monica.

Sometimes we pick a book because it moves us out of our comfort zone to think in bold new ways. Other times we pick a book because it settles so nicely into our comfort zone. That's what *Watching Baseball* is for me.

It transports me back to a simpler time of warm, sunny Sunday afternoons, not a care in the world for just a few precious hours, the scent of fresh-mown grass from a gentle breeze blowing through open windows and doors, sitting on the couch with my Dad, watching baseball.

Luanne Teller is the director of the SABES Central Resource Center. She can be reached at <lteller@worlded.

A Review of *Empowering Women through Literacy: Views from Experience*

REVIEW BY MEV MILLER

***Empowering Women through Literacy: Views from Experience* edited by Mev Miller, ED.D. and Kathleen P. King, Ph.D. Information Age Publishers, 2009.**

Empowering Women through Literacy is the first comprehensive collection of writing from the field by everyday educators in adult basic education. It illustrates both the joys and challenges of integrating innovative solutions to supporting women's learning needs in ABE.

This unique volume reveals the many ways in which addressing women's empowerment through literacy continues to impact lives. Not only are teachers and learners in ABE, literacy, and ESOL classes affected; those who value and support women's learning, equity, and education for social change are affected as well.

This section of the introduction will give you a feel of the book:

When we first conceived of this project, we hoped for an emergent volume that could take the first steps towards broadening the visibility and discussion about women's empowerment through literacy. When we developed the call for proposals, we had no idea what to expect. But the response soon became overwhelm-

ing.... From this experience, we have made at least two observations.

First of all, WE LEARN members and ABE teachers who address women's literacy issues need a public forum in which to share and discuss their work. Because we sought the experiential and inventive, we have uncovered many voices that don't typically have an



opportunity for publication through standard educational venues. We received writings from long-time professional academics, career classroom teachers and administrators, graduate students, tutors who were

formerly adult literacy learners, researchers, professional developers and trainers, peer groups, counselors, and poets.

Here you will not only find research-based essays, but also poetry, a letter, a graphic novel, artwork, journal entries, stories, conversations, and theater. Educational locations include immigrant learning centers, GED classes, homeless and transitional shelters, alternative programs serving teens, corrections, university settings, workplace collaborative, disability services, and community-based projects.

The 47 contributors reflecting on their experiences represent a diversity of racial, ethnic and cultural, ages, sexualities, educational backgrounds and experiences.

Secondly, we discovered how strongly the affective aspects of women's learning form the centerpiece of these contributors' experiences. Each one unapologetically and without pause discusses the relationships they build with learners and among colleagues in their teaching/learning situations. In this volumeyou will find though, are the ways in which building relation-

ships, creating safer learning spaces and allowing for holistic possibilities to integrate spirit, body and emotion creates critical paths to

Continued on page 14

Empowering Women...

Continued from page 13

reaching women's learning minds and supporting their successes, not only for students but also as professional educators. It is our (not so) quiet hope that this volume creates one step towards reconsidering the policies about and research strategies for students in ABE, especially women....

Readers of *Field Notes* in Massachusetts will recognize some of the contributors:

- "The Literacy of Being," Denise DiMarzio
- "But How Can I Teach Her if She Can't Get Her Bum on the Seat?" Jenny Horsman
- "Dear Mary" and "Landscape of Academe," Lorna Rivera
- "Telling Our Truths," Tzivia Gover
- "Fabella and Fiona Find Lib-

erating Literacy: A Teacher's Visual Reflection on Women and Literacy," Sally S. Gabb

- "WE LEARN: Working on Fertile Edges," Mev Miller
- "Parallels in the Marginalization of ABE Women Educators and Women in Literacy," Sandra D. Bridwell
- "Transformation Is the Way: A Study about Forum Theatre & Critical Literacy with Brazilian Immigrants in a ESOL Class in New England," Maria Tereza Schaedler

Educators who read this volume will likely feel a sense of recognition with the situations, issues, concerns, and possibilities they've encountered in their own practice. Readers will gain perspective on their work and be heartened by the successes

portrayed in these writings. As we take the book around the country and the world, it has been enthusiastically embraced by educators seeking affirmation for their own work and suggestions for new ideas to take into their own classrooms and programs. We hope that readers of *Field Notes* will find this true as well.

You may borrow it from The SABES Literacy Library or purchase it directly from WE LEARN (<http://www.litwomen.org/publications/empower/index.html>). The proceeds from this book go into WE LEARN's General Fund.

Mev Miller is the Director of We Learn. She can be reached at <mev@litwomen.org>

**Check out the We Learn Website for lots of great resources:
www.litwomen.org/welearn.html**

Hotline!



Hotline!

Free information on GED, ESOL, literacy, and citizenship classes for adults offered throughout Massachusetts. Information online at

www.sabes.org/hotline

Call 1-800-447-8844, seven days a week, 6 a.m. to midnight.

Hotline!

Letters to the Editor

To the *Field Notes* editor, Lenore Balliro:

Thinking back over the ten-year run of *Field Notes* (plus three years of *Bright Ideas* editorship) triggers warm, fulfilling memories. As we think about the cessation of *Field Notes*, it feels as though we are losing a long-time friend. We have been such fans of our statewide newsletter; it has helped us feel connected with something bigger, something more vital, and something more significant—the whole, statewide, adult education community.

To have submissions by adult literacy practitioners was invaluable. Your efforts in helping these sometimes experienced, sometimes beginning writers craft their pieces for public sharing was masterful, and your “design eye” made the layout engaging and fun to peruse.

We loved reading about the challenges and triumphs of those who taught English language learners each day; the tips shared by counselors; ideas and information about classroom practice and materials—that consistent, very keen voice from the field that speaks from the heart about what it’s like to work with students every day. How eager we were to turn the page, read the stories, and check out the resources you faithfully included for the eternal students, like us. *Field Notes* has been unique, practical, and immediate.

Field Notes has reflected the heart and soul of the ABE field, and you have put your heart and soul into the publication. It’s really remarkable how you always managed to select a specific and timely topic focus for each issue which kept the publication fresh and useful throughout its many issues. *Field Notes* has been “value added” to our field, and consequently to our students. It’s been a much-needed voice that provided a whole continuum of perspectives and experiences. The wealth of ideas helped support our work while daring us to dream of bigger and better things.

Editing a magazine like this is very difficult—dealing with so many different writers, with a wide range of abilities and a broad range of styles, and handling all the approvals up and down the line. You have been patient but persistent, and you have never taken shortcuts or compromised on quality. And that’s why, issue after issue, the quality remained so high. We know, because we’ve read every issue, cover to cover, and every time it was worth the time.

Our world will seem smaller without *Field Notes*. We won’t meet all the practitioner writers who have so much insight and knowledge to share. We’ll be wondering what’s going on “out there,” and we’ll miss the unrealized potential and sharing.

Major congratulations, Lenore, for your stewardship of a fine resource, and may your adroit skills in bringing to the stage practitioners’ voices, issues, and solutions find a welcoming venue soon.

Ernest Best
Ruzica Banovic
Tricia Donovan
Carey Reid

Laurie Sheridan
Luanne Teller
Sally Waldron
Lou Wollrab



More letters on next page

Dear *Field Notes* Editor:

For more than two years now, part of my responsibility at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has been to review issues of *Field Notes* before they were published. At this poignant time of the final issue, I wish to commend the editor and staff on the extraordinary job done in publishing for nearly two decades. *Field Notes* is a high quality newsletter that has contributed much to my own professional development. Through creative themes, it has provided practitioners in Massachusetts and throughout the United States with ongoing opportunity for instruction, reflection, and inspiration from their peers.

It's clear that the caliber of the publication reflects the caliber of its editor. Thank you, Lenore, for your commitment to excellence that was evident in each issue. In a mark of true skill, you handled complex, time-sensitive editing tasks with tremendous grace (including your patience with me, an admittedly "deadline-challenged" person). I'm very sorry to see the end of *Field Notes* but encouraged to know that its rich legacy will remain through online technology.

Sincerely,
Sharon Artis-Jackson, Ed.D.

Dear Editor:

Field Notes and its predecessor *Bright Ideas* have been an enlightening part of our professional lives for many, many years. We have always looked forward to each issue, packed with good articles about what was happening in the field and about new techniques, practices and research that provided guidance for our own practice.

The driving force behind the success of *Field Notes* has been Lenore Balliro. A marvelous writer herself, she is a generous and excellent teacher who has escorted many practitioners through their first baby steps writing articles about their work and publishing those articles in *Field Notes*. Lenore often has to recruit, cajole, persuade and otherwise push us to take those first tentative steps to becoming "writers," and she always provides the support, direction and encouragement necessary for all writers, from rookie to highly experienced.

At SABES, we often use *Field Notes* as a source of inspiration, reference and enhancement to augment many of the trainings we offer to the field, and it has been an invaluable aid to all of us in our efforts to provide the highest possible quality professional development to the ABE field in our state.

Field Notes is an excellent publication that provides the ABE field with a much needed outlet for sharing and cataloging our best work and practices in an easy-to-read format that has given all of us an enjoyable and informative resource.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Lenore for all her work and to congratulate her on a job very well done!

The SABES Directors,
Carol Bower, SABES Northeast
Annemarie Espindola, SABES Southeast
George Kohout, SABES West
Sue Miller, Central SABES
Steve Reuys, Boston SABES
Luanne Teller, SABES CRC



Mark Your Calendar

Juneteenth

Location: Worldwide

See details at <http://juneteenth.com/>

June 10-12, 2009

Thomas Edison State College/CAEL
National Institute on the Assessment
of Adult Learning

Location: Princeton, NJ

Contact: Joyce Archer, 609-984-1130 x3205

www.tesc.edu/4398.php

June 10-13, 2009

National Community Literacy Leadership
Conference

Location: Buffalo, NY

Contact Email: hannahmallon@gmail.com

www.literacypowerline.com/events/view_all/

July 19-22, 2009

Correctional Education Association 64th
International Conference

Location: Madison, WI - Madison Concourse Hotel

Email: office@ceanational.org

www.ceanational.org/

June 25-27, 2009

The Centre for Literacy of Quebec
Summer Institute 2009

Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills

Location: Montreal, QC

Contact: The Centre, 514-931-8731 x1415

www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/

June 28-July 1, 2009

National Educational Computing Conference
NECC 2009

Location: Washington, DC

<http://center.uoregon.edu/ISTE/NECC2009/>

August 4-7, 2009

University of Wisconsin–Madison
25th Annual Conference on Distance
Learning & Teaching

Location: Madison, WI

www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/

August 4-7, 2009

25th Annual Conference on Distance
Teaching & Learning

Location: Madison, WI - Monona signer

Phone: 608-265-4159

Email: distel2@education.wisc.edu

www.uwex.edu/disted/conference

August 5-6, 2009

Directors' Summer Institute for ABE Directors
and Other Interested Staff

Theme: Nurturing our Programs: Real Life
Solutions for Real Life Challenges

Location: College of the Holy Cross,
Worcester, MA

Contact: Luanne Teller <lteller@worlded.org>

September 8, 2009

International Literacy Day

Location: Worldwide

Details: www.nifl.gov/nifl/literacy_day/ild_current.html

November 16-17, 2009

National College Transition Network (NCTN)

Third Annual National Conference on

Effective Transitions in Adult Education

“Helping Adults Succeed in Postsecondary
Education and Training

Location: Providence, RI

www.collegetransition.org/index.html

November 19-22, 2009

National Council of Teachers of English
Annual Convention

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Contact: 217-328-3870, 877-369-6283

www.ncte.org/forms/contactncte/

Bye Bye

BONSWA!

Adios

do widzenia

AuRevoir

Zai Jian

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KUULEMIIN! *VISO GERO!*

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*SAMPAI BERJUMPA
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viszontlátásra *ADJÖ!*

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arrivederci!