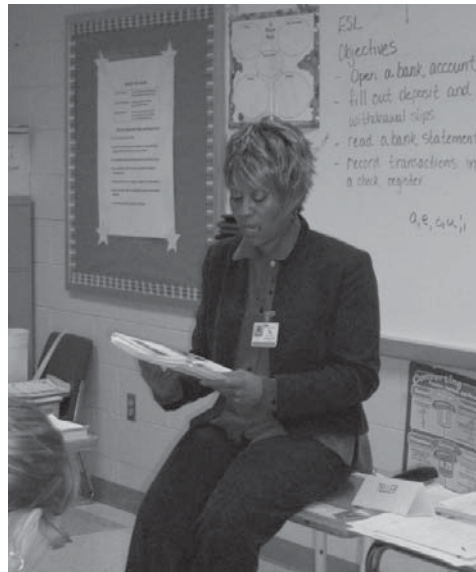




## Standards-in-Action

All nine of Roanoke City's ESOL teachers, including Lanet Hall (pictured to the right), were able to participate in Phase II of the Standards-in-Action pilot program, focusing on classroom observations.



# Standards-in-Action Before, During, and After

by Aimee Clarke

**E**ducators continually hone their skills and areas of expertise to bring the best they have to offer to the students they teach.

Utilizing new resources such as pilot programs often brings fresh new perspectives to tried-and-true approaches to learning. Such was the case with a program that was introduced to Roanoke City Public Schools Adult Education (RCPS) last year.

Roanoke City participated in a pilot program called Standards-in-Action. I was fortunate enough to be among the participants chosen for the program, which was introduced in two phases. We were paired with a program from northern Virginia, Prince William County. Our teachers really enjoyed meeting other ESOL practitioners from Prince William and learning about their adult program. RCPS had a team of five (four teachers and one coordinator) that participated in Phase I of the pilot program, which focused on classroom assignments.

Because of the relatively small size of our program, we were able to include all nine of our ESOL teachers for Phase II, which focused on classroom observations. So, what exactly did we learn from this pilot program, and where are we going from here?

Even before this program was introduced, RCPS was proactive when it came to implementing standards. In the summer of 2008, we put together a team of three teachers to align the ESOL standards with our curriculum. All of our classes used the same text series, *Workplace Plus*, making for smooth transitions. We also attempted to develop a user-friendly notebook so teachers would not feel so overwhelmed by content standards. Each teacher would work with the level of the content standards she or he taught. For example, intermediate teachers received a copy of the intermediate low and intermediate high standards. While we had

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## Integrating Content Standards

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# PROGRESS

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## A Few Words on *Progress*

Over the past six years, Virginia adult educators have developed and begun to implement GED® and ESOL content standards. Two years ago, Virginia, along with five other states, had the honor of being chosen to participate in the U. S. Department of Education's project, Standards-in-Action (SIA). Prince William County and Roanoke City adult education programs worked with the SIA team to integrate ESOL content standards following SIA procedures. In addition, adult education programs statewide have been implementing Virginia's GED and ESOL standards with the aid of training offered through Program Managers' Meetings, VAILLs, and VALRC.

In this issue of *Progress*, teachers and program managers describe their experiences as they have grappled with the issues and challenges surrounding standards integration. Two program administrators offer insights into the process of introducing content standards into their programs. In addition, two teachers highlight lesson plans that they have developed and provide some background information about their efforts.

To broaden the perspective about content standards beyond Virginia, Karen Gianninoto, a program specialist with Maryland's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, chronicles her experiences with content standards development and integration first as a teacher in a local program and later as a state staff member. Maryland has developed a full range of standards in adult education, including teacher standards, which have been adapted for Virginia.

After so many years of discussion about various types of standards and their place in adult education, it is exciting to read what adult educators have to say about their efforts to embrace content standards and the way in which standards have impacted their practice. While the path has not always been smooth, the conclusion of these adult educators seems to be that content standards can provide important structure and guidance to instruction that not only benefits teachers, but strengthens the entire program while, most importantly, giving students the support they need to be successful learners.



## Calendar

- May 20**  
Literacy Fair of Virginia  
Keysville, VA
- June 1-3**  
Innovations in e-Learning Symposium  
Fairfax, VA
- 16-19**  
Annual CASAS National Summer Institute  
San Diego, CA
- July 15-17**  
Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL)  
London, UK
- 28-30**  
VAILL: Virginia Institute of Lifelong Learning  
Richmond, VA
- August 26-28**  
LESLLA 2010  
Cologne, Germany
- October 11-13**  
VAACE Conference  
Norfolk, VA
- 14-17**  
Second Language Research Forum  
College Park, MD

# Captivating Commas: A Lesson by Kristin Hott

**Class level:** ABE/GED

**Topic:** Language Arts, Writing:  
Mechanics/Comma Use

**Length:** 4 hours (2, 2-hr sessions)

## Objective(s) including Virginia's GED Content Standards:

By the end of the lesson (2nd session), the learner will apply the comma usage rules to **separate**: items in a series, independent clauses joined by a conjunction, introductory elements, non-essential appositives, and parenthetical expressions from the rest of the sentence with 80% accuracy on a practice worksheet compiled of sample sentences. (See LAW.5)

## Materials/Equipment:

- Steck-Vaughn *Complete GED* book, Mechanics - Lesson #16: Commas, pg. 135
- 10-question quiz
- Cut-up sentences with comma manipulatives (cardboard)
- Newspapers/Newsletters
- Overhead projector/SMART Board
- Handouts (for warm up and guided practice activities)
- Tables or separate areas for "stations"

## Stages of the Lesson Plan

**Warm Up/Review:** Begin with a whole group classroom discussion of speech and the **use of pauses** when we talk. Ask for volunteers to show, verbally, how they might use a pause in a sentence as they talk. Ask them to listen for any change in tone of voice that occurs with such pauses. Allow the class to **discuss** why we use pauses in oral speech and see if a connection arises to the use of commas in writing. If this does not occur, guide them to consider the reason a "pause" in written or verbal communication is necessary and ask about how commas are used in sentences. Allow for a brief discussion of commas, their familiarity or difficulties with them, and a self-assessment of their understanding of why they are used in writing.

**Introduction:** Introduce **mechanics** as a specific portion of the Language Arts, Writing

Test on the GED Tests: Give a brief, general overview of the components of that section, including capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Let learners know that, as a part of punctuation, comma rules and usage are of significant importance. You might let them know that, on the GED Tests, a considerable portion of the correction-based questions will center on comma use. ***Here's where you might formally introduce the lesson's objective.***

**Vocabulary** is one of the first issues to tackle, as non-essential/essential appositives, introductory elements, and parenthetical expressions are all somewhat "bears" for learners to encounter. If students have pre-read the accompanying lesson, ask for volunteers to help explain each.

Review the concept of **punctuation as a road map** for the reader, identifying the comma as an important tool to shape, separate, and prioritize information in a sentence. Bring back the idea of the "pause" talked about in the warm up, and begin review of the 3 comma types that will be covered in the lesson.

**Introduce written examples of 5 sentences** that incorporate one of each of the lesson's comma examples, but be sure to leave the commas out! (overhead projector or handout) Let some organic discussion occur as to whether commas might be needed in each sentence.

As you move through each sentence, notice if students naturally know where the comma belongs, even if they are unable to identify the comma rule that matches it. ***Be sure to remind them that this is ultimately the skill needed, more than memorization of the name of the rule. Focus on application – and an understanding of why the comma is or is not used – is the ultimate goal of the lesson and the way the GED Tests will test students' skills.***

**Guided Practice:** Using sentence strips or 11 x 14" paper strips, cut up sentences that incorporate commas of each type identified in the objective. (Leave out the commas.) Create **"comma stations"** that will have at least 2 examples of the concept in cut-up sentence portions with three-dimensional comma manipulatives.

*Continued on page 4...*

## Captivating Commas Lesson Plan (continued from page 3)

Be sure to label the station and encourage students to re-read the written description of the station's comma rule before beginning the activity.

Students will **assemble the sentences** in written sequence according to the written sample provided (no commas in the sample, please) and will **insert the comma manipulative(s) correctly** between the cut-up sections, according to the description given in the comma rule provided.

**Cut-up sections should not be spliced only where a comma would be inserted, to allow for critical thinking and authentic demonstration of understanding at each station.** (Example: During the / winter months/ people generally wear/ thicker clothing/ to keep/ warm. / = cut This is an example of an introductory element: During the winter months, people generally wear thicker clothing to keep warm.)

Students should have a **check-off sheet** to complete as they move through each of the stations individually, in pairs, or in triads, depending on class size. Allow for approximately 30 minutes of time, during which you circulate, assist, and observe discussion.

Once back in the large group, allow for discussion and gauge the need to re-teach or clarify problems encountered.

**Application/Extension:** Students will now choose from 3 different activities to identify, utilize, and explain comma rules/usage.

1. Students will choose an article from a newspaper (or other short written excerpt) and circle the commas shown. Taking notes, and using their lesson materials, they should prepare to identify at least 3 DIFFERENT reasons a comma has been used in the article.

2. Students will write a paragraph of their own choosing, making sure to incorporate at least 3 different types of comma usages, and be prepared to explain their use in the piece of writing.

3. Students will create a poem or "song"

that teaches an audience about the use of at least 3 different comma rules and be prepared to share the poem at the next class session.

## Evaluation/Assessment:

**Informal:** Review of the application/extension activities in the following lesson session will allow for peer-based and individual self-assessment of understanding. Students will switch papers with another student who will review the work and make comments about its accuracy/ask for clarification.

**Formal:** Students will be given a short quiz, made up of 10 OPT-style Language Arts, Writing correction questions, aiming for at least 80% accuracy.

## Modifications/Accommodations:

Students should be allowed to pre-read lesson materials on comma use prior to the lesson. Kinesthetic activities have been introduced into the guided practice portion of the lesson. Multiple Intelligence strengths are addressed in the extension activities.

*Kristin Hott is an adult educator with Richmond City Public Schools, Department of Adult & Continuing Education. She wrote this lesson while taking the ABE/GED Lesson Planning online course, offered by VALRC. About the course, Kristin said:*

*"I thoroughly enjoyed the online ABE/GED Lesson Planning course! I have been 'Internet savvy' for a long time but had never taken an eight-week course in the virtual world. It was a wonderful way to focus my energy on a specific teaching tool that serves to enhance the architectural component of instruction. The weekly assignments progressed both with structure, provided by the instructor, and organically through the discussion board threads that engaged the entire group of students, all practitioners who had a lot to share and glean. I emerged from the experience more confident in the 'infrastructure' of my lesson plans that actually ground my teaching in meaningful, learner-centered, accommodation-rich activities for my multilevel GED classes. I take my plans much more seriously now than I did before and see them as a record of my creativity, experience, and dedication to my learners. I encourage anyone teaching to consider the class to revitalize and apply a fresh approach to this aspect of instruction."*

# VCU Hosts **VAILL 2010** in Richmond this Summer

## Mark your calendar and plan to attend **VAILL 2010!**

The Virginia Institute for Lifelong Learning (VAILL) will be held July 28-30, 2010, on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. In previous years, ABE/GED practitioners met in Radford, and ESOL practitioners met in Northern Virginia. This one-time joint training will give participants a chance to network and hear what others are doing in their programs. Participants will be provided with lodging in campus facilities, food, and a wonderful opportunity to continue their progress in the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program sponsored by the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center and the Office of Adult Education and Literacy.

Our focus for VAILL this year will be the rollout of Level Two of the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program. Because most workshops offered will be part of Level Two, participants will need to have met some eligibility requirements before their registrations can be processed.

The primary "course package" for both ABE/GED and ESOL instructors at VAILL 2010 will be **Level Two, Sessions 1 & 2** of the certification program. To be eligible for this package, a participant **MUST** have:

- Received certificates for completing Level One, Sessions 1 & 2.
- Taken Level One, Session 3.
- Submitted afterwork for Level One, Session 3.
- The participant's Session 3 afterwork does NOT need to have been approved.
- The participant does not need to have taken a self-selected workshop.



We understand that Level 1, Session 3 may not have been available to all instructors who have begun the certification program and would like to participate in VAILL 2010. Therefore, we will be offering both ABE/GED and ESOL instructors a second course package consisting of **Level One, Session 3 & Level Two, Session 1**. To be eligible for this package, a participant **MUST** have:

- Received certificates for completing Level One, Sessions 1 & 2.
- The participant does not need to have taken a self-selected workshop.

For program managers, VAILL 2010 will consist of **Level Two, Sessions 1 & 2** of the certification program. To be eligible for this package, program managers **MUST** have:

- Received certificates for completing Level One, Sessions 1 & 2.\*
- *\*Exception:* Program managers who attend Level One, Session 2 training in May 2010 may attend VAILL if they have submitted their Action Plan. Plans do NOT need to have been approved.
- Program managers do not need to have taken a self-selected workshop.

The daily agenda is still being developed but tentative plans are to meet beginning with lunch on Wednesday, July 28th and continue through lunch on Friday, July 30th. Registration forms will be distributed through VAELN listservs. The registration fee will remain at \$30.00 as in previous years. More details will follow as plans become more concrete. Talk with your colleagues and plan to attend as a group so you can share in this experience to strengthen your program and the services you provide to your learners.

Questions regarding the logistics of VAILL should be directed to Jane Swing, (540) 831-6207 or [jswing@radford.edu](mailto:jswing@radford.edu), and questions regarding VAILL content or workshop offerings should be directed to Jeffrey Elmore, (800) 237-0178 or [jaelmore@vcu.edu](mailto:jaelmore@vcu.edu). ■

# New River's Journey with CONTENT STANDARDS

by Jenny Bolte

**At the very beginning of the GED Content Standards journey in 2003**, our former state director Dr. Yvonne Thayer called me and asked that I play a role in the development and implementation of the state's creation of GED Content Standards. I couldn't grasp exactly why she had asked me except she knew that my involvement would mean my buy-in. We formed a Steering Committee; then, the writing groups began in 2004. After writing the initial drafts came piloting, re-writes, field reviews, and then statewide roll-out to the field.

Back at my program during these early years, I had a prophetic conversation with a student. When I asked how she was doing, she gave me that mechanical "I'm okay" response. Feeling her frustration, I asked, "What's really up?"

When she set her backpack down on the floor, I knew she was ready to spill what was bothering her. "I just don't feel like I have control over what I'm doing and how long it's going to take until I'm ready to take the GED."

That hit me square in the gut. "Fair enough," I answered her. "Give me some time to think about this one," I concluded.

And I did. I thought a lot about how we were serving our students. I thought about how I would feel sitting in a class not knowing where that proverbial light at the end of the tunnel was. I also thought about how my staff did the best they could with what they had. They didn't have the resources to do anything any differently. This problem was on my head.

Then it hit me: we need a curriculum where the students' learning plans depict exactly what they need to accomplish. The students, then, could set their own pace. Developing curriculum seemed, at the time, like a fairly straight-forward task. It seemed logical that, if we were going to create a curriculum, we use the draft content standards as the starting point – a framework on which we could hang our curriculum.

We would often meet on Friday evenings and other really crazy times to get the job done. From the very beginning, I shared my vision that I wanted our program's GED curriculum to be a

living and breathing document. I never wanted us to pat ourselves on the back and say, "We're done." All along, I was upfront with my staff that I believed that it was the process that was most important to me because I considered it to be the most productive and useful staff development opportunity I could offer. I knew that in order to get the task completed, we would have to learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable. It's hard work creating something and then putting yourself out there for others to critique. I was in a unique position of guiding staff in creating something that would change how we do business. The process flowed each year as we continued to make much needed revisions toward a quality, useful curriculum.

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**"I just don't feel like I have control over what I'm doing and how long it's going to take until I'm ready to take the GED."**

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Each year we got one step closer to what I was envisioning at the beginning of the process in 2004. The longer we worked on the project, the more staff were involved, until just about everyone at one time or another had their hands in the curriculum. It was a long process, but the pay-off was worth it. The energy each year was usually positive and focused; however, when asked to speak outside of our program, I felt awkward because sometimes it's hard to get others to really understand what you're doing. The process was important to me because we were learning about the specific content on the GED Tests, how to use assessment information to guide instructional content, how to work together to accomplish a large task, and, lastly, how to use technology to meet our students' needs. Content standards and curriculum eventually became commonplace in our program, but there was an obvious hole: my staff continued to remind me that we needed to focus our efforts on the Pre-GED level.



I was game. So, I put together a team spear-headed by Sue Parkhurst, a staff member with curriculum writing experience, and asked that they research what was out there for Pre-GED since Virginia doesn't have Pre-GED Content Standards. The team decided to "adopt" Massachusetts's Pre-GED standards to develop our curriculum because their standards seemed most complete and most in line with Virginia's GED standards. By this time, our process was pretty ingrained, and I was able to be almost completely hands-off. All of the work was done in a wiki so I could keep my finger on it without sacrificing another Friday night. By the end of that year, our program managed to have a pretty comprehensive curriculum spanning seamlessly from Pre-GED to GED levels. That felt good.

At first we literally killed forests by photocopying the curriculum for each staff member. Then, as we were introduced to different types of media by the Resource Center, in particular the wiki, we worked toward getting our curriculum set up online so teachers could access what they needed for their classes and students could enroll in and use the curriculum as a distance education program. We were learning as we were going along, and often we'd learn something that caused major changes and revisions. With no formal training in technology, I have kept pressing forward. I just jumped in feet first and hoped my staff would be forgiving when I made mistakes. For awhile it felt like a one-step-forward-two-steps-backwards kind of process, but we just kept truckin'. At the end of the year, we looked back and were moderately pleased with the outcome, and we were at the end of my initial vision for this project.

Then, at VAACE last year, I attended a Resource Center workshop showing us numerous free online resources right at our fingertips. I made the note to myself: "You're crazy to keep paying for stuff." With that in mind, I checked on the date my contract for our online educational software program would expire. "We're going to let them go," I told my fiscal manager, "and work toward aligning all this free stuff with our curriculum." It wasn't a hard sell as everyone knows the seriousness of having to tighten our budgets to do more with less. This new idea put this year's work in motion.

So right now I'm at the place where I can really reap the benefits of this investment of time: my program has a living and breathing curriculum built on standards designed by

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**It seemed logical that, if we were going to create a curriculum, we use the draft content standards as the starting point ... we were learning about the specific content on the GED Tests, how to use assessment information to guide instructional content, how to work together to accomplish a large task, and, lastly, how to use technology to meet our students' needs.**

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adult education practitioners across the state. I have staff who have learned to work together to create a resource that they can use to help their students gain more control over their educational journeys. I personally have learned a great deal about technology and social media. However, I guess best of all is that I can more easily hit the ground running in respect to curriculum development. As new ideas—and then projects—come my way, I am confident we can build from the foundation we have already established. ■

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*Jenny Bolte is adult education program manager at New River Community College.*

# Who Needs Standards Anyway?

by Karen Gianninoto

Many years ago, I was a K-12 teacher who began teaching ESL in the evenings. It was customary in K-12 to have standards and curriculum for subject areas by grade. When I began teaching adult education, my first two thoughts were to review the curriculum and review the standards. I soon discovered that neither existed. I was perplexed about how I could write plans and develop a course of study without some sort of framework. I was not the only isolated adult ESL teacher in Maryland asking those questions. When we came together for state meetings, we all had the same concern and, as a state, we were ready to move forward in developing standards that would provide instructional consistency.

An ESL Workgroup was formed to address the needs of teachers in the field. Expert teachers from the field represented programs from across the state. Urban, suburban, and rural programs were represented as well as adult education programs housed in K-12, community colleges, and community-based organizations. The first workgroup task was to develop the *Maryland Adult ESL Program Standards*. Guidelines were developed for identifying and improving eight major components of adult ESL programs, which include:

- Program Structure, Administration, and Planning
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Recruitment, Intake, and Orientation
- Retention and Transition
- Assessment, Evaluation, and Educational Gains
- Staffing, Professional Development, and Staff Evaluation
- Support Services

As an ESL teacher and leadership team member at a local program, I found these standards very

helpful in completing a program self-evaluation. The standards helped identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and areas for professional development and program improvement. In addition, our program understood how we would be monitored and evaluated by the state. The standards and sample measures assisted our program in determining how we would make changes to improve our program. The program standards were developed using the following objectives for Adult ESL programs in Maryland:

- Develop the learners' English literacy skills, including speaking, reading, writing, and understanding the English language.
- Reflect the learners' goals while considering their roles as family members, community participants, workers, and lifelong learners.
- Provide learners with the skills to apply English accurately and appropriately in a variety of home, community, workplace, and academic settings.
- Use assessment activities to document learners' progress toward advancement to other training programs, employment, post-secondary education, self-sufficiency, attainment of a secondary school diploma, and other goals.
- Integrate second language acquisition with relevant life experiences by emphasizing the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and other culturally specific skills necessary for self-sufficiency.
- Provide a non-threatening learning environment that respects adult ESL learners and integrates their cultural backgrounds and experiences into the instructional process.

In the spring of 2000, I was selected as a member of the ESL Workgroup that was tasked to design, develop, and revise the *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL*. After considering the diversity of adult learners in Maryland, the group began comparing and contrasting models developed in other states. Through this process, the workgroup came to the consensus that Maryland's ESL/ESOL Standards should be



Using content standards, teachers can determine the skills students should know at each level and have a clear plan of skills to be learned in order for students to reach the next proficiency level.

a resource, not a prescription, for state-funded programs, and the completed standards manual should provide an appropriate framework for ESL and EL/Civics instruction.

After the standards were completed, training on use of the standards occurred and the piloting phase began. Interviews and surveys completed on the use of the standards indicated that the *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL* helped teachers in planning instruction. They could determine the skills students should know at each level, and teachers had a clear plan of skills to be learned in order for students to reach the next proficiency level. In addition, programs used the standards to develop curriculum and teacher observation forms. The ESL/ESOL standards align with CASAS and BEST Plus assessments and other informal assessments that programs use to identify the topics and skills the students need to learn. As a teacher during the pilot phase, the standards improved my teaching, and I provided lessons that were more challenging to my students. I could informally assess student skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. By reflecting on the informal assessment, I was able to differentiate learning based on student strengths and weaknesses. Now that I am a state specialist, I observe classes expecting to see the standards in action. In addition, a training guide and observation forms were developed for local program use. The state supports the use of standards by providing a three-part standards training for all new leadership team members each year. The ESL Workgroup designed and released an ESL content standards online course for instructors in 2009. In addition, all ESL instructors are required to be trained in the use of the standards.

Maryland has continued to develop additional standards to guide the field. In July 2005, Adult Education and Literacy Services convened a statewide *Professional Development Symposium* for improving the professional development

system. All Adult Education and Literacy Services grantees participated in the symposium. Grantees examined research, reviewed professional development models, and made recommendations on needed enhancements. Participants decided to adopt teacher standards as one of the first steps in improving instruction and strengthening the professional development system.

The standards were developed by a workgroup. The teacher standards clarify the skills and knowledge needed for quality instruction. In 2008, programs were trained on the purpose and use of the Teacher Standards. Programs began using the standards in 2009 to identify teacher needs and to inform local professional development plans. Feedback has indicated that the teacher standards have helped teachers reflect on their practice and helped programs meet the professional development needs of teachers.

My responsibilities as a state specialist have included keeping the standards in the hands of the teachers and ensuring that the standards meet the needs of the programs by reviewing and revising frequently and by providing professional development on the use of the standards. All of the Maryland standards can be viewed and downloaded on the [Maryland Adult Literacy Resource Center website](#).

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*Karen Gianninoto is Adult Education Program Specialist, Professional Development, in the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning of Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulations.*

Maryland's Teacher Standards provided the framework for the Virginia Adult Education Teacher Standards.

To download a copy of Virginia's teacher standards, visit the [VALRC website](#).

Click "Training," then "Certification Program," and, finally, "Resources," to find the teacher standards in PDF form.

# SMNRs:

# Social Media News Releases

by Victoire Gerkens Sanborn

**P**ress releases have long been considered the starting point of the news cycle. An effective press (news) release is well-written, timely, and sent to publications according to the schedule set up by each publication. But with the decline of newspapers and magazines due to decreasing circulation and competition from online news sources, traditional press releases are no longer regarded as the best communication tool for news announcements. As hand-held devices and portable laptops proliferate, people are able to access information at any time and in any place that provides wireless access. These days, almost every business and organization oversees its own website, and many have begun their own Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts. Wherever Internet and social media sites spring up, press releases follow. Today's organizations have more options for where to place their information and how to disseminate it. This article will discuss the key elements that make up a social media news release (SMNR) and how the SMNR compares and contrasts with the traditional press release.

Social media can no longer be ignored in marketing and advertising. A recent Pew study showed that as many as 70% of people between the ages of 18-29 use social media. Fifty percent

of Generation X and 30% of Baby Boomers also use social media. In addition, news organizations and reporters regularly search the Internet for news items or background information. Savvy businesses and organizations know how to use the concept of inbound marketing, in which people find information about the organization on the web through well-placed tags and social media bookmarks. Done successfully, news placed on social media sites can spread quickly as readers share information with their friends and colleagues via email and text messages and place links, videos, and images on their Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Let's say your organization is holding an event in which free GED testing is offered. In a SMNR, you might include a link to images that you took of the last event (or of the current location) and a link to a podcast that includes test-taking tips or a YouTube video with testimonials from former students or directions for students on how to sign up for your program. Podcasts and videos act like virtual word of mouth and allow users to spread information about the event via email and cell phones, their personal sites, and comments on other blogs and websites.

Creating a SMNR, with its various components, requires planning. The good news

## How to Create a SMNR that will Get Noticed

- Shoot relevant video or photos.
- Include links to your SMNR on your website, blog, Facebook page, and/or Twitter account.
- Add video to your sites and YouTube.
- Add images to your sites and Flickr account.
- Create a podcast and place it on a free podcast directory; then, link to it.
- Release your press release over a social media wire service.
- Create a document or flyer that people can print out, describing the event or more interesting information about your product or services.
- Link the title of the press release to tags and key words in the document, so that it will be picked up by search engines.
- Find a "hook" that reels people in (something new about adult literacy and education that will benefit the community or that people need to be aware of). Ask yourself: Why is this information interesting – NOW?

is that a well-written SMNR shares many of the same qualities as a traditional press release. It must be brief, contain timely information, offer the “Who, What, Why, and Where” in the first paragraph, use interesting quotes, and provide contact information for key people. Because a SMNR targets the Internet, it must also include photos and graphics and be tied to other social media, such as YouTube or podcasts. A good SMNR includes links to background information or sources on the web and provide tags or key words that allow search engines to take the information directly to readers and stakeholders. It is important for anyone who writes a SMNR to consider web audiences and how they pick up news.

### Effective SMNRs contain “the following elements:

- Contact information prominently displayed up top.
- A list of basic facts.
- A series of quotes.
- Program logos and photo headshots.
- Related audio or video.
- Social bookmarking or sharing links to sites such as Digg and del.icio.us.
- RSS feeds.
- Comments.” (Greer, 2008)

People who write SMNRs must be able to use search engine optimization (SEO) techniques. Your SMNR must be tagged and titled with appropriate words that provide an exact description of your information. For example, instead of saying something general like, “Our adult education program serves the largest number of adult students in our community,” your SMNR might state, “ABCLiteracy Program’s new 14-week GED class will begin on April 15, from 6-8 PM, M-Th. Last year 80% of 120 students succeeded in obtaining their GED certificate.”

Other key elements are placing you SMNR on a website that people know well and visit frequently and making your information so relevant or interesting that the SMNR’s links are shared by interested readers. You should also make sure that your SMNR is listed in free online PR sites and linked to social bookmarking sites (such as Digg or Google), free social media sites (such as Twitter), online yellow and white pages, and community portal listings.

The idea is to make your SMNR easy for your target audience to find. Search engines and social bookmarking sites will find your site through the key words and tags you have chosen. Some care must be given in choosing the key words, headings, and phrases that describe your SMNR. If you are recruiting EL/Civics students, for example, you will need to put EL/Civics prominently in the title, first sentence of the first paragraph, the body of the text, your conclusion, and your tags. You might also use other words tied closely to the topic, like civics education, ESOL learners, etc.

Videos, images, and podcasts greatly increase the chance that people will find your sites. As with SMNR tags, you must describe these media with key words and descriptions.

If your content is compelling enough, your SMNR will:

- capture the attention of your readers.
- be syndicated on the sites of web publishers, such as *The Huffington Post*.
- be shared by your readers on sites like Twitter and Facebook.
- be clicked through by your target audience.

In conclusion, like all good writing, the SMNR must be clear, concise, and relevant. By following the guidelines and providing excellent links that others will want to share, you are well on your way to becoming a tech-savvy publicist. ■

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*Victoire Gerkens Sanborn is Literacy Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.*

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- Dunford, April (2008, October 23). A Skeptic’s Guide to Social Media Press Releases. *Rocket Watcher: Product Marketing for Start-ups*. Retrieved from <http://www.rocketwatcher.com/blog/2008/10/a-skeptics-guide-to-social-media-press-releases.html>
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To view a SMNR template, visit:  
[www.shiftcomm.com/Web20Releases/5232660.html](http://www.shiftcomm.com/Web20Releases/5232660.html)

# Standards-in-Action: Before, During, and After

(continued from front page)

a good start by making these user-friendly notebooks, we discovered we were not exactly on the right path.

During Phase I of the pilot, we learned many important things. First, we learned that standards needed to be integrated. A learner may read at an intermediate level but speak at a beginner level. Therefore, all teachers need to understand and familiarize themselves with all levels (literacy, beginner, intermediate, and advanced) of content standards, not just the levels they are teaching. RCPS places students in class based on their ability to read and comprehend. Therefore, although the reading standards may be accurate, their speaking, listening, and writing abilities may be lower or higher than their class placement.

Second, we learned the importance of taking home students' work for additional review.

*As we want our students to feel part of a "community" in class, we as teachers also need that "community."*

As adult educators, we were trained to walk around during class to monitor and check

our learners' work. Rarely, however, did we take home their assignments to assess whether they actually suited learners' needs and abilities. We had a lot of "Ah-ha" moments in our Critical Friends group when we passed around various assignments.

Lastly, and most importantly, we learned the value of a Critical Friends group. We met four times and followed the same specific process at each meeting. We became a learning community that exchanged wonderful ideas on how to improve the quality of our teaching. We had time to reflect and discuss the happenings in our classes and support each other, as teaching can be very isolating. As we want our students to feel part of a "community" in class, we as teachers also need that "community."

So how do we keep what we learned during the Standards-in-Action Pilot Program fresh and continue to share what we learned with new teachers to our program? We make sure

all educators new to our ESOL program attend an orientation that includes information on content standards. While not as thorough as the pilot program, it is a good start for teachers. In addition, we ensure that they take the ESOL strand of the Virginia Content Standards Online Training, offered through the Resource Center. We pair new teachers with "expert" teachers. These "expert" teachers lend support, answer questions, and help with lesson planning using content standards as a guide.

Every teacher is given a notebook with a copy of the content standards and a chart to keep track of the standards they have addressed. The chart is a great way for teachers to stay familiar with the standards and to track their students' progress. The main idea is for teachers to realize that the content standards were developed to be helpful but not overwhelming or confusing. The standards help teachers plan the best possible lessons for their students while ensuring students in programs across the state are achieving the same set of skills. ■

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*Aimee Clarke is ESL Coordinator for Roanoke City Schools Adult Education Program.*

# Safety in the Workplace:

## Two Connected Lessons by Cathy Gilbert

**Class level:** ESOL High Intermediate

**Length:** 2 sessions (with two connected lesson plans) at 2.5 hrs. each

### **Objective(s) including Virginia's ESOL Content Standards:**

**Lesson 1:** Students will be able to recognize safety signs and phrases in the workplace and respond appropriately to oral safety instructions.

**Lesson 2:** Students will be able to recognize safety hazards in the workplace and understand preventative measures.

- **L5.4** Use a variety of listening strategies to effectively overcome barriers to communication.
  - a) Distinguish tone (e.g., anger, humor) in a variety of situations
  - b) Restate in response to targeted requests for clarifications
- **L6.3** Identify specific information in conversations and connected discourse.
  - a) Ascertain specific information in conversations (e.g., post-surgical instructions)
  - d) Recognize common slang and colloquialisms
- **L6.4** Use a wide variety of listening strategies to effectively and consistently overcome barriers to communication in everyday life, social, and workplace situations.
- **R5.1** Comprehend most authentic materials on everyday topics related to life roles.
- **R6.1** Comprehend authentic materials on everyday topics related to life roles.

### **Enabling skills:**

**Critical thinking skills:** Students will be able to quickly and appropriately respond to emergency situations through role play simulations. Students will identify safety hazards and recommend preventative measures.

**Vocabulary:** Students will recognize and interpret safety signs, hazards, common slang, and safety language for emergencies.

**Life skills:** Students will draw a diagram of their work station/dept., equipment, and safety equipment and locate all safety signs and exits.

### **Language skill focus:**

**Listening:** Students will listen to a recording of many voices shouting and calling instructions during an emergency situation. They will learn listening strategies to focus on their supervisor's voice and instruction.

**Speaking:** Students will be able to say the appropriate safety terms in good English, with clear pronunciation.

**Reading:** Students will be able to read a variety of safety signs, focusing on those in their own work environment.

**Writing:** Students will draw a diagram of their work station/dept., locating safety equipment and exits.

### **Materials/Equipment:**

Safety signs; safety words and phrases (on flip chart paper); masking tape; safety sign worksheet; flip chart paper, markers; flashcards with safety instructions, slang, and safety equipment; drawing paper; drawing of a workplace (showing major equipment, signs, and location of workers and safety equipment); CD/tape player and recording of many voices shouting instructions in English ("flip the switch," "crank it," "turn it off," etc.); sketch for workplace simulation and "equipment" (cardboard boxes, books, etc. can be used as well as tables and chairs); signs for simulation and real or pretend safety equipment; numbered signs to indicate steps in the process (function of the simulated work area); flashcards for safety hazards and assigned tasks for employees; safety hazards drawings; safety hazards worksheet and posters; prizes (for warm up); guest speaker (if none available, bring a workplace accident story to read together)

*Continued on page 14...*

## Stages of the Lesson Plan: Lesson 1 (continued from page 13)

**Warm Up/Review:** Safety sign matching: As students arrive, they will be given a safety word or phrase. There will be signs posted around the room. Students will match their safety word or phrase with one of the safety signs posted. Students will then get a worksheet with all of the signs. They will go around the room and copy words and phrases from the flip charts. They will be encouraged to discuss the signs and words with each other. If students disagree on where a particular word or phrase goes, that one will be held for class discussion.

**Introduction:** Ask students about the safety sign matching game: which words, phrases, and signs did they recognize? Ask where they have seen these signs. Ask about any other signs they have seen in the workplace, and have students draw those on additional flip chart paper pages. Also ask students about words or phrases they have heard (or seen) at work that have not yet been mentioned. Put these on flip chart paper as well.

**Presentation Part 1:** Group vocabulary and signs by topic. One group at a time, present new vocabulary (from signs, words, and phrases) and equipment and common phrases (proper English and slang) for safety instructions. Practice pronunciation for each and help students to correctly identify each with its appropriate group. Students can correct their worksheets as each group is presented.

**Guided Practice Part 1:** Instructor or tutor will call out the flashcards one by one. Students will complete their worksheets, matching the given safety instructions and slang with the appropriate sign and safety word or phrase. When all flashcards have been called out, review answers and collect worksheets.

**Communicative Practice Part 1:** Ask one student to be the supervisor. The supervisor will be given a slang expression or safety instruction to call out to the rest of the group. The rest of the students will need to quickly point to the correct sign and demonstrate how to comply with the instruction. Choose another supervisor and continue in this manner until all flashcards

have been practiced. Separate flashcards into two groups, those the students have mastered and those that will need additional practice.

**Presentation Part 2:** Show students the workplace drawing. Help students to identify the pieces of machinery, signs, and safety words, and show the location of workers. Answer questions and ensure that students understand the key elements of the drawing as well as the function of the work area and the location and function of each piece of safety equipment. Use numbers (Step 1, Step 2, etc.) to assist students in describing the function of the work area.

**Guided Practice Part 2:** Pass out drawing paper and instruct students to draw their own workplace, focusing on the department or immediate area in which they work. Students who are not working may choose to draw a workplace from a previous job, their own kitchen, or a community place (i.e., restaurant or store). Students should write their names on the back.

**Communicative Practice Part 2:** Pair students and have them explain the key elements of their drawing to their partner. Partners will ask questions about signs, safety words, function of the work area (Step 1, Step 2, etc.), and location and function of safety equipment.

**Application/Extension:** Students will be asked to add more details to their drawings as homework. They will be asked to note signs and safety words as well as places where perhaps there should be a sign or warning. Students will be encouraged to speak to their supervisors about our lesson and ask questions about their work areas.

**Evaluation:** Review worksheets and watch students as they respond to the "supervisor's" instructions. Also listen and guide students as they explain their drawings.

## Stages of the Lesson Plan: Lesson 2

**Warm Up/Review:** Safety hazards guessing game: Students will receive a safety hazards worksheet as they arrive. They will know (from sample posted on the board) how many hazards are in each picture. Prizes will be awarded for the highest correct number of hazards (dangerous things) spotted by individual students.

**Introduction:** Review the safety hazards game, asking students to go to the posters on the wall to point out hazards they spotted. Ask students to explain what the hazard is and why it is considered to be a hazard. Go through each poster this way until all hazards have been identified. For each poster, ask students, "What is the hazard, where is the hazard, and why is it dangerous: what might happen?"

**Presentation Part 1:** Present vocabulary for preventative measures. Where appropriate, match with pictures (i.e., safety equipment, etc.). Ask students, "What is the potential or possible danger here? What could be done to prevent an accident?"

**Presentation Part 2:** Introduce guest speaker to talk about workplace safety by telling a "true story" and asking students what could have been done to prevent the accident. If no speaker is available, use a story from the Internet or from "True Stories" that describes a workplace accident. Help students to focus on the cause of the accident (drawing a diagram together to show what happened). Ask students for ideas on how this accident could have been prevented.

**Guided Practice:** Put students in groups of three. Ask students to look at their drawings (from homework) and identify potential hazards for their group. Ask students to consider an accident that has occurred in the past or something that might happen. Students may add to their drawings, but the focus will be on explaining potential problems to the other members of the group. Group members will give suggestions for preventative measures. Review ideas with the whole class.

**Communicative Practice:** Explain to students that we are going to simulate a workplace. Show students how to quickly help to set up the room, following the diagram/sketch of the simulated work area. Explain: One of you will be the supervisor and the rest will be employees in this area. The supervisor will set up a safety hazard, without telling you what it is. You will be assigned a task. When the work starts, the first person who notices the safety hazard will call, "Stop!" Everyone will stop work while the safety hazard is explained, then removed.

Ask for a volunteer to be the supervisor of

the department. The supervisor will choose a safety hazard flashcard. All other students will close their eyes while the supervisor sets up the "hazard." Students (employees) open their eyes and supervisor directs them to their stations and tells them their assigned tasks and the steps or function of the work area. Work commences at the supervisor's command. Go through several simulations until students become adept at noticing safety hazards.

**Discussion:** After the simulations, facilitate a discussion between "employees" and "supervisors" regarding safety hazards that were noticed and recommended preventative measures. Discuss what might have happened if we had not reacted quickly and if the equipment were real machinery.

**Application/Extension:** Students will be encouraged to bring copies of the handouts to their supervisors and offer to assist with safety training demonstrations.

**Evaluation:** Students will participate in a series of simulated workplace hazards. Safety signs will be displayed. Quick and appropriate responses will be assessed by peers, tutors, and instructor. Play recording of many voices shouting instructions; evaluate students' responses. ■

### **The Stories Behind the Lesson (continued from back cover)**

*equipment with no one else in the vicinity to render aid in an emergency.*

*"These two incidents occurred in western Virginia at two separate workplaces. Either accident could have happened to anyone. I believe it is imperative that employers teach and practice with their supervisors, assistants, and all employees, how to cut off the power to a machine in an emergency. I also believe that employers should insist on a "safety language" that is common English and that everyone should have to memorize those phrases. These phrases should also be posted near all major equipment.*

*"Rosa especially hopes that other people will learn from her mistake. She holds up her two hands and says, 'I did this to myself because I was careless. If my supervisor had been in the room with me, I know that she would have unplugged the saw and saved my second hand.'"*

## afety in the Workplace: The Stories Behind the Lessons

This issue of *Progress* includes standards-based ABE/GED and ESOL lesson plans, written by Virginia instructors. We hope instructors will feel free to rip these pages out of the newsletter and use them in their own classes (if appropriate). The ESOL lesson plans on safety in the workplace were created by **Cathy Gilbert**, an instructor in the Northern Shenandoah Valley Adult Education Program. She submitted the lessons while taking the Beyond Basics: ESOL Lesson Planning online course offered by the Resource Center. About the lessons, Cathy says:

*"The inspiration came from two separate work accidents, both of which I believe could have been prevented, had the safety lesson been covered in ESL-friendly terms at work.*

*"One incident was a man who got his arm caught in a machine. He suffered serious and permanent damage to the arm and hand and is now on disability. The American supervisor was apparently too far away to reach him quickly, so he began yelling at the other workers, 'Hit the switch, hit it, hit it!' None of those words made*

*sense to the limited English speakers.*

*"The second, more serious incident involved a woman who was cleaning a saw. She told me that the saw was off, but as she began to clean it, her hand got caught and cut off four of her fingers. Her sleeve was still caught in the saw and she could not reach to pull the plug or turn off the machine. She said that she was in agony and was afraid that it would pull her entire arm through the saw, so she reached in with her other hand to try to rescue the first hand. Three fingers of her other hand were quickly cut off. This woman is also now on disability.*

*"She told me that she knew her supervisor said to make sure that the saws were unplugged before cleaning them, but she forgot to check, because in the past, they had always been unplugged when she came to do her job. The person who runs the saw forgot to unplug it that day, the supervisor forgot to check, and the woman forgot to check. Another safety issue here is that there was a person working on*