

PLUGGEDINVA

Teaching Toward Transitions

by Karen Gent

Transition seems to be the buzzword in adult education right now. When I hear the word "transition," it reminds me of a television commercial I've seen that advertises transition eyeglass lenses, which change their shading based on changing light. The advertisement makes the appeal that transition lenses are able to quickly adjust and adapt in changing light. I believe that same principle can be applied to adult learners who must adjust and adapt in an environment of change as they participate in transition programs like PluggedInVA. As an adult education instructor, I have found it necessary to make adjustments and adaptations from teaching in a traditional adult education classroom to teaching in a contextualized transition program.

PluggedInVA is a six-month program that seeks to provide motivated adult learners with a contextualized GED® program integrated with some type of technical training. It helps transition adult learners to community college and/or entry level jobs in the workplace. Participants are dually

enrolled in an adult education program and a local community college. Various certifications and as many as twenty-nine college credits may be earned by a student during the course of the program. The program has a flexible design in order to meet the unique needs of individual learners at varying skill levels.

I have been teaching traditional ABE and GED® preparation classes with open enrollment since 2004. My first experience teaching in a transition program with closed enrollment was in 2009 when Southwest Regional Adult Education was chosen to pilot PluggedInVA Information Technology. I have since taught in two additional PluggedInVA cohorts that focused on information technology and entrepreneurship.

I was onboard and excited to be part of the pilot project from the ground level. PluggedInVA proved to be just as innovative and challenging as I had anticipated, and I had to make adjustments in my teaching strategies to meet the demands

Instructional Quality

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A Few Words on *Progress*

The contributors to this issue of *Progress* include national leaders in adult education, Mary Ann Corley and Jackie Taylor, as well as adult educators from Virginia. While each of them presents their own unique perspective on teacher and instructional quality, no one disputes the need for every adult educator to keep up with the new research and promising practices.

The more diverse a practitioner's perspectives and knowledge, the more likely she or he will be to implement an array of effective approaches that will meet the needs of more students.

We often hear from the field that there is just too much to learn. That can be a problem for all of us. We are regularly told that we must understand how to integrate technology into instruction, learn about transitions, understand workforce issues in our communities, employ research-based numeracy and reading practices, use assessment to inform instruction, develop standards-based lessons, and on and on ... It is often hard to decide where to start or what to do.

That is why *Progress* is beginning the **One Goal Project**. We are challenging every adult educator in the state to start by choosing to implement one goal to improve instructional quality. With the reorganization of Virginia's adult education system into regions, it seems to be a good time for adult educators to commit themselves to making one positive change in their practice beginning in the new school year. There are a myriad of ideas in this issue, but you may have something else in mind. Whatever it is, make the commitment to that goal and follow through with action steps to achieve it.

We would like to know about your successes and your failures. Yes, failures: we often learn more by trying something new and failing than by implementing a plan that succeeds. So if some part of your plan doesn't work, just reflect on what you will do differently next time. Beginning next spring, we will publish examples of the One Goal Project in *Progress* so that you can share with and learn from your colleagues across the state. Write up your One Goal Project experiences and send them to Hillary Major at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. We look forward to hearing from you.



Calendar

July

29 - August 1

Correctional Education Association 67th International Conference
St. Paul, MN

September

8 International Literacy Day

17 Citizenship Day

October

5-6

VATESOL 2012
Norfolk, VA

11-12

VAACE (Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education) Annual Conference
Williamsburg, VA

17-19

National Career Pathways Network Conference
Richmond, VA

24-27

International Dyslexia Association Annual Conference
Baltimore, MD

November

9-12

Effective Transitions in Adult Education 2012
Providence, RI
collegetransition.org



Barbara E. Gibson

Tutor Training Quality and Student Outcomes

by Victoire Gerkens Sanborn

Introduction

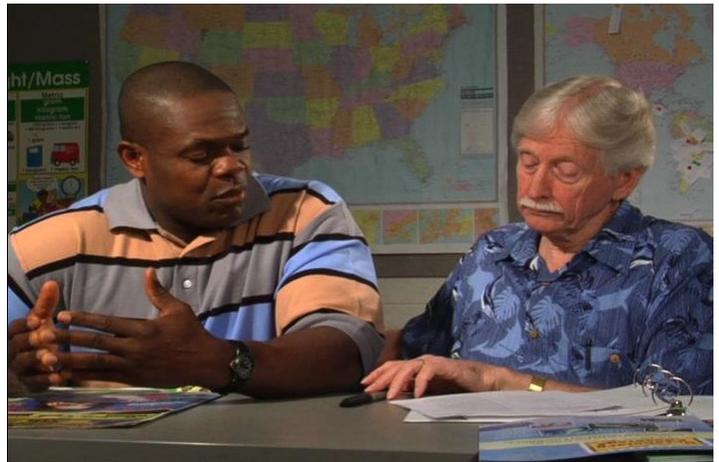
A community-based adult literacy organization (CBLO) faces some of the toughest challenges of any nonprofit organization in successfully achieving its mission. CBLOs serve individuals who read at the very lowest levels of literacy. Most of these adults have a learning difficulty or undiagnosed learning disability (some say the numbers approach 80%). Such students associate the classroom with failure and many recall only bad experiences in school. Due to budget constraints, CBLOs rely on volunteer tutors to teach their adults. Most potential volunteers sign up with little to no teaching experience. They arrive at a volunteer orientation with optimism, many having successfully helped their child to read or a sibling with school work, only to lose confidence when they learn about the intense training and tutoring requirements and the challenges they will face in helping these very low level learners.

Faced with such

CBLOs serve adults who read at the very lowest levels of literacy, but most volunteers sign up with little to no

teaching experience. and who are swiftly matched with a student tend to stay long enough to help their students achieve a literacy goal, but these successes are slow and incremental. Although a small percentage of tutors remain 5 years or more, CBLO staff normally experience a continuous and ongoing revolving door of recruiting and training tutors.

These activities take an enormous amount of time and resources for an already overworked staff, for it is a rare literacy organization that can hire sufficient staff to oversee their volunteers and students closely. The executive director and program manager often work part time. Full-time staff tend to wear many hats. Given the



finding new tutors in a competitive and shrinking volunteer pool, many organizations are tempted to change their tutor and training requirements, taking any adult with a high school degree who shows an interest in tutoring (regardless of their ability to teach), reducing the length of a tutor training workshop in order to make training seem more palatable, and relaxing ongoing professional development requirements in order to make tutoring seem less onerous.

While such measures might show quick results, what impact do such changes have on student outcomes? Does altering tutor training truly result in tutor retention? If so, for how long? And how effective are tutors whose teaching skills have not been fully developed, or who are unable to take advantage of a teachable moment because they can tutor only with canned lesson plans and workbooks? Wouldn't programs be

high turnover rate and the daunting task of
PROGRESS ∴ *Volume 24, No.3*

better served by maintaining rigorous training standards that follow best practices (and risk losing a number of potential tutors who cannot take the demands of the job) over relaxing their policies and providing substandard training?

The Job of the Volunteer Tutor

Before addressing these concerns, we need to examine the position of a tutor more closely. These volunteers are essential to the success of a CBLO, providing one-on-one or small group instruction to adults, tailoring their lessons to the learner's strengths and goals, and working closely with staff to ensure measurable

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Research Says: Teachers Matter

An Interview with **Mary Ann Corley**

Note: Mary Ann Corley, from American Institutes for Research (AIR), spoke in June with Progress editor Hillary Major. The two had recently worked together on the TEAL project, which focused on ABE writing instruction. Mary Ann Corley spoke about current research, national professional development efforts, and her own most memorable training experience; her suggestions for practitioners inspired the Progress One Goal Project.

Why is “teacher quality” such a hot topic right now?

MAC: Well, there is research that shows that teacher effects are extremely large, that the teacher that any student has makes a huge difference in that student’s achievement. Researchers Sanders and Rivers came up with the statistic that three years with a highly effective teacher can boost student achievement as much as 50 percentile points, which is huge. Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain showed that an increase in teacher quality of one standard deviation is worth as much as a ten-student decrease in class size, which is pretty cool. And one of the more oft-quoted studies, Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004), said that teachers are the single greatest school-based influence on student achievement and can either negatively or positively affect student performance.

So I think there’s a huge demand for accountability because we see that the United States has slipped in terms of students’ skills

when they leave school and, when they get to college, the kinds of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) materials that they can handle. There are some pretty sobering statistics out there about how our world competitiveness is slipping. In K-12, No Child Left Behind was an attempt to boost student outcomes, but we know that student outcomes are affected by the quality of the teachers. In adult education, the issue of teacher quality is gaining in importance as standards become more rigorous, the GED® test becomes more rigorous, and we become more focused on our students’ abilities, not just to pass tests, but to succeed when they get to postsecondary education or to the world of work. We’ve got to give our students skills for life, and the teacher is critical.

Let me say, too, that you’ve asked about “teacher quality,” but I prefer talking about “teacher effectiveness.” Teacher quality is the input, what goes into a teacher’s background and skills, including degrees and licenses and professional development as well as the teacher’s knowledge of content and teaching strategies. Teacher effectiveness, however, is the outputs: the teacher’s practices, what she or he does in the classroom, attitudes and rapport with students, students’ comfort level in the classroom and motivation to learn, and student output. Recent research is shifting from teacher quality to teaching quality or instructional quality, and we measure that through the contributions to student growth and learning. There is some research, too, that shows that teacher inputs (certifications, degrees, and subject area majors) really don’t impact student achievement; it’s the effectiveness that does.



Three years with a highly effective teacher can boost student achievement as much as 50 percentile points ...
Teachers are the single greatest school-based influence on student achievement.

To me, the outcomes for the students are most important. Clearly, you need teacher quality, you need the inputs of degrees and licenses, but it's the teacher effectiveness that I think is the critical piece that makes all the difference with our students.

Speaking of that effectiveness piece, do you see or have you been part of any promising national or model systems for ensuring or improving teacher/instructional quality?

MAC: I don't know much about initiatives outside of adult education, although the American Institutes for Research hosts the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (<http://www.tqsource.org>), which has all kinds of information on their website.

I think the initiatives that are really working toward improving teaching excellence in adult education are STAR, TEAL, and Standards-in-Action – particularly STAR and TEAL, which have really concentrated on the question: What do we need to do to improve teaching? [Editor's note: STAR, or Student Achievement in Reading, is a comprehensive reading reform initiative developed by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE). It includes professional development, tools, and resources that teach effective reading instruction with a focus on reading components and evidence-based instruction and help build state and local systems in support of reading improvement. TEAL, or Teaching Excellence in Adult Education, is an OVAE-sponsored initiative designed to improve the quality of teaching in adult education in the content areas through professional development materials, strategies, and technical assistance. In its first two years, TEAL focused on the content area of writing for ABE students, working intensely with small teacher cohorts from 12 states including Virginia.]

I just wish we had more years and more money to develop TEAL, because we've just scratched the surface. But we're seeing results and hearing positive things from the participating teachers, not just about writing instruction but about topics like differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Teachers are saying, "Oh my God, this formative assessment stuff is dynamite!" You know, many of us who are maybe a little bit aged weren't exposed to a lot of this stuff when

Teacher effectiveness is the output: the teacher's practices and attitudes ... and we measure that through contributions to student growth and learning.

we went through school because it just wasn't part of the jargon back then or the knowledge that was given to teachers.

Mary Beth Curtis was one of the leads with STAR and was also on our advisory board for TEAL. When she looked at what we were doing with our online courses on UDL, differentiated instruction, formative assessment, self-regulated learning, strategy instruction, and lesson planning, she remarked on how all these aspects that cut across content areas are applicable to STAR teachers, too. These are areas that all of our teachers need to know about, no matter what they're teaching. So, taking the ego out of it, I'd like to say that STAR and TEAL are two of the projects that are really moving adult ed in the right direction when it comes to teaching effectiveness.

With the TEAL initiative, participants had the sustained experience of going through online courses, having a peer cohort, having a mentoring component, and getting connected with research and with specific applications of research. Are there other elements or features of STAR and TEAL that you feel make them work the way they do?

MAC: I think having a cohort, or a professional learning community is very important. When we decided with TEAL to run the online courses for a year before convening face-to-face for a summer institute in D.C., we were thinking mostly of how to cover the content we needed to address rather than putting a lot of forethought into how to build a sense of community and connection. We didn't know how it would go, but to our delight, all the different state groups started to connect with one another and became a learning community. So as we were facilitating the courses, Heidi Silver-Pacuilla and I didn't have to say or do much when you guys were having discussions:

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Research Says: Teachers Matter, An Interview with Mary Ann Corley (continued from page 5)

you were teaching each other. Then, when you came to the summer institute, there was such high energy because you were getting to meet people that you had been talking to all year.

So I see the professional learning community as very important. There's so much research on how professional learning communities are some of the best ways for teachers to learn and to change their practice because they allow teachers to share in a non-threatening way and learn from one another. So, Hillary, you would share something online and everyone would go "that's great!" and then Guillermo in California would jump in and do the same thing ... and, to me, that was a great payoff. We didn't know that was going to happen, and we're glad it did.

But I do think that all of the components you mentioned, from peer cohorts to mentoring, are important. All the research shows that professional development needs to be sustained. You can't do just the one-shot workshop, or what I call the "hit-and-run workshop," because it doesn't change practice. One of the best things to change practice is peer coaching. In TEAL, the states that emerged as having a strong cohort of participating teachers and a strong coordinator encouraged their teachers to share with one another. That peer coaching or mentoring or sharing continued the learning from the national professional learning community down to the state level.

That leads into the next question, which is: at the local level, what are some ways teachers and managers can focus on improving instructional quality or teacher effectiveness?

MAC: I think they need to learn, if they don't already know, what some of the key elements are in terms of creating the right kind of environment for learning to take place for adults. They should be focusing on student-centered learning, where the students are co-creators of learning as opposed to passive recipients of knowledge that the teacher transmits. That's a very important point.

I think anybody who's looking at changing practice needs to start small. You could explore starting a student-centered learning environment by looking at principles of either differentiating instruction or Universal Design for Learning, where you give the students multiple options for accessing the information you're presenting to them and multiple options for showing you that they've learned the information. You can start small by just taking your favorite lesson and saying, "Well, I've done this successfully however many times now; what can I do to make it more multisensory to reach more students? What can I do to group my students so that they're not all just working independently?"

So one easy place to start is just by sharing

Resources

[National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality:](#)

Though aimed at K-12 audiences, this website hosts reports and information that may be of interest to managers, trainers, and teacher leaders. For example, the issue brief ***Job-embedded Professional Development: What It Is, Who Is Responsible, and How to Get it Done Well*** features examples of job-embedded and non-job-embedded learning opportunities.

[TEAL:](#)

On the **Resources** page, find TEAL Fact Sheets on topics including:

- **Student-centered Learning**
- **Universal Design for Learning**
- **Differentiated Instruction**

The TEAL ***Just Write! Guide*** includes sections on enhancing teaching practices, with topics including:

- **Applying Universal Design for Learning**
- **Differentiating Instruction**
- **Implementing Gradual Release of Responsibility**

Teachers should be focused on student-centered learning, where students are co-creators of learning as opposed to passive recipients of knowledge that the teacher transmits.

some basic principles of student-centered learning with teachers and then making available either an administrator or a lead teacher who can actually be there, not necessarily to observe the teachers, but to share points. You could do study circles, for example, where you read a short article about how to create a student-centered learning environment, let people talk about it in a one-hour conference call or face-to-face meeting, and then have them create an implementation plan. If a teacher doesn't set a goal to make one change – not a huge, dramatic change but just a small change – then classroom practice is not going to change. If managers and professional development specialists could help teachers to set one goal for making a student-centered learning environment, and then just work on that until they're comfortable with it, and then see what the next goal might be, we'd be continually improving our own professional growth and our own teaching. Collectively, if you've got a group of teachers working on different goals, they'll be learning from each other when they come back together, and they might hear about other practices they want to try. But the greatest benefit is that teachers are going to start seeing student results in their own classrooms.

So it's hard for me to identify just one thing you can do to start focusing on improving instructional quality, but I'd start with something that's research-driven and that we have evidence for. I'd get teachers reading about the topic and talking about it and then setting their own individual goals. I'd then have teachers do their own self-assessments of whether or not they've reached their goal. They can also ask students, "How did you like this? What do you think about this?" There are probably a million things that teachers and managers can do to affect instructional quality, but my best recommendation is to start by setting one goal.

On a personal note, can you share a little about the most meaningful professional development experience that you've had?

MAC: The experience that stands out for me is from when I was the GED® administrator in Maryland, years ago. I was sent with about twenty other people to an outside, week-long course on facilitative leadership. They brought in a group of three or four facilitators, and the whole workshop was absolutely dynamite. The week went so fast and I learned so much, but what made it great was that everything was interactive. The facilitators would do mini-lectures, 15 minutes or so about a concept, and then they would get everyone up into groups to try things.

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The One Goal Project

Have you set a goal make a change or try something new in your classroom this fall?

Tell *Progress*! Share your resolution by writing the *Progress* editor, Hillary Major, at hmajor@vcu.edu — or tell us about it on our Facebook page! Beginning next spring, *Progress* will begin printing what we hear from you about your One Goal Project experience.

Teaching Toward Transitions

(continued from front page)

of a rigorous contextualized curriculum. I had a paradigm shift from a classroom focused primarily on educational functioning level (EFL) gains and GED® test preparation to one focused on those things plus much more, including college survival skills, 21st century skills, professional

soft skills, and the Career Readiness Certificate. In other words, the focus became meeting the needs of learners who were transitioning to college and career readiness. PluggedInVA was not just a learning experience for the students:

it was definitely a learning experience for me with each new cohort.

Until PluggedInVA, I had never helped learners prepare to take ACT's WorkKeys® assessment, through which they earn a Career Readiness Certificate. I had to familiarize myself with both entities and become acquainted with KeyTrain®, the online training system for career readiness skills. I became the KeyTrain® administrator for Southwest Regional Adult Education, and I provide set-up and training for other instructors. Most recently, I have been trained to be a

WorkKeys® assessment administrator and will be able to administer the test to my next cohort of students.

In all PluggedInVA cohorts, students receive training in information technology (IT). With IT skills at the forefront, I felt compelled to

The focus became meeting the needs of learners who were transitioning to college and career readiness: it was definitely a learning experience for me.

evaluate my own IT skills as an instructor and was motivated to integrate technology into the classroom on a much more significant level than I had done in the past. It meant that my lessons were accompanied by Microsoft PowerPoint slides, that online resources were utilized to enhance my teaching, that online communication took place through social media, and that research skills were taught to prepare students for classroom projects.

Research Says: Teachers Matter, An Interview with Mary Ann Corley (continued from page 7)

There was one activity on facilitation that I will never forget. Each of us had get up in front of a smallish group and facilitate a very short lesson. Before my turn, the facilitators told these two women sitting in the back of the room that they should talk to each other the whole time I was facilitating. And as I was trying to teach this lesson, they kept talking. In these cases, I think we all sort of wonder what to do, whether to say something. You don't like to be rude or terse with people; on the other hand, they were being rude, and it was nerve-wracking to have to make the decision. So I let the talking go on for a while and then I stopped and said, as politely as I could, "Hey, you guys, is there something you want to share with all of us? If not, I'd really like you to pay attention to this one part, because if you don't get this, you're going to miss the next part of what we're doing." Then I got a really

One of the nicest things about that week came at the very end. On the first day, we had drawn the name of a secret buddy out of a hat. We were to observe that person throughout the week. On the last day, we formed a big circle, and the facilitators started with one person, saying something very positive about that person. So the person would stand in the middle of the circle and hear all these nice things being said about him, and then he would pick the person who was his secret buddy and pull her into the circle and say something very nice about her. And so, by the time we went around the whole circle, everybody felt like someone had said something positive about them. I thought what the person who had my name said was so nice that I've never forgotten it: "She didn't say much, but when she did have something to say, it was worth listening to." And I thought: Wow!

nice thumbs-up from the lead facilitator.
8

That's nice.

The learning gaps associated with IT skills were easily identifiable. As one would expect, it was true that some of the older students had more deficiencies while many of the younger students proved to be very proficient with their IT skills. This common challenge in the cohorts provided excellent opportunities to incorporate peer teaching as the more skilled students assisted their classmates who were struggling.

Integrating technology into writing instruction proved to be a rigorous but successful endeavor for me. As a means to accomplish this task in the pilot program, I decided that I would have the students complete all of their writing assignments in Microsoft Word. In my excitement about this, I failed to consider that not all of the students had sufficient keyboarding skills or sufficient knowledge of the applications of Microsoft Word to perform the assigned tasks. With the first assignment, I was quickly jolted back to reality and found myself teaching students how to create and format Microsoft Word documents. Necessary adjustments were made to accommodate that first class, and it was later decided by curriculum developers that each future cohort would begin with a keyboarding class. Consequently, students' documents in subsequent cohorts were hand-written until the

students were adequately prepared to make the transition to Microsoft Word applications.

As is common in open enrollment classrooms, retention remains a constant challenge in these closed enrollment cohorts but is minimized through the encouragement of instructors and peers and through the program's student-centered, credit-bearing curricula. The majority of PluggedInVA participants are able to persist and finish the entire program with many successes. The results are that EFL gains are made, that various certifications and college credits are earned, and that learners develop the confidence, motivation, and skills needed to impact their futures.

I have learned in the context of PluggedInVA that flexibility, creativity, and innovation are necessary ingredients in being an effective instructor. PluggedInVA is on the cutting edge of a new trend in adult education. As the light changes, so to speak, instructors must gear up and be ready to make their own transitions in order to move adult learners beyond the GED® test and equip them for college and career readiness. ■

Karen Gent is Regional Fast Track Coordinator with Southwest Regional Adult Education.

So throughout the week these three or four facilitators really put themselves out to us, to make sure that we were involved in hands-on activities, and to speak with each of us individually if there were things that we could do to improve. The facilitators were what made the experience; they listened to all perspectives. They never said, "Oh no, that's not the answer." Instead, they allowed the group process to take over, so if somebody was going in the wrong direction, the facilitators didn't need to say anything because the rest of the group was able to take care of it in a polite way. It was a wonderful model for me of how to do professional development. ■

Mary Ann Corley is Project Director for TEAL and Principal Research Analyst for American Institutes for Research.

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Quality Online Teacher Professional Development

by Joanne Huebner

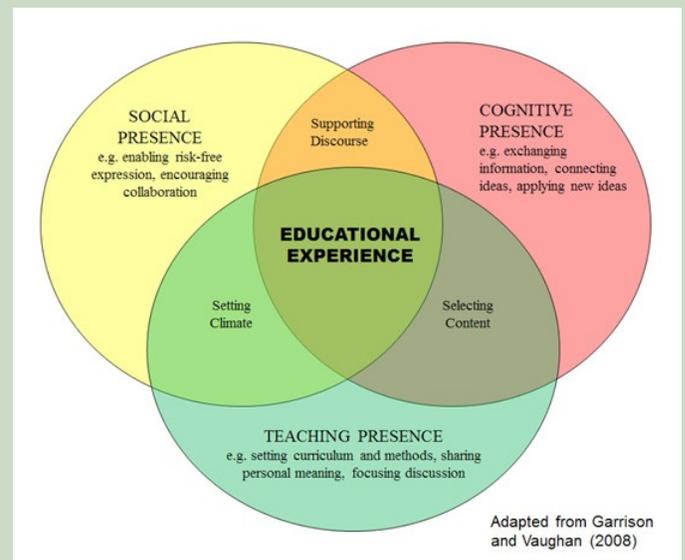
There is no doubt that online teacher professional development will play an increasing role in professional development plans as adult education programs grapple with continuous program improvement while balancing the changing roles of program managers, recruiting and retaining a new generation of teachers, and effectively managing data in an ever-volatile funding environment. Yet, the online teacher professional development experience does not always align with definitions of “quality professional development” or the goals of continuous program improvement.

What should you expect of a quality online teacher professional development experience? In essence, no less than what you would expect of bricks-and-mortar professional development: that it 1) communicates new or enhanced information that provides for individual learning and professional growth, 2) changes and improves teaching practices through immediate application and testing in the work environment, and 3) offers an opportunity for individuals to contribute to the learning and professional growth of others. It is in the third expectation that the online environment can and should excel, opening up the adult learning professional community beyond the confines of a walled classroom. But, first, we need to shed our misconceptions about online or distance learning being a one-to-one endeavor.

A Changing Expectation of the Online Experience

Our current online learning practices have historical roots in the correspondence courses of the late 1800s. It may make us chuckle to think of a time when adult learners received an envelope in the mail containing lessons and worksheets that were filled out and returned by mail to a verifying institution for grading, but current distance education policy allows for just that. Yet, over the years distance education has provided more than a means to educate the masses. A serendipitous benefit has been that it provided the means in which to assess emerging paradigms in adult learning and to field-test effective models and methods to

improve instruction. The transformational use of computer technology has been at the core of these models and methods for the past 50 years. Connectivism, one such emerging paradigm introduced by George Siemens (2004), suggests that knowledge is achieved through the process of a learner connecting to and feeding information into a learning community enhanced and directly supported by digital media, in particular the World Wide Web. This paradigm is supported by the Community of Inquiry framework (see figure below) of Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2008). With these developments, previous notions of “point, click, and be done” online learning are dissolving and being replaced by a knowledge-centered and relationship-based practice – supported by Web 2.0 technology – where learning, not the computer, is at the core.



Because of Web 2.0, distance education is no longer merely a means of transmitting static information from one place to another. Instead, the learner becomes the focus. Information is not proprietary, but meant to be shared. Within the framework of blogs, forums, chats, wikis, newsgroups, and networks of friends and acquaintances, an immense communal information exchange has developed (Bessenyei, 2008). This technology has the potential of transforming distance education and the experience of face-to-face learning. Web 1.0 learners access content that is created by someone else. Web 2.0 learners can design their

own content (knowledge), either individually or in collaboration with others in the broader network. It is in this environment that quality professional development has the potential to flourish.

Frameworks for Determining “Quality” of Online Professional Development

While most sources concur that there is little overall difference to date in measured outcomes for professional development in online versus face-to-face settings, a report of a workshop facilitated by the National Academy of Sciences (2007) is comprehensive in its review of the positive and negative aspects of online professional development for teachers. The findings reflect input from teachers themselves and indicate that online teacher professional development has increased potential to influence learner achievement by improving and/or changing teaching practice. The resulting definition of “quality” provides one framework upon which to measure professional development (see chart); quality online teacher professional development opportunities include flexibility and versatility, the potential to build community, new possibilities for accountability, and relevant, self-directed learning.

Flexibility and Versatility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenient — any time / anywhere • Adaptable — any given need at any given time in career • Scalable — unlimited use
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared language, beliefs, values • Tap into expertise wherever it may be • Develop own practice — learn, try, reflect, share
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective and involving
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous PD without redundancy • Self-directed — tailored by you • Engaging

A second framework for indicators of quality online professional development is based on Chickering and Ehrmann’s *Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever* (1996). This framework asserts that good practice:

- 1) Encourages contact between learner and facilitator/instructor
- 2) Develops reciprocity and cooperation among learners
- 3) Uses active learning techniques
- 4) Gives prompt feedback
- 5) Emphasizes time on task
- 6) Communicates with high expectations
- 7) Respects diverse talents and ways of learning

The Teaching, Learning, and Technology (TLT) Group, a non-profit that provides a range of services to help faculty, their institutions, and their programs make more sensible use of technology, has created a large [library of teaching ideas, sorted by these seven principles](#):

To judge it, you need to try it.

These are two of many frameworks that not only provide indicators of quality online professional development for teachers, but also serve as indicators of quality online instruction for adult learners in general, both of which should be included in goals for continuous program improvement. Among the most important roles a teacher assumes is that of learner. Teacher-learners model continual improvement, demonstrate lifelong learning, and use what they learn to help all students achieve. Today, professional development resources are available with a Google click. Determining which online programs are quality – which will provide personal learning and professional growth, promote improved practice that affects student achievement, and foster a community of like professionals upon whom to rely as well as share expertise – is up to the practitioner.

Harvard School of Education professor Chris Dede states, “Changing teachers’ practices often requires unlearning past practices as well as learning new practices” (National Academy of Sciences, 2007). The conversation is changing: no longer is the focus of online learning on faster and cheaper; it is on quality and impact. Turning the model of distance education – evolved

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Lifting Together:

An Interview with Jackie Taylor

Note: Jackie Taylor, COABE president-elect and moderator of the LINCS professional development listserv, spoke with Progress in June.

Why is “teacher quality” such a hot topic right now?

JT: Well, partly it’s because the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) has teacher quality and effectiveness as one of its top priorities. Patricia Bennett is in charge of that initiative and the focus is to develop teacher competencies to help states improve the quality of instruction. Mariann Fedele-MacLeod led the discussion on the development of the adult education instructor model competencies for the LINCS listserv in May. [Editor’s note: Information about and transcripts of that discussion can be found on the [LINCS website](#).

That’s just part of the answer, however. It all depends on how you define “teacher quality” or “teacher effectiveness.” There is no definition for teacher effectiveness in our field. Mariann Fedele put out an example of a definition that guided her in her project (“those characteristics – knowledge, skills, mindsets, thought patterns, and the like – that, when used whether singularly or in various combinations, result in successful performance”), but OVAE themselves have not created a definition to guide us. So what do we mean by effective teaching? What makes an effective teacher? I do know that the [National Coalition for Literacy](#) has developed a set of what they call **professional quality principles**, which are different from teacher quality but include teacher quality and teacher effectiveness in adult education as well as professionalization of the field (in other words, developing or earning a degree or credentials in adult education or a specialty in adult education), improving teacher working conditions, and getting teachers the support that they need. No matter what you do to improve teacher effectiveness, if teachers don’t have the supports to implement changes, very little will get changed. We can’t break the backs

of the teachers who we’re trying to help, so teacher working conditions are very important. Another principle is that we need more research on what is meant by teacher effectiveness in adult education and



what that looks like. We also need research on the intersections between teacher quality and effectiveness, certification and credentialing, and teacher working conditions to help us see how these things relate in supporting teachers in doing their jobs well.

What makes an effective teacher? The National Coalition for Literacy’s professional quality standards address teacher quality or effectiveness as well as professionalization of the field of adult education.

When you look at the question of teacher effectiveness, it’s not just a matter of implementing instructional standards in programs. There are many facets to it. What I’ve observed both from the professional listserv discussion and other conversations is that all of these pieces have to lift together. All of these supports need to fall into place in order to elevate our field effectively without burdening one part of it. So, different groups are picking up the ball and moving it forward in different ways.

OVAE is tackling one facet, with the development of the teacher competencies, which could then be used as a benchmark for developing a national teacher certification in

adult education or for states to develop their own state certifications or build off instructional models, initiatives, and emphases in their states to create state plans.

COABE is developing what they're calling an adult education certification and credentialing portal. That will be an online interactive database of higher education programs, degree programs, and certificate programs in adult education where you will be able to go to find an adult education program based on the parameters that are important to you. Whether you're deciding based on cost, location, who the program faculty are, what the specialties are, whether the focus is more on theory and research or on helping teachers be better at teaching, you'll be able to search the database using all of these different parameters. You'll also be able to read reviews or write reviews. So, if you're a graduate from a program or just from a particular course in a program, you'll be able to post a review of your program much as one would post a review of a book on Amazon.com. The program degree coordinator will also be able to go in there to update information or to add his or her program if it's not already listed. The portal will be very Web 2.0: people will be able to share information on LinkedIn and Twitter and Facebook, and there will be an interactive component. I'm thinking there may be a blog where we could have guest speakers, much as you see on the LINCS discussion lists but using a blog interface instead of discussion list software. People have a lot of questions about the intricacies of what's needed to get a higher education degree at different institutions, so different program coordinators could be guest discussion leaders for a period of time on the blog and answer questions from the field. So the portal is a really exciting initiative.

COABE has also just completed a survey of the field to get opinions, both from COABE members views and the field at large, on what's needed in terms of higher education degrees in adult education. The survey asks a lot of important questions, like: Do COABE members want a national certification in adult education? If so, what would that look like? Would it have stackable credentials or would it focus on a single credential? In either case, where should we start – with math and numeracy? teaching reading? something else? COABE is analyzing the data from the survey now and should have results published on their website soon.

We can't break the backs of the teachers we're trying to help, so teacher working conditions are very important.

Do you see any promising national or model systems for ensuring or improving teacher/instructional quality?

I think we could go back to the CAAL reports released last year, which provided overviews of different state credentialing systems. The report [Certifying Adult Education Staff and Faculty](#) by Christine Smith with Ricardo Gomez is a "primer on who is doing what in certification and credentialing," and [Closing the Gap: The Challenge of Certification & Credentialing](#) by Forrest P. Chisman includes a summary of CAAL research and discussions on adult education credentialing as well as recommendations. So I think you will find in those two resources a lot of examples and details of different state credentialing system models.

In terms of working conditions, I think you could look at Massachusetts. They do a lot of work trying to improve working conditions, and they have developed statewide standards for working conditions for teachers. [Editor's note: The website of the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Literacy, a statewide membership organization, includes a section on working conditions with the [Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Literacy Standards for Quality Working Conditions in ABE/ESOL Programs](#) and a program self-assessment:

What are some ways teachers and managers can focus on improving instructional quality in their local programs?

That's a really good question. I think it's important when we're looking to improve what we do to look at what we know from research to be effective means of staff development – and it's not the one-shot-in-the-arm workshop. Although those can be good for getting ideas, brainstorming, or attending national conferences or so forth, the staff development that the research encourages us to focus on is extended and over time.

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Lifting Together: An Interview with Jackie Taylor

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Extended staff development is more expensive to do and requires a longer term commitment; however, it can be done. In fact, teachers do it all of the time, by developing a staff development plan in a particular area of focus based on their students' instructional needs and really working from the ground up to meet those needs. This might involve a problem-based learning approach or an action research approach to the questions teachers have.

Also, some of the research we know from NCSALL points to the need for teachers to be able to interact with their peers on a regular basis. Often that's hard to do at the local level if your program sites are spread out across the county. So, we need to ask ourselves: What are some strategies for engaging part-time teachers in programs at the local level?

In the staff development section of the NCSALL sourcebook, *The Program Administrators' Sourcebook: [A Resource on NCSALL's Research for Adult Education Program Administrators](#)* pages 50-54 give some pretty basic strategies not only on how to help fund staff development but also on how to help teachers be effective in the classroom. So, for example, if the learning opportunity is something longer term like an online course, it's important not only to make it possible for a teacher to take the course (which might carry a fee) but also to carve out time for her to actually participate, to provide paid staff development release time. It's usually easy to think about paying teachers to go to a conference, but when it comes to online opportunities, we often think, "Oh, they can just do that on their own time." Teachers, however, still need to carve out the time to do online coursework, so I have seen that the more effective online staff development has been with teachers who've had the support of program administrators who gave them time every day to do their online work.

We've talked about the themes of investing in teachers, both through meaningful professional development that's sustained over time and through efforts to improve working conditions. I think one of the biggest challenges for programs is how to address these issues with limited funding.

Extended staff development is more expensive to do and requires a longer term commitment; however, it can be done. In fact, teachers do it all the time by developing a staff development plan in a particular area of focus based on their students' instructional needs.

It's all a very interesting struggle, and I don't think there's a magic crystal ball or any sort of miracle that's going to happen. I think we all have to pull together and work from the grassroots to see the change happen that we want to see and we want to be. So, with the teacher working conditions, we can't expect a federal mandate to come down and say, "Now you have to treat your teachers right." I think it's really going to have to be a movement from the ground.

What has really lit a fire under those grassroots efforts that you've been most successful in mobilizing?

I think what lights the fire is when people feel that something they've valued has become threatened, that the threat is real and is going to affect their program or students directly, and that there's a limited time in which to address the issue. I think we're good at reacting but we need to be better at being proactive.

Personally, what has been your most meaningful professional development experience?

There are several, but two come to mind immediately. When I was teaching GED® classes in a welfare-to-work program in Tennessee, there was an action research grant that I applied for. The grant was to create a work-focused Families First classroom. Families First was the name of the Tennessee welfare-to-work program, whose participants were 98% women. I taught those classes 20 hours a week. So, when I got the action research grant to create a work-focused program, I engaged my students in the question: How are we going to do that? They wanted

to open a small business, and they decided it would be a photo studio. So we launched into the photo studio business in our classroom. We got over \$50,000 of in-kind support from the community – training from state librarians on taking pictures, comped rental space on a studio, significant discounts on studio equipment from the manufacturers, etc. And students ran everything about the studio, from hosting Easter Egg hunts with kids to managing the business end of it. That experience was the most rewarding for me and for them, I believe, in many ways. Students learned how to take initiative and develop something on their own; they opened their own small business and ran it without going under (they ran it for six weeks). But they also changed in their perceptions of themselves. At the beginning of the project, they were all very camera shy; none of them wanted their picture taken, not a single one of them. They left the experience as camera hounds, wanting to be in front of the camera and wanting to get pictures with and take pictures of their children. They prided themselves. That, for me, was one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had in staff development.

And the second experience, which is ongoing, is the professional development discussion list that I moderate, learning all the time from the list subscribers. Yes, in a general way, there's ongoing incidental learning, ideally answering in-the-moment need, but I think the more important experiences are the focused discussions and small group work that we do. These usually take place during the summer; we'll get together around a certain topic, for example social media and different social media tools that could be used for staff development. Those have been some really meaningful experiences. ■

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Quality Online Teacher Professional Development

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from correspondence courses, to radio and television delivery, to computer based delivery, to Internet delivery, to web-based networked learning – “on its head” could possibly mean that, rather than place-based instruction, **learning online** in its evolving form becomes the norm. If the goal of education is to create lifelong-learners, teachers need to exist in the spaces where learners exist, and all need to develop new skills of digital literacy, learning how to learn and how to determine “quality” of professional development in a dynamic and ever-changing dimension. ■

Joanne Huebner is Instructional Technology Specialist at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

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Tutor Training Quality and Student Outcomes

(continued from page 3)

outcomes. Regardless of a tutor's experience, or lack thereof, the intensity of the volunteer job, which includes completing a 14- to 20-hour tutor training and meeting with a student twice a week for at least a year, acts as a potential barrier to tutors' long-term commitment. Some tutors never complete the initial training. Others are never matched with a student, and few continue past the initial one-year commitment.

In today's busy world, volunteer tutors find it hard to meet their student twice a week for a minimum of six months. For every hour they tutor, they spend an equal amount of time developing a lesson that is tailored to their learner's personal learning plan. Additional tutoring activities include preparations before teaching a workbook lesson, finding reading material that will interest their student, making informal assessments, and observing and reporting progress. Is it any wonder that tutor burn-out is common and that turnover is high?

Given these circumstances, and the fact that it is easier for programs to recruit students than tutors, who can blame overworked staff from tinkering with tutor training to make it more palatable for prospective volunteers? But, in relaxing their standards for training, are programs doing students a disservice?

Tutor Training Models

[Best Practices for Tutoring Programs: A Guide to Quality](#) suggests that certified teachers are the most effective tutors in a K-12 setting. "There is evidence that tutors with any academic background can be successful in making gains with students. Another review of literacy interventions shows that college students, paraprofessionals, licensed teachers and community volunteers can all be effective tutors." This 2011 study by the Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation goes on to say that "teacher education, professional experience and tutor training also make a significant impact on tutor effectiveness." It should be noted that the study describes tutors who work with children, for it is a sad fact that scientifically-based research for tutors in adult literacy programs is close to non-existent.

Most adult literacy tutors have no background in teaching, although many former teachers gravitate towards this volunteer job. Retirees, who make up a large portion of volunteer tutors, graduated from high school or college years before the world was digitally connected,

“Professional experience and tutor training ... make a significant impact on tutor effectiveness,” says a 2011 study.

and many of them find it difficult to incorporate technology into their lessons. The varying levels and sets of skills that volunteers bring to a tutor training are challenges that the staff of a CBLO must accommodate, no small task for an over-stretched organization.

Tutor training varies from program to program. In a series of interviews I conducted in the fall of 2010 and winter of 2011, fifteen executive directors from CBLOs across the state described their training, which ranged from 3 hours to 22 hours in length. On average, tutor training ranged from 6 to 18 hours. Some programs provided only on-site training and some offered blended training, which consisted of a menu of on-site training, online self-directed training, and video-taped segments. Almost all the organizations provided a volunteer orientation; all provided additional in-services. A few programs had begun to introduce just-in-time training, which provides additional teaching skills to tutors at the time that they need it and reduces the number of initial training hours. Tiny programs or start-up organizations that have no trainer might direct a tutor to take an online tutor training course or study a skills book, such as *Tutor*, *LitStart*, or the *Laubach Way to Reading*, before they are matched with a student.

From my discussions with the programs, three types of tutor training workshops emerged.

1. Traditional Tutor Training

For decades, the standard bearers for tutor training were Literacy Volunteers of America

(whole language) and Laubach Literacy Action (phonics). Both organizations required member programs to conduct a minimum of 12 hours of training, which could be offered in four 3-hour segments over two weeks, or two 6-hour segments over two consecutive Saturdays. Both organizations advised that the program schedule regular orientations for prospective volunteers and additional in-service trainings in topics not covered sufficiently during the workshop, such as strategies for dealing with learning disabilities, goal setting, assessment and evaluation, and so forth. The two organizations have since merged as ProLiteracy America, which nationally certifies trainers in a rigorous course that can also be taken online. A ProLiteracy certification demonstrates that a tutor has completed 16-20 hours of training, including an orientation, the tutor training workshop, and additional two-hour in-services throughout the year.

Pros for traditional training: The length and intensity of the training provides volunteers with basic tutoring skills and a comprehensive overview of the joys and challenges of tutoring. Enough time is built into the training for skills practice under the guidance of a trainer and between training sessions for trainees to absorb new tutoring concepts. As a cohort, tutors can turn to each other for support after the training and feel a sense of community in what is often an isolated volunteer job, for tutors tend to teach in a private room at a time and place that is convenient for their student and not at the program site.



Cons: Tutors who missed a portion of the workshop often have no opportunity to catch up with their cohort and are asked to wait for the next workshop to complete their training. They often drop out, frustrated, when they realize that the next workshop is not scheduled for a few weeks or even months. In addition, during the course of such a long training many tutors feel overwhelmed with the information they are asked to absorb. Even those who are matched immediately with a student will forget some of the skills they practiced and will not remember them in enough detail several weeks or months later to use with their student when they most need them.

2. Modified Tutor Training with Close Staff Oversight

A number of Virginia CBLOs offer a volunteer orientation and a 6- or 8-hour training, after which the tutor is matched with a student. The tutor receives close guidance during the initial tutoring sessions, which are scheduled at the literacy program. Additional follow-up training (just-in-time training) is scheduled after the student and tutor have met for several sessions. This training builds upon the skills that tutors need to continue. Because these skills are taught when the tutor is ready to learn them, the lessons have more practical meaning. Frequent in-services also make up for the lack of up-front training that traditional tutor training provides. One literacy organization in Virginia employs a number of professional part-time staff who oversee from six to eight tutor/student pairs in multilevel classrooms that meet at set times. Tutors seldom work with their students unsupervised.

Pros for modified tutor training: In this training model, tutors are guided by professional staff from the moment they are matched and have an opportunity to ask questions or clarify concepts immediately during the lesson. The student/tutor match starts off supervised, and tutors receive just the training they need at the right time. This model saves the organization a lot of effort in scheduling a training, for it is easier to schedule one day of training instead of two days or four nights. The model helps with tutor and student retention, since learning concerns or changes in attendance are immediately addressed.

Tutor Training Quality and Student Outcomes

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Cons: This training method requires intensive staff oversight over individual tutor/student pairs after the initial training. The hands-on approach limits the number of tutors an organization can train, for oversight is tied to staff capacity. If the organization is small and has only a few part-time staff members, the number of student/tutor pairs will be severely restricted. Also, the flexibility of scheduling a tutoring session at the student's convenience is gone, for in the initial stages of their association the student and tutor must meet where the staff can observe them. Importantly, for this model to be effective the tutor must participate in ongoing just-in-time training that targets their evolving skills, but many programs report that after initial training only 20% of tutors regularly attend such in-services. If that is the case, as many as 80% of tutors receive inadequate training.

3. Blended Tutor Training

A blended tutor training consists of both on-site and online training and is designed to fit an individual tutor's needs or to help a CBLO with staffing issues. The Virginia Literacy Foundation created an asynchronous online tutor training workshop for just this purpose. Many programs do not have the capacity to offer more than one or two on-site trainings per year. In between trainings, they generate a long list of tutors waiting to be trained. Prospective volunteers often drop out or sign up with an organization that can use their help immediately.

Some programs have lost their trainers, and the online training can act as a substitute until a new trainer is found. Many new volunteers who have taught or tutored before say they don't need to take a complete tutor training, but that they would like to go over a quick review before being matched with a student, which is what the online training can also provide. In a blended tutor training, it is vital that staff have taken the online tutor training, so that they can answer questions and guide their tutors through the various sections and links. This model works best when a tutor taking online training is matched with a peer mentor who can motivate the tutor to continue.

Pros of blended training: A blended

workshop allows teachers and returning tutors to review the workshop online and provides anytime/anywhere training for a volunteer who cannot attend on-site workshops or who has missed a portion of an on-site workshop. With the blended model, programs can assign a portion of the online training, such as the adult learner, to tutors before the workshop or offer the entire online training to individuals who cannot attend an on-site training due to a conflict in scheduling.

Cons: Unless they have a system in place for assessing tutor progress, staff has no way of observing how well volunteers who take the online training understand the concepts. The online portion of a blended workshop is not for all tutors, especially those who are uncomfortable using technology or who live in areas where connectivity is slow or nonexistent. This model requires a systematic plan to work well. In addition, tutors who take only online training often feel isolated and disconnected from the program.

Research in Best Practices

Research states that a systematic approach to tutor training and tutor support works best in helping literacy students achieve their goals. The quality of the tutor training is also an important factor. According to *Best Practices for Tutoring Programs*, "Tutors can be successful regardless of their educational level and tutoring experience when the program provides substantive initial and ongoing training" (p. 33). Research also shows that tutoring works best when tutors can turn to a lead teacher for advice or to someone with experience who can guide them as they need it, provide them with consistent feedback, and point them to easily accessible resources. "Strong management correlates to student success, while disorganized management within the tutoring program can inhibit student achievement" (p. 12). Other practices for sound tutor management include: targeted professional development that helps tutors build upon their skills, benchmarking student success, using data for continuous program improvement, and designing a sustainability plan. To maximize tutor retention, tutors should

Research also shows that tutoring works best when tutors can turn to a lead teacher for advice ... someone who can provide them with consistent feedback and point them to easily accessible resources.

feel connected to the program. Toward that end, the organization should find meaningful ways to recognize tutor achievement, provide tutors with opportunities to become involved in other areas within the program, and arrange informal sessions with other tutors for networking and information sharing.

Best Practices for Tutoring Programs suggests that the “consistency of the tutoring relationship” is critical to achieving student outcomes; “students should be tutored by the same person for at least one and a half to two hours a week for a minimum of twelve weeks”(p. 37). Although the publication targets K-12 students, the advice is sound for tutoring adult students as well. Research indicates that both one-on-one and small group (3-4 students) tutoring models are effective in raising student learning outcomes (p. 38), which bodes well for ESOL programs that favor small group tutoring over one-on-one instruction.

More research is needed to connect the optimal outcomes for adult student achievement to tutor training. Current research concentrates more on tutors of K-12 children, peer tutors for college students, and classroom teachers than adult literacy tutors. One study on teacher training (Van Der Sijde, 1989) supports a two-pronged approach “in which training is given on two occasions: a first training before a period of observations, and a second training after a number of observations of lessons in which the same training, but tailored, is given to the teachers after two or three months” (p. 313). This description sounds similar to just-in-time training, or the second training model described in this article. Van Der Sijde concludes that even a short training course for teachers can successfully effect a change in their teaching behavior and in student achievement. One wonders whether the same holds true for tutors, although Van Der Sijde cautions that it remains unclear how changes in teaching behavior affect students’ achievement. In conclusion,

no amount of research and statistics will help programs if they fail to systematize their tutor training, follow best practice models for tutor training, or provide tutors with timely support and the resources they need to help students achieve their literacy goals. ■

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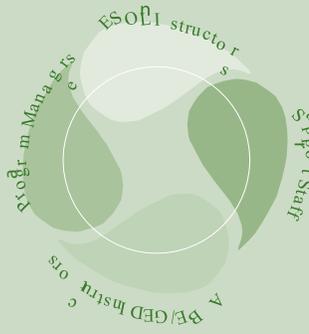


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Virginia Practitioners Innovate, Reflect, and Share



The Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program (VAECP) is Virginia's foremost effort to improve instructional quality (along with overall program quality and, ultimately, student outcomes) across the state.

More than 450 ABE/GED instructors and 200 ESOL instructors have completed at least one VAECP workshop. The aspect of the certification program that most forcefully targets classroom practice, however, is the afterwork assignment. For every certification workshop an instructor attends, he or she must complete some kind of extension project or afterwork. Depending on the VAECP session, these assignments vary from reflecting on retention and instructional strategies with specific students in mind to outlining entire courses, from writing and trying out lessons or activities to planning and carrying out individualized projects. In all cases, afterwork is designed to encourage participants to continue expanding their instructional knowledge and skills through reflection and follow-up action targeting their own instructional situations and their own students' goals.

Extension work is one of the primary means through which VAECP strives to embody the principle that effective professional development for adult educators

- is not a "one-shot" activity, but occurs over time;
- fosters the connection of content and materials to real-world situations;
- reflects adult learning theory research as well as national or state standards;
- accommodates different learner backgrounds; and,
- appraises change in instructor knowledge and practice.

(Features of effective professional development are adapted from the CAELA [Framework for Quality Professional Development for Practitioners Working with Adult English Language Learners](#), sponsored by the Center for Applied Linguistics,

) VAECP participants receive feedback on their afterwork from reviewers, coordinated by the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC), who evaluate the work and provide suggestions. Reviewers also nominate afterwork that is of particularly high quality for inclusion in the [Featured Extension Work Showcase for Excellence](#) on the VALRC website. Afterwork may be featured in the showcase because it describes particularly insightful reflection, exemplary applications of evidence-based practice, impressive student outcomes, or innovative or inspiring ideas. The online showcase now hosts more than 50 examples of projects, lessons, and reflections from Virginia's adult educators, including:

- an activity on "smart shopping" for a multilevel ESOL class,
- reflections on a lesson that challenged ABE/GED students to research a current event and write a pro/con essay,
- insights on creating a classroom Google site,
- a rubric for assessing students' speaking skills,
- reflections on a collaborative project to help ESOL students make effective use of job search websites,
- a volunteer's story of producing a public-access cable TV show to promote local literacy and adult education programs, and
- a course outline for introducing business management skills while teaching writing and college transitions skills.

This issue of *Progress* includes excerpts from just two of the numerous outstanding afterwork projects showcased. Together, the many voices of Virginia adult educators make up a repository of professional wisdom, addressing the real challenges faced by today's adult educators and the steps, small and large, that they have taken to face these challenges while continuing to make improvements in their own classes and programs. As Virginia practitioners continue to progress through the certification program, this valuable resource will continue to grow. ■



Afterwork Showcase: Good and Bad Excuses

by Celia Arnade, Arlington Education & Employment Program (REEP); lesson submitted as afterwork for Level II, Session 1 of the ESOL strand of the certification program and featured on the VALRC website

Lesson Basics

Class level: Intermediate

Length: 2 hours

Topic: Work

Language skills focus:

- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Speaking
- ✓ Writing

Objective(s):

- Students will be able to distinguish between good and bad excuses.
- Students will be able to list characteristics of good employees.
- Students will be able to offer an excuse for why they can't do something.

Materials/Equipment:

- Books or handouts of "Four Day Job" in *Picture Stories* (Longman)
- Excuses Handout
- "I am" Checklist
- Paper

Benchmarks from Virginia's Adult ESOL Content Standards:

- S4.2 Speak so that a listener not familiar with limited English speakers can generally communicate with a person at this level on familiar topics, but with some effort.
- S4.3 Control some basic grammar and pronunciation features in a structured setting, but inaccuracies may interfere with understanding.

Stages of the Lesson Plan

Activity Steps

Warm Up / Review

Grouping Strategies: Whole class
Materials Needed: Board

1. Teacher makes two columns with headings: good excuses and bad excuses.
2. Teacher asks class: "What is an excuse?" "What does this mean?"

Introduction / Presentation

Grouping Strategies: Pairs and whole class
Materials Needed: "Four Day Job"

1. Students will look at the picture story and discuss story with partner.
2. Teacher elicits vocabulary about story from whole class and writes on board.

Guided Practice

Grouping Strategies: Pairs
Materials Needed: "Four Day Job"

1. Working with a partner, students will rewrite the story in the past tense (p.33).
2. Teacher will elicit rewritten story and write on the board for students to check their work.
3. Students will work in pairs and take turns retelling the story while teacher monitors the pairs.

Communicative Practice

Grouping Strategies: Pairs or groups of three
Materials Needed: Paper

1. Working in pairs or groups of three, students will write a dialogue about calling in sick or offering another excuse.
2. Students will present dialogues to class.

Application

Grouping Strategies: Whole class
Materials Needed: Board

1. Teacher will elicit from students good and bad excuses (using the example of the man in the story to get started) and fill them in on the board in the two columns from the presentation part of the lesson.

Extension

Grouping Strategies: Whole class and individual
Materials Needed: "I am" Checklist

1. Teacher will ask class: "Was the man a good employee? Why? What should he have done? Was he reliable?"
2. Teacher then asks the same questions to students: "Are you a good employee? Why? Are you reliable?"
3. Students will check off characteristics that apply to them and share with a partner and whole class as time permits.



Afterwork Showcase: Math and Reasoning Skills for Health Science Careers Activity

by Debora Carter and Jill Okin, Rappahannock Area Regional Education; activity excerpted from a course plan submitted as afterwork for Level II, Session 3 of the ABE/GED strand of the certification program and featured on the VALRC website

GED Activity Learning Objective

Read, extract, and compare information based on several related graphics depicting nursing career trends and explore VA Wizard website to substantiate conclusions drawn from graphics.

Common Core Standards Addressed

Key Ideas and Details 6.1-12.1

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 6.8-12.8

Production and Distribution of Writing 6.4-12.4

Activity Steps

Working in small groups, students will view a line graph from an employment website showing the percentage of jobs listed for five different nursing jobs. An overhead projector will display a bar graph depicting the average salary for the related nursing jobs. Students will discuss the components of both graphs. They will look for similarities and differences between the graphics. The students will analyze the trends and information within the graphics. They will identify the trends of nursing jobs and draw conclusions on the type of certification required based on hiring trends.

Individually, the students will register and explore the VA Wizard website to research nursing jobs and other health science fields. They will each complete a career interest survey. Using Microsoft Word, each student will write a summary paragraph about pursuing one of the health fields. Volunteers will share their interest with the class.

Working in pairs, students will extrapolate data from the VA Wizard website comparing the educational requirements for either five nursing fields or five related health fields. They will hand-draw a graph of their choice using components of a graph such as titles, column/row headings, and labels. They will then use Excel to create the same graph and present their Excel charts to the class.

Career Awareness/Readiness

Problem solving; Analyzing data; Job procurement skills; Communication skills; Oral/writing skills; Reading data; Interpreting data and making decisions based on information; Group participation and collaboration; Evaluation skills

Postsecondary Readiness

VA Wizard career interest survey; Knowledge of educational requirements; Job procurement skills; Prioritizing information; Sequencing skills; Time management; Oral communication; Presentation skills

Technology and Digital Literacy

Navigating the Internet; Researching websites and downloading various articles; VA Wizard – registration and exploration of medical careers; Microsoft Excel and Word

21st Century Skills

Critical thinking and problem solving; Effective communication; Collaboration and team building; Creativity and innovation