Inquiry/ Research

Compendium

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INQUIRY/RESEARCH COMPENDIUM

Introduction

The inquiry/research approach to professional development is one which practitioners use to conduct *systematic, intentional, field-based inquiry*[1] into their own daily practices. The term "practitioners" refers to instructors, tutors, administrators, aides, students, and other service providers (e.g., child-care workers). The approach, itself, builds upon the "real world" experiences practitioners bring to the field, and it is grounded in analytical and reflective practice, so that practitioners:

- reflect critically on their own practices,
- review related research in their area of interest,
- pose problems for inquiry arising from their own settings, prior experience, and goals for teaching and learning, and
- develop analytical approaches for resolving issues.

Practitioners, in addition, develop and investigate theories about what works and why.

Out of their research experience, practitioners may generate a knowledge base where none might have existed previously. Because the knowledge comes from their own research, it is assumed that the findings will have a positive impact on their practices and on the adult learners who benefit from improved instruction. By critically inquiring into their own practices, practitioners build such a knowledge base from the "inside-out"[2] and through their research questions and activities, they may develop a greater understanding of students and teaching.[3]

Because the research is always field-based, the methods of inquiry/research are often qualitative or interpretative, lending themselves to ethnographic considerations, such as keeping field notes or journals, observing, interviewing, engaging in dialogue, audio taping, and conducting literature reviews, as well as analyzing documents and students' work. However, practitioners also may employ some quantitative methods such as collecting and analyzing survey data, test scores, and retention data as a way of assessing changes occurring in the learning environment.

Organizing inquiry/research as an on-going group activity is the first step towards establishing what Lytle and Cochran-Smith refer to as "a community of learners." Learning

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[1] Cochran-Smith, M., Lytle, S., (1990) "Research on Teaching and Teachers Research*:* The Issues that Divide" *Educational Research* Vol. 19, No 2, 2.

[2] Cochran-Smith, M. and Lytle S., (1992) "Communities for Teachers Research*:* Fringe or Forefront*?"* *American Journal of Education*, 161.100, No 3., 298-324

[3] A more complete discussion of inquiry-research appears in the *Professional Development Resource Guide for Adult Educators,* prepared by Pelavin Research Institute in 1996, as part of the Building Professional Development Partnerships Project (PRO-NET) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy.

communities are a key element in the inquiry/research process as they provide practitioners with opportunities to learn from one another through sharing knowledge, insights, perspectives, and skills. By encouraging practitioners to come together to rigorously analyze data and critique research methodology and findings in a constructive manner, practitioners build their self-confidence and are better able to share their research with a broader audience.

Through inquiry/research, practitioners engage in a variety of activities that require the development of various types of skills. These skills may include collecting and analyzing data, framing and analyzing problems, developing research questions, designing interventions, conducting literature reviews, engaging in critically reflective dialogue, communicating via the Internet, and reporting and disseminating research findings. Practitioners learn these skills in various ways. They can learn from experienced members of their own learning community, from their professional development coordinator, or from an outside expert such as a university researcher who is brought in for that purpose. The skills may be learned either before someone ventures into research, or throughout the research process as the skills become relevant. In an inquiry/research group in Georgia, for example, the development of new skills was integrated into the whole research experience. Participants read about research strategies in cooperative learning groups and then taught one another what they learned in a day long series of mini-presentations and activities that they created based on their learning.[4]

While inquiry/research is gradually becoming a more integral component of professional development in some states and programs, other programs are just beginning to experiment with this approach. The purpose of this compendium, therefore, is to help practitioners become more familiar with inquiry/research. This objective is accomplished by providing adult educators with ideas about research topics, ways to fund research projects, and project contact persons for practitioners interested in exploring methods of inquiry/research further. In some cases, this compendium also provides examples of how practitioners prepare for their research and how learning communities operate.

Samples of research projects in several states are included, although the compendium is by no means exhaustive. The description of the research projects that follow, as well as indepth reports of inquiry/research projects, are cumulated in the *Online Action Research (OAR) Database*.[5]

Telephone interviews with staff development coordinators, program administrators, and state literacy resource center staff, and a review of reports highlighting inquiry/research projects, were the basic means of obtaining information for the compendium. However, assessing the quality of each of the projects was beyond the scope of this effort. A next step might be to develop criteria that could be used to evaluate the quality of inquiry/research projects. However, it is important to remember that inquiry/research does not occur in a vacuum. The quality and outcomes of individual research projects must be viewed in the context of the organization in which the research occurs.

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[4] Drennon, C. (April, 1997), correspondence.

[5] To access this online database, or to contribute reports of inquiry/research projects to the database, contact CASAS at (800) 255-1036, ext.358.

* A more detailed description is listed on the OAR database

It also should be pointed out that information varies regarding the projects' impact on teachers' behaviors or on student outcomes. Readers interested in the inquiry/research cited below may wish, therefore, to further explore the value of the projects vis-a-vis their own instructional settings. Project contacts are provided for that purpose.

Research projects contained herein are organized by states; and within each state, specific projects are briefly described. In some cases, research projects are built around a specific theme or content area. In those cases, individual projects within that theme are described.

An index organized by subject area is provided at the end of the compendium, to enable the reader to easily access project summaries. Within each subject area, project titles are listed by state, and, in some cases, titles are listed under more than one subject area.

California

*Comparing Language Development between two ESL classrooms: 1) Internet Activities as Part of Daily Instruction and (2) No Internet Activities Integrated into Daily Instruction (Study in progress)

Susan Gaer, a teacher-researcher who participated in the Online Action Research project sponsored by CASAS in 1992 and 1993, has taken principles learned about action research and applied them to this new, 1997 project.

Susan's interest was sparked when she found a lack of research regarding online instruction in adult education ESL classrooms. Recently, however, several studies have focused on the impact of the Internet on adult education professional development. Also, innovative teachers are implementing techniques that integrate the Internet into adult education ESL instruction. However, there appears to be no research focused upon measuring students' language development when using the Internet as part of adult education ESL instruction. In fact, most of the literature on Internet usage in the classroom is, at this time, anecdotal. Susan and Rob Jenkins, another ESL Instructor, will measure "the listening language development" of students in two types of classrooms: one with Internet activities integrated into it, and one without the Internet. Results of these explorations will be shared at regional and state conferences.

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*Identifying Level Exit Criteria Using ESL Model Program Standards

The ESL instructional staff and the program coordinator at Mira Costa College Continuing Education set out to: determine which criteria instructors use to promote students to the next level, agree upon a set of criteria for promotion, using exit criteria from the California ESL Program Model Standards, and articulate the program standards to students.

To begin with, the program coordinator met with students to determine what their perceptions were regarding how effectively they were reaching their educational goals. A concern was raised when several students stated that they were not sure how they were placed in "this class," and when and how they would "get out."

In meetings with instructors, the coordinator determined that students believed that the current curriculum guides were "too general," and outcomes did not clearly identify language skills, functions, and grammar appropriate to each level.

Staff agreed to participate in an action research project in which each instructor identified the language skills, functions, and grammar they currently used to promote their students to the next level of instruction—with reference to the level exit criteria in the California ESL Program

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* A more detailed description is listed on the OAR database

Model Standards. They agreed on a site representative to participate in a district-wide committee to determine uniform exit criteria. As the project progressed, teachers promoted students every nine weeks, using the identified criteria, and provided input on the final draft of priority outcomes for each level. Teachers will meet in 1997 and 1998, to finalize priority outcomes and to begin to identify appropriate assessment activities. Results will be available after this first year of action research.

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CWELL Action Research Center Projects, San Diego, California

This report, entitled *Delivering WELL: Teachers as Researchers in Adult Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning* (McDonald et al, 1995) highlights 10 teacher-as-researcher projects conducted during the first year and a half of the Consortium for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning (CWELL) project. Conducted under the auspices of the CWELL Action Research Center (ARC), these projects stem from questions asked by teachers in various areas of adult education (e.g., English as a Second Language, Adult Basic Education, Vocational Education, and within the Greater Avenues for Independence program, California's welfare-to-work program). The teacher-researchers were selected from four Continuing Education sites within the San Diego Community College District: Centre City Skills Center, Cesar Chavez Center, Educational Cultural Complex, and Mid-City Center.

Together, these teacher-researchers served youth and adults who were among the most economically and educationally disadvantaged in San Diego, California. Their projects differed regarding the research issues posed, methods used to conduct the research, and students who participated in the projects. All projects, however, resulted in a greater understanding of the students who attend adult education programs at four Continuing Education sites. The project findings have increased this understanding, for themselves, as teachers, as well as for other teachers, administrators, and researchers concerned with the current issues that face adult education.

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Student Literacy Practices and Experiences in the ARC Community

These projects related to studying reading, writing, and other types of activities that adult students engaged in outside the classroom, in order to inform the types of literacy activities that occur *within* the classroom. By taking into consideration the students' community, culture,

and lives outside of the classroom, teachers selected curriculum that was more relevant and familiar to the student, and thus attempted to bridge the classroom-non-classroom gap in learning more effectively. This approach also may aid in improving student participation, achievement, and retention. Two of the teacher-research-projects, for instance, dealt primarily with developing a better understanding of students' "context" (environment) outside of the classroom. These projects include the following.

*Student Literacy Practices, Advanced ESL, Mid-City Center

Amy designed a survey to measure the types of materials students read outside of school—in the home, on the job, and in the community—as well as how often they read (hours per week), and in what language. Questions previously used in other literacy practice studies (e.g., CALPEP, Mikulecky) informed this project, which surveyed 122 Advanced ESL students from four SDCCD Continuing Education sites. Demographic information also was collected.

The study found that Advanced ESL students, mostly from Mexico and Vietnam, had been in the United States an average of 6 years, and had an average of 10 years of education in their own country. They preferred reading books (four hours per week, on average), with history and religion as favored subjects; which was followed by newspapers (two hours per week, on average), with *The San Diego Union-Tribune* as the popular, especially the front page and the sports page. The respondents reported writing mostly notes, letters, and lists, spending about two and a half hours on each, per week. Other writing practices, such as instructions, forms, and stories were less common. Nearly half the respondents had jobs, ranging from that of tailor to medical assembler to maintenance technician—working an average of 36 hours per week. At work, they reported that "notices" were the most widely read material. Most often, reading material was obtained from school, followed by the family.

This preliminary study suggests that all teachers can more authentically assess their students by using materials that correlate with their students' lives outside the classroom. This, of course, requires involving students in guiding what is taught in their own classrooms.

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*Life History of ESL Students, Beginning ESL,

This project studied the life histories of Hispanic females learning English as a Second Language at the Cesar Chavez Center. This site, located in Barrio Logan, is over 90 percent Hispanic. Building on years of teaching experience, Marina knew that many of her students have a difficult time simply getting to school. Their lives were not only busy and challenging, but some had traumatic experiences stemming from coming to the United States and, upon arrival, finding it "different" from what was expected.

Marina's project used in-depth case studies to document the functional and familial experiences of five female students in her class. All the students were Hispanic, in their 30s, married, and

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* **A more detailed description is listed on the OAR database**

subject to a variety of stressors inside and outside of the classroom. Through weekly meetings, Marina learned about their every-day challenges and the subsequent effects of such challenges upon their school participation and achievement. Functioning as a teacher-researcher and as a counselor, Marina documented the emotional and cognitive perspectives of these ESL students, thus creating a level of understanding that allowed Marina to modify her own ESL curriculum and instruction to better fit the real-life requirements of her students'.

Marina observed that it was not only attendance at school that was important, but the *quality* of the experience one had once in an actual classroom. For some students, exhaustion or worry clouded the classroom experience. Through weekly meetings, these female students came to help one another through difficult times, so that they all could concentrate more effectively on their studies.

Implications of this study include the need for an on-site clinical counselor to assist students in assimilating into their new culture, as well as helping them to participate in a specific classroom setting. The study also suggests the need for the formation of a student support group facilitated by a counselor.

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Students as Researchers and Curriculum Developers

This work involved the collaboration of teachers and students in research projects. The approach of this stems from the belief that students can and should participate in activities that directly affect them, and that most will find the experience as empowering, confidence building, and beneficial as a general learning experience. In this situation, the teacher acts as a facilitator, guiding the students, not controlling them. The premise of this practice is that if students feel empowered in the classroom, they are more inclined to participate actively, be more motivated, achieve more, and stay in the program for a longer period of time. This premise also has been supported in Hanna Fingeret's work. Listed below, two of the CWELL teacher-researchers participated in projects that actively involved their students as researchers.

*Student Report of GED Curriculum, GAIN Alternative Learning Lab, and Mid-City Center

Mike's study engaged three student-researchers to work with him in developing a computerized GED study curriculum to achieve a higher success rate on the GED-Social Studies Test. He initially surveyed the students to identify their learning styles and needs. The students then identified the history and geographical information necessary to pass the GED, and found the information through a library literature search and existing study guides. Working with Mike, they assembled and presented the information in a computer format, including in the curriculum world geographical statistics, a summary of the history of the United States and each individual

state, review questions for critical thinking, and important vocabulary words. The information was reinforced through the use of "sound boards," or voice recordings of the computer text.

Using this customized curriculum and supplementary classroom materials, all three students passed their GED-Social Studies Test on the first try, and increased their level of knowledge, critical thinking skills, and computer skills. They also and were more enthusiastic and optimistic about passing in their other subject areas. Though extremely time consuming, this study proved to be an ideal example of how students engaged in the research process can produce positive effects for both the teacher and the adult students, themselves.

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*Case Study of Students' Reasons for Leaving, Orientation ESL Classes

At the Cesar Chavez Center, as at other sites, over 30 percent of Orientation ESL students drop out of the program. Rosa, therefore, studied the issue of retention in the Hispanic community's Barrio Logan by conducting a case study of two Hispanic students who became student-researchers on the project. One student was at a high risk of dropping out of school, while the other was quite likely to remain in the program and succeed. Meeting bi-weekly, Rosa and the two student-researchers found that, at the onset of classes, Orientation ESL attended class regularly. When, however, they realized the length of time necessary to learn to speak English proficiently and to get a good paying job, up to one-third dropped out of the program. Why did these students drop out and what can be done to turn this trend around.

Through numerous discussions, the student-researchers discovered that ESL students dropped out for two main reasons. First, many were approached by a drug dealer who introduced them to a quick way to make money without speaking English. Second, they dropped out because they did not feel they were a part of the educational community. This may have resulted for many reasons:

- They were out of school for a long period of time;

- They had many "duties" at home that interfered with their schooling;

- They did not have time, for various reasons, to study;

- They found the class material not to be "relevant;" and

- They did not believe that they had a voice in determining class content with their teacher, or with any other perceived "authority figures."

Based on these findings, it was recommended that teachers and counselors do the following:

* **A more detailed description is listed on the OAR database**

- Find speakers who can demonstrate the negative aspects of selling drugs, as well as the positive aspects of continuing in school;

- Pro-actively solicit students' views on the ESL program, and on their progress through the program; and

- Stress the importance of having students participate in developing their educational plans.

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Functional Context Education

These projects build upon existing research that suggests teaching basic skills within a context relevant to the learner is more effective than teaching basic skills in a context that is of minimal relevance to the learner. In addition, both vocational content knowledge and skills may be learned simultaneously in vocational education courses. Four of the CWELL teacher-research projects related to this body of knowledge, and are listed below:

*Behavioral Changes Following a Class in Pronunciation of American English, ESL Pronunciation

In this project, Linda evaluated the effects of her class, "Steps to Clearer Pronunciation," taught within a workplace setting. The nine-week class was intended to improve pronunciation skills, provide information about the sounds of American English, and identify ways to modify one's speech to improve intelligibility and communication skills for better functioning in the workplace.

To measure changes in pronunciation, the teacher-researcher made pre- and post- recordings of each student. These recordings were evaluated, and positive speech behaviors as well as errors were noted and explained. In addition, the instructor rated students' practice, performance, and pronunciation changes. As the nine-week period provided enough time to begin monitoring the students' speech production, a final course evaluation was conducted to record pronunciation, behavioral, and attitudinal changes—and a follow-up survey measured levels of speech retention.

Findings were positive, and this project demonstrates that pronunciation taught within the functional context of the workplace can yield positive results, both for the student and for that student's company.

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Empowerment Skills for ESL Students, Advanced ESL

For this project, ESL was taught in a functional context of empowerment, goal setting, and life-management skills. Lynn had noticed that many of her students lacked specific goals, and wondered if this prevented them from progressing in their learning English or in getting jobs. Accordingly, in her teacher-research project, she designed a curriculum to teach ESL within the three main subject areas: goal setting; motivation and self-esteem; and gender roles and relations (especially between women and children). Lynn used pre- and post-tests to determine if there were any significant differences in her students' English speaking and writing ability before and after learning English in this context. The study examined, as well, the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of her students.

The data showed that the class with the empowerment driven curriculum had high learning gains, although the differences between classes were statistically significant.

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*The Impact of the St. Vincent de Paul Village for Preparing African American Males to Enter and Survive in the Workplace, ABE Life Skills

Maxine conducted case studies to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the Life Skills curriculum at a homeless shelter, by measuring its effect on African-American students and their preparedness for re-entering and "surviving" in the workplace. The Life Skills program consists of four courses—Job Preparation, Chemical Dependency Recovery, ABE Literacy, and GED—all designed to help residents of the St. Vincent de Paul Village acquire the skills necessary to live successfully outside of the shelter.

Pre- and post-test scores of aptitude, employability, and problem solving, as well as intergenerational data, were collected. Family data included which family members were educated, which were not, what value was placed on higher education, the influence of welfare, and the workplace history of immediate family members. Through this information, a contextual portrait of each student emerged. Case studies were developed for five African-American males in three categories of prior educational and economic achievement, in order to understand their needs for adult education and their responses to services provided. Methods were developed to gather and chart data. Clients were observed and interviewed, as were other residents, teachers, and managers.

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* **A more detailed description is listed on the OAR database**

Among the findings were that the Shelter's 28-day program was too short to effectively interest residents in improving their cognitive and work skills. In addition, the courses were not well-enough explained to the residents, services were not well integrated, and adult education was not considered "cool" by many African American males. The three categories examined were: (1) pursuing a high school diploma, (2) upgrading skills for upward mobility, and (3) succeeding in the workplace outside the shelter. Those who succeeded had more highly educated parents than the others; and those who did not succeed had many personal problems to deal with, besides uneducated parents. The most serious impediment to success was chemical dependency, as those who had only financial problems were able to resolve them and succeed.

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A Teacher's Study of Her Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) Class, VESL -- Office Skills

Jeannie studied the effects of conveying knowledge and skills in a functional context. As the instructor for ESL students learning to improve their computer skills (e.g., word processing, keyboarding, typing), Jeannie believed that students who learned English within a functional context, such as a vocational office skills program, would learn both English and work skills simultaneously, and potentially more effectively than if they were taught separately. Previous research suggested to Jeannie that knowledge learned in context was more relevant to the learner, and was consequently learned more effectively, and with higher retention.

Several interesting findings resulted from this study. Contrary to expectations, students trained in the VESL -- Office Skills program—did not necessarily stay in the community college office skills program. The program prepared students for jobs (18%), Advanced ESL classes (12%), University classes (8%), and GED classes (4%). Others stayed in the class to continue learning (16%), while 14 percent continued in other business classes at the site, and 22 percent stayed in the community college system.

Students also were compared with five other, similar-level classes, on the CASAS reading tests. Although the content of the class was office skills, their performance on the CASAS tests was no different from other, more general ESL students; the class, in fact, ranked second highest of all classes at this level. All of the students attended class regularly, which is not typical in community college continuing education, and they learned to set tabs, change margins, cut, copy, past, make tables, and insert and edit graphics using Microsoft Word. In-depth descriptions of the progress and aspirations of 13 students were completed.

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Intergenerational and Family Literacy Research

These teacher-research projects were concerned with the intergenerational transfer of cognitive skills from parent to child. Research has previously suggested that there is a strong relationship between the primary caregiver's (usually the mother's) level of education and the educational achievement of her children. As a result, it is believed that adult education may be presented as a way to promote family literacy in an educational setting.

*Family Mutual Educational Reinforcement: The Intergenerational Transfer of Literacy in a GAIN-ABE Computer-Assisted Lab, GAIN-ABE

In her classroom, Judy observed that her GAIN Adult Basic Education (ABE) students often spoke about for going to school in terms of the influence it had on their children. Based on the belief that parents are the child's first teacher, she tried to identify evidence of an intergenerational transfer of cognitive skills, from parent to child, in her computer-assisted classroom. Incidental educational benefits for the children would suggest that "double-duty dollars" were used within the GAIN program, where one dollar spent on the GAIN participant (parent) also could have positive effects for their children. Although anecdotal evidence suggests that this is often the case with adult students, there was little systematic documentation in adult education research.

Judy adjusted her class curriculum to more explicitly address parent-child cognitive skill building and the effects the GAIN program had on the participant's children. Various surveys were administered to document intergenerational transfer; students wrote in their journals in response to questions (e.g., What kind of future would you like to see for your children? Do you believe that your participation in the GAIN program has helped your children?); and students were interviewed about their parent-child interactions. Other activities included trying out new curriculum materials designed to teach math to the family as a total unit, class visits to the local library to review age-appropriate children's books, and a follow-up survey of students who successfully completed the GAIN/ABE program.

All activities, especially the follow-up survey, yielded positive responses to the GAIN/ABE program. Students helped their child more with homework, talked to the child's teacher more, and took their child to the library more often. These data suggest that an incidental intergenerational effect occurred within the GAIN/ABE classroom, and may be fostered through targeted activities.

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*Families Learning English Together, ESL and Child Development

* A more detailed description is listed on the OAR database

Marjorie Howe, San Diego Community College District (SDCCD) Home Economics Resource Instructor, and Esther Garcia, Mid-City Center ESL and Child Development Instructor collaborated to revise and update a course outline, and to develop new course curriculum and instructional materials to help Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents, especially mothers, together with their preschool children, learn English and learn to integrate better into the community. The customized curriculum was developed, modified, and incorporated into a family literacy ESL class.

The curriculum was two-pronged and included lessons to help LEP students in the following ways to: (1) develop their skills in accessing community resources, locate and use medical services, use the library, shop for family necessities, and communicate at a basic level with school personnel at their child's school; and (2) expand their "basic-survival" English in the context of family situations. The project also developed and field tested an evaluation component to measure the improvement of English in both parents and their children, as well as the level of parental involvement in the child's development. Additionally, a list was compiled of computer software that may be used to develop parents' and children's language development, number recognition, hand-eye coordination—and to introduce new technology in the classroom.

The mothers have responded quite positively to the class, and have bonded with one another and with the teacher, and they have requested that their class have a special name and that a logo, both designed to celebrate their parenting ESL school. More enrollment has resulted from word-of-mouth advertising.

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The 1992-1993 Online Action Research (OAR) Project

In 1992 and 1993, CASAS facilitated action-research projects conducted by six pairs of teachers in ESL, ABE, and GED programs in California. The Online Action Research (OAR) project was one of 36 funded by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL); and it used the research to:

- examine the effectiveness of classroom practices in adult ESL, ABE, and ASE programs,
- develop and use a variety of assessment strategies,
- provide an alternative form of staff development,
- explore the use of networking technology (E-mail) to facilitate the research process; and
- develop and disseminate an online database of language and literacy action research.

INQUIRY/RESEARCH COMPENDIUM

Teachers worked in pairs to conduct classroom-based research, and they systematically collected and reported on their research procedures and results. Research facilitators at CASAS provided technical assistance, including introducing teachers to the action-research process, and providing support to conduct their research, develop assessment strategies, and analyze findings.

Computer-supported collaboration (E-mail) assisted instructors to develop and refine their research by providing for ongoing dialog with "research partners" from different sites. Through this project, the OAR online database was developed, and has continued to serve as a vehicle for collecting and disseminating reports on action-research projects to teacher-researchers and to others interested in adult education. Several of these projects are highlighted below; and for information about accessing the OAR database, contact CASAS at 1 (800) 255-1036, ext. 358.

*Improving Listening Strategies in Real Life Situations

The research question was, "What are the effects of teaching listening strategies for real life situations on intermediate ESL students' listening comprehension and interactive listening behaviors?" The intervention addressed the question in two ways: (1) by raising students' awareness of listening as a skill that can be improved, and by teaching strategies for active listening; and (2) by providing an increased number of opportunities for students to practice active listening skills with exercises designed for both "bottom-up" and "top-down" processing—approximating real-life situations.

The assessment included several measurements. A performance-based assessment instrument requiring interactive listening was designed because this custom instrument would more closely approximate real-life listening tasks where information comes in short chunks and students are required to respond. This tested student's listening strategies, including clarifying questions that are not included on most standardized listening tests. A survey of listening habits (pre and post) was given and weekly student logs were also kept.

This project offered a two-fold benefit to students, as it allowed them to cross various cultural barriers that had hitherto prevented them from communicating effectively. Their confidence increased, as well, thus enabling them to increase risk taking in listening situations outside the classroom.

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*Questioning Skills by ESL Students

The research question was, "How can ESL students develop questioning skills and the confidence to use them in real life situations?" In order to improve the students' questioning skills, and help them re-word questions in order to make them more comprehensible and more accurate, or to feel more confident when asking questions, students participated in questioning

* **A more detailed description is listed on the OAR database**

drills at least three times and were also involved in a series of role plays involving using English outside the classroom in the school office.

Several measurement tools were used, including:

a) **Pre and post CASAS listening tests:** These tests were used to evaluate the students' listening skills.
b) **Performance-based tests:** The students performed a simulated task inquiring about their progress in class.
c) **Logs** in which students documented out-of-class experiences through the asking of questions were also used.

Teachers found that the study of questioning skills was more complex than originally anticipated, involving not only grammatical forms but also vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation patterns. Students felt they benefited from the large amount of time spent on questioning skills. In future research, individual learner profiles would be useful, as learners have different types of problems to overcome.

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*Integration of Reading and Writing

The research question was, "How does the integration of reading and writing instruction improve both reading comprehension and writing fluency?" The intervention process included: (1) students reading selected reading passages, discussing new vocabulary, then retelling the story orally to a partner; and (2) students completing two writing tasks (one task required a retelling of the story in their own words; the second asked students to "apply" what they read to their own lives). Assessment tools included standardized pre- and post-testing with the CASAS Life skills Survey Achievement Reading Tests; a performance assessment based on the CASAS Functional Writing Assessment; and student surveys which asked about students' reading and writing interests and habits.

More students than before advanced out of ESL and stayed in ABE classes, essentially because they understood that there is a connection between reading comprehension and writing fluency. As a result of these research activities, students completed tasks with greater confidence and experienced an increase in their confidence and competence.

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*Improving Students' Writing

The research question was, "Will a student's writing skills improve through the use of a student-centered process that includes an on-going teacher-student assessment of all completed writing assignments, portfolios, and student involvement in selecting writing topics?" The intervention included: initial interviews and discussions with each student to identify needs, discuss and set goals, and explain the research plan; and implementation of a student-centered writing component using dialogue journals and essays, writing assignment portfolios, and individual conferences to discuss completed writing assignments. Students were involved in selecting topics for writing assignments, as well as in discussing the results of their assignments, including looking critically at their own errors.

The assessment included a performance assessment in the form of the CASAS Functional Writing Assessment picture prompt with teacher-developed rubric and scale, student portfolios, and student surveys.

Data were analyzed in three categories: pre and post student survey data, pre and post writing assessments, and weekly scores on writing assignments. The most notable results came out student responses to questions concerning their own writing ability. All students indicated that they felt they had improved to some degree since participating in the project. When asked why they felt their writing had improved, comments included, "I have fewer problems," "It helps me not be afraid to make mistakes," "I get help from the teacher," "I can write easier," and "It's interesting to learn this way." Comments like these indicate students were positively affected by the methods used in the project.

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*GED Reading Program

The research question was, "In what ways will GED students benefit qualitatively and quantitatively through the creation and implementation of a reading program that uses videotapes, directed instruction, cooperative learning and reading logs?" All students who worked on the project were assigned individualized learning plans in GED reading comprehension in one area at a time, beginning with social studies. In addition to the normal

instructional program, project students participated in lessons twice weekly in directed instruction, using the KET/GED video tapes, followed by discussions of general content areas tested in GED tests 2, 3, and 4. Cooperative group practices followed in which students worked together to answer questions which cued responses at appropriate levels of critical thinking as tested on the GED test. KET print lesson support materials were also used. The assessment tools used were GED Official Practice Tests and student surveys.

For teachers, an unexpected outcome was that students showed less measurable improvement than actually expected. One reason may be that the timelines between the pre- and post-tests were too short. However, student attitudes about reading in class improved even more than was expected. Students, in fact, began to view themselves as lifelong learners.

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Georgia

The Adult Literacy Staff Development Inquiry Project

For the past seven years, the University of Georgia (UGA), Department of Adult Education, has contracted with the Office of Adult Literacy Programs, Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education, to provide mandated annual staff development workshops for adult literacy personnel throughout the state. During 1996 and 1997, practitioner inquiry represents an additional component of the staff development project grant awarded to UGA.

Adult literacy teachers in two of Georgia's service delivery areas (SDA's) were invited to participate in the Adult Literacy Staff Development Inquiry Project. The particular SDA's were identified based on their proximity to the University of Georgia, and because they employed some teachers who had previous experience with practitioner inquiry. Participating in the inquiry project was optional and represented an alternative to attending the annual, mandated staff-development workshop.

Fifteen adult literacy teachers chose to participate, six from one SDA and nine from another. Each participant signed a Letter of Agreement specifying the seven-month duration of the project, and expectations (e.g., attending all scheduled inquiry meetings, carrying out a classroom-based research project, and presenting a professional development portfolio to peers).

The inquiry project is organized differently in the two participating SDA's, in order to accommodate existing program structures. One group of six teachers meets monthly for four hours. The SDA pays these teachers for their meeting time from local staff-development funds. The second group of nine teachers convene for a full-day, four times throughout the year. Those teachers also are paid for their meeting time by the SDA from local staff-development

funds. A staff member from the University of Georgia facilitates the meetings with both groups. Between meetings, teachers carry out research activities in their local settings.

During the inquiry group meetings, a facilitator guides participants through a series of activities: reflective writing and conversation about adult literacy issues; identification of specific problems and questions that one might study through practitioner inquiry; critical reading and discussion of relevant literature; design of research projects; collection of data; collaborative data analysis; and presentation of research findings.

Some issues explored by participants include:

- How groups of new students can create bonds with one another during the intake and orientation process, and whether bonding affects subsequent participation in the program;

- How a classroom-based, "cottage industry" contributes to students' self-esteem, decision-making skills, and acquisition of job-related knowledge and skill;

- Whether vocabulary, comprehension and enjoyment of reading are affected by participation in a book club;

- Ways E-mail and the world wide web can be used to engage students' interest in writing;

- If pleasure reading outside of class affects enjoyment of reading, as well as vocabulary and comprehension skills;

- How the use of peer tutoring affects both the tutor and other students;

- Whether students are better able to express themselves using E-mail than when they are asked to do traditional writing assignments;

- Whether a change from individualized instruction to group instruction affects the historical retention patterns in a program; and

- If an enhanced orientation process affects student bonding and retention.

This year, participants in the Adult Literacy Staff Development Inquiry project are compiling professional development portfolios related to their research. They will present the portfolios to a group of peers and others when the project culminates in June. The University of Georgia also will prepare a final project report, including individual project descriptions and outcomes.

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The Georgia Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network (GALPIN)

Literacy South, a private, non-profit organization based in Durham, North Carolina, provides training, research, staff development, evaluation, technical assistance and advocacy for participatory literacy programs in the Southeast. A grant from the UPS Foundation was awarded to Literacy South in partnership with the Philadelphia Writing Project. Additional funding was provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

During the late Summer and early Fall of 1995, adult literacy teachers, tutors, program administrators and literacy organization directors throughout rural Georgia were invited to apply to participate in GALPIN. Communication about the opportunity occurred primarily through program administrators who had been sent informational flyers and application forms from Literacy South. Literacy South staff also sought referrals through professional contacts in Georgia including the Department of Technical and Adult Education. Diversity in terms of race, gender, professional role, and geography, was a primary objective in the recruitment and selection process.

Eighteen practitioners were selected to participate (16 adult literacy and ESL teachers, 1 program administrator, and 1 director of a local non-profit literacy organization). Each participant signed a Letter of Agreement specifying the duration of the project, expectations, and compensation.

Participants were expected to attend five 2 ½ day retreats which were co-facilitated by two members of the Literacy South staff. Each participant received a $100 stipend plus expense reimbursement for each retreat attended. The retreat sessions were held at state parks throughout Georgia between October 1995 and October 1996. Between retreats, participants carried out research activities in their local settings.

During the retreat sessions, facilitators guided participants through a series of activities: reflective writing and conversation about adult literacy issues; identification of specific problems and questions that one might study through practitioner inquiry; critical reading and discussion of relevant literature; design of research projects; collection of data; collaborative data analysis; and presentation of research findings.

Some issues explored by GALPIN participants include:

- the impact of pleasure reading at home on comprehension, vocabulary development and learner attitudes;

- the impact of creative visualization on retention GED completion, and learner attitudes;

- the collaborative development of specific teaching/learning strategies among learners and adult literacy teachers;

- the exploration of beliefs about literacy education held by community leaders and employers in a rural southern community;

- the identification of beliefs about the GED held by high school counselors and principals in a rural southern community and the messages conveyed about the GED to potential high school dropouts;

- the development of curriculum blending learner interests with skills measured by the GED;

- the exploration of learner self-esteem and the development of instructional strategies to tap into strengths and abilities;

- the identification of skills employers want from entry-level workers in one rural community.

- the relationship between "effective delivery skills" (a concept from the performing   arts) and learner participation during a literacy class; and

- the identification appropriate staff development approaches for tutors in a participatory ESL program.

Each GALPIN practitioner wrote a summary of his or her inquiry project, including outcomes of the research and reflections on inquiry as a staff development process. A collection of these summaries, along with descriptive information about the GALPIN project, will be published by Literacy South later in 1997. Several participants also presented their research at local, state, and national conferences.

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Workplace Skills Required by Employers

This project was developed out of a concern that economic progress is limited by low educational level and that students may not learn the skills necessary to thrive in the workplace. The following research questions were addressed: (1) What skills do employers require in employees? (2) Are literacy classes teaching those skills? (3) If not, how can the literacy curriculum be altered to encompass these skills? Data was gathered via input from business

and industry, input from former literacy students, tracking success of some former literacy students now in the workplace, examination of existing material for teaching life skills, and a survey of students about their perception of the importance of interpersonal skills in the workplace.

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Kansas

Kansas Online Action Research Project

In the summer of 1995, Dianne Glass, the State Professional Development Coordinator, organized a two-day training for three teacher/program coordinators from different parts of the state who had expressed interest in conducting online action research projects. Using the CASAS orientation packet, the teachers were introduced to action research and were also trained in how to communicate via the Internet.

During 1995 and 1996, these teachers carried out their action research projects. One of these projects is summarized below. Their experiences and findings were presented at a state adult education conference in a session that was also designed to interest other teachers in the state in conducting action research projects.

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*What Strategies are Effective in Helping ESL Students See the Value of a Cooperative Learning Approach?

The research question was, "What strategies are effective in helping ESL students see the value of a cooperative learning approach?" Prior to the action research project, little class time had been devoted to providing structure to group activities to raising student awareness of the value of cooperative learning or to promoting teamwork within groups. Also, learners did not view cooperative learning activities as either effective or valuable.

After examining research about cooperative learning, the teacher decided to implement many cooperative learning strategies, including:

- providing team building activities so that students establish rapport with one another,

- discussing ground rules prior to working in a group; and
- assigning roles to each member of the group.

The assessment tools included pre and post student questionnaires, student logs, an instructor log, and pre and post activity assessments.

Overall, the findings were positive and encouraging for the teacher and her students. The post-student questionnaire revealed a significant positive change in attitude toward the use of cooperative learning. When students were asked to evaluate their individual participation in a group, most students consistently ranked their satisfaction with a 4 or 5 on a 1 to 5 scale. Students also responded redundant positively to structured activities, such as specific role assignments in a group. Kimberly Flynn, the teacher, remarked, "I was amazed at the comments I heard from students. They enjoyed each other and felt that they had learned from each other."

Contact
Kimberly Flynn, ESL Teacher
Project Finish/Johnson County Community College

Maryland

Practitioners and administrators at the University of Maryland prepared for action research by following the CASAS model of Action Research, by going to the University of Maryland library and practicing online research with the librarian's assistance, and by using E-mail to communicate regularly. The goal of this action research project was to provide alternatives to more traditional professional development activities such as workshops. Project activities were funded by the Maryland Department of Education Division of Adult Education. One of the projects is reported here; others will appear in the OAR Database.

As a follow-up to these initial projects, Maryland is exploring possibilities of collaborating with Virginia. The two states are considering a thematic line of inquiry such as "Disabilities in ESL."

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*Needs Assessment of Low Level ESL Students

This study assessed students' English literacy needs. Research methods included a survey questionnaire developed by the practitioner to assess "daily life occasions" and a CASAS Performance-based Assessment Checklist. Over 60 percent of the ESL students chose speaking as the most important language skill to practice.

Contact

Maria de Colon, EFNEP Coordinator & ESL Instructor

Massachusetts

Adult Multiple Intelligences Project

This collaborative three-year project between World Education and Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education involves eight teachers selected on a competitive basis from non-profit adult learning centers in New England. The project, funded through the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) will provide an opportunity for practitioners to research multiple intelligences based instruction and assessment in their classrooms. The goal of the project is to generate information on how the Multiple Intelligences theory may foster innovation and guide teacher change in adult education.

The primary research question addressed through the project was: How can Multiple Intelligences theory support or enhance learner-centered instruction and assessment in ABE, ASE, and ESOL? Building on several other overarching questions, teachers will conduct research specifically related to their own learning environments. Data will be collected from a variety of sources depending on the nature of the research project and may include teacher's observations, dialog journals, teachers' documentation of teaching techniques, student portfolios, student teacher interviews and project staff's observations. Teacher-researchers will be provided support through biannual institutes, classroom visits, online discussions and technical assistance.

In the third year of the project, teacher-researchers will train other adult educators in the Multiple Intelligences approaches and will pilot products emerging from their research. The outcomes of the research will include: a research report, a Multiple Intelligences Source Book (a summary of the research findings, with examples of lessons that integrate multiple intelligences in different domains, writings by teachers about their experiences, writings by project staff and Project Zero educator-researchers on multiple intelligences compatible instructional and assessment approaches), a Multiple Intelligences video for adults, and an Adult Multiple Intelligences Teacher Resource Kit (articles, publications, and videos on multiple intelligences and related instruction and assessment approaches).

Boston Inquiry Collaborative on Learning Disabilities and the Lack of Progress

The Adult Literacy Resource Institute (A.L.R.I)/SABES Boston Regional Support Center[6] sponsored a summer inquiry institute in 1994 on learning disabilities in which nine teachers and two facilitators participated. Three sessions were held. In the first session, the facilitators worked to build a sense of community within the group, laid out their expectations for the completion of the institute and asked teachers to generate questions that haunted them about their students. An expert on learning disabilities was invited to speak with the group and address questions generated.

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[6] A.L.R. I. Receives funding from Massachusetts Higher Education Coordinating Council, The Massachusetts Department of Education/Adult and Community Learning Services, City of Boston's EDIC/Department of Jobs and Community Services

The expert recommended that participants read *7 Kinds of Smart* by Thomas Armstrong. At the end of the first meeting, participants had developed their research questions and formulated a data collection plan. By the second session, several teachers changed their research questions entirely, recognizing these questions would require more than the three months allocated to the research project. This session focused on using a data analysis process that had been developed by teachers at the Prospect School in Vermont. Participants had an opportunity to use an Educational History Survey developed by one of the participants in her own classroom research.

Through the sessions, participants learned how to look for patterns and implications in the data. The third session was designed to help participants make the transition from thinking about data to writing about it. Written papers were due at the end of the research projects.

The research papers were published by the A.L.R.I. in *Connections, A Journal of Adult Literacy.* The Winter 1995 issue, Volume V, is *The Learning Disabilities/Lack of Progress Issue.* The papers fall into 3 categories: coping with learning disabilities, multiple intelligences (or learning style), and learners' autobiographies.

Various approaches were employed depending on the nature of the research project. Practitioners conducted literature reviews, student interviews, administered assessment instruments (e.g., Multiple Intelligences Checklist), developed and administered student surveys, and reviewed student writings and drawings.

Lucie: Is She or Isn't She?

In an attempt to gain insight into why students have difficulty with thinking skills and following information on a page, a study was conducted on one particular student. The goal was to determine if the student's learning difficulty was due to external and/or internal problems. The student's background was examined to find external, environmental, and emotional influences on her education. The study also involved a review of literature. It was determined that the many intermeshing factors that influence the way a person learns and thinks cannot be separated, and, thus, each person should be treated on an individual basis.

Contact
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Learning Styles and Their Validity in the ESL Classroom/The Multiple Intelligences Instrument

This study was initiated by two instructors for the purpose of developing an instrument that would accelerate the awareness of how ESL students learn most efficiently. After a review of literature it was decided that a test or inventory had to meet two criteria: (1) the testing process would have to be a learning process in and of itself, and (2) the testing tools would yield reliable data when used with ESL students. In one case an instrument was selected based on measuring the efficiency of six learning styles: writing, listening, speaking, visualizing, manipulating, and reading. Through the results of the inventory it was discovered that a majority of the ESL

students learned most efficiently through manipulation as well as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, but researchers found the inventory less accurate with new students. In the second case, a multiple intelligences (MI) checklist was administered to students in order to assess their learning styles. The instructor found it to be a profitable experience that allowed the students to understand themselves better as well as the instructor being better equipped to understand the students.

Contact
Jessica Spoon, Chapter One instructor
Katherine Dull Logan, ESL teacher

Using the Multisensory Game "WORDS"

In this classroom experiment multisensory teaching techniques were tested by playing the game WORDS. This game, similar to BINGO, was used to teach vocabulary to beginning ESL students. The instructor concluded that the class greatly benefited from the experiment as the students' confidence in writing, spelling, and skills increased.

Contact
Janice Forcellese, ESL teacher
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Starting to Read: A Dyslexic Experience

The experiences of a dyslexic adult learner were detailed. Some of the strategies used to instruct this student were discussed, such as using a tape recorder and making index cards of inverted letters and finding letters in product labels. The teacher attributed the student's progress is to the student's observation of her reading problems, creating a positive language to overcome her sense of low self esteem in reading environments, assessing the approaches she used to compensate for word patterns, and then individualizing both short- and long-term strategies to alleviate these difficulties.

Contact
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The Penalties of Illiteracy for the Non-Reading Detainee

In order to teach reading skills to ABE students in prison, the instructor used the prison canteen list as a subject. The list was broken into categories, and was color coded. The instructor found that because the canteen was something practical that affected all the inmates they were able to relate to it and improve their reading skills. These improvements contributed to an increase in self-esteem among the students.

Contact
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Developing Educational Self-Esteem

A GED instructor developed two exercises in the hopes of building her students' educational self-esteem. The first exercise was a current and past educational history survey, which was designed to give both the teacher and student knowledge of the student's educational path. The survey was followed by a student-teacher dialogue. The second exercise was an anonymous student's educational history given to students two months into the program. The students read the history and discussed it as if they were the teacher meeting the student for the first time. Through these experiments the instructor found that the students were eager to share, which helped induce an increased awareness of students' learning styles on the part of the instructor.

Contact
Lea Campola, education manager
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Learning Abilities

To address the issue of lack of progress on the part of GED students, an experiment was conducted that investigated the students' educational and cultural histories. The activities used involved memory games, the use of imagination, physical movement, and fiction and creative non-fiction writing. It was found that the curriculum developed through this experiment built writing confidence in the students. It also was discovered that having a variety of exercises begun as a group and then assigned as individual tasks makes the classroom a flexible environment where progress can occur.

Contact
Lareese Hall, ABE/GED teacher
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An Ideal Student's Lack of Progress, or Snow Shoveling in Unfamiliar Territory

The case study explored why a GED student failed to make progress. The instructor gave the student three different writing assignments (free writing, a letter, and a GED-like essay). The student encountered difficulty with all of these assignments, including dedication to concrete details, inability to paraphrase or to put questions in her own words, and complacency with her reading, which were determined to be factors contributing to her lack of progress. It was concluded that it is just as important to teach GED students abstract thinking and organization skills as it is writing fluency.

Contact
Martha Merson, GED tutor
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Finding the Key: The Educational Autobiography & Theory of Multiple Intelligences

This study attempted to answer what ABE and GED students and an instructor could uncover about failures to learn by looking into the students' autobiographies, and how the theory of multiple intelligences could be used as a positive force during this process of examination. The instructor reviewed the educational biographies of two students, and then met with each of them, reconstructing their educational biographies, using the Multiple Intelligence Checklist. It was discovered that the educational biographies of both students provided clues to their learning difficulties. The process was most effective as the trust grew between teacher and student.

Contact
Cara Streck, ABE and GED instructor
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Approaches to Teaching Essay Writing

The Adult Literacy Resource Institute (A.L.R.I)/SABES Boston Regional Support Center[7] supported several projects on essay writing. Nine teachers were involved in an inquiry project to "catch themselves in the act" of teaching essay writing and documenting their approaches and questions. Teachers were asked to submit student-written essays and to write an article explaining how that writing came about. Teacher articles were published by the A.L.R.I. in *Connections, A Journal of Adult Literacy.* The Summer 1996 issue, Volume VI, is *Catching Ourselves in the Act: Writing About Teaching Writing.* A summary of articles follows.

Talking Through an Essay: Organizing What Your Students Want to Say

This experiment was aimed at demonstrating to GED students the organization of an essay and linking writing with speaking. For smaller groups, students were consulted on a one-on-one basis and formulated an outline through discussion with the instructor. For the larger group, working individually was substituted with group discussions and a standardized writing organizer was used to help the students organize their ideas. The experiment yielded more organized and interesting essays, an understanding of how to make use of an organizer, and an increased confidence about writing.

Contact
Allison Hoskins, pre-Vocational/GED instructor
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Bumps and Potholes: An Essay on Teaching Writing

The instructor was interested in increasing the writing skills of External Diploma Program (EDP) students. She focused on three assignments given to her students that sparked good writing: (1) a discussion of family culture, (2) an essay on cultural background, and (3) a critique of a live performance and art exhibit. In order to elicit ideas for how to carry out these assignments, the instructor used various strategies such as brainstorming, posing questions to the students, and individual consultations. The instructor found that her students wrote best when they found personal meaning in the assignment or a connection between the academic and their actual lives.

Contact
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Writing Essays: A Frustrating Experience for Bilingual Students

The task was to teach ESOL Level III and Haitian EDP students how to write essays. Due to the high level of difficulty in meeting this goal, this instructor tried a new approach by bringing in a consultant from the Adult Literacy Resource Institute to hold special writing sessions. The instructor found that these workshops were helpful but didn't ease all of her students' frustrations. She also discussed how she met with students individually to talk about revisions, and how she emphasized attention to details, and utilized journal writing as a tool to increase her students' overall writing skills. The instructor discovered that she should be more demanding of her students and that sometimes it is necessary to modify curriculum in order to meet the needs of students.

Contact
Kerline Auguste Tofurim, ESOL and EDP teacher
Haitian Multi-Service Center

Finding Ways "Not to Teach"

The topic of how to teach in the classroom is broached. It is concluded, through personal observation and experience, that often it is advantageous to spend time not teaching but rather engaging in humor and banter within the classroom. The instructor found that having fun in the classroom allowed students and teachers to get to the more important activities and issues.

Contact
Xiaowei He, coordinator for the Take-and-Give (TAG) Peer Tutoring Program
Quincy School Community Council's Adult ESL Program

Women's History Month: Studying Women Through Biography

This project was created to help counter waning motivation of ABE and Pre-ASE students. To help energize and interest the students, during Women's History Month the instructor designed curriculum that included reading/researching a woman, writing a report on that woman, and finally working in groups to design a paper patchwork quilt depicting the women that were researched. Generally, the instructor viewed the project as a great success but reflected on some of the things that went wrong including too short of a time span, not a sufficient breaking of the assignment down into smaller segments, and students' difficulty with many of the assigned tasks.

Contact
Martha Gray, ABE and Pre-ASE teacher
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Bridging the "Information Gap": The Content of Writing

The instructor was concerned with teaching writing to ESOL students and designed an assignment related to the Civil Rights Movement, in the spirit of Black History Month. A video was shown to help bridge the students' information gap, which was followed by a class discussion and ultimately a writing assignment. This approach sought to: promote language development, create an environment that best bridges the information gap and eliminates tedium in the classroom, and help students express their own ideas clearly and persuasively. Results of the experiment showed that students actively participated in the assignment and became more confident in their writing ability because of the promotion of background information—the use of a video, in this case.

Contact
Dilip Dutt

Organizing Inspiration

An exercise was used to find out information about GED students' learning histories and at the same time encourage writing. The instructor asked his students several questions that they needed to take notes on and then requested that the students take the notes and write them up as letters to their children. The instructor failed to achieve the level of prose from the students that he desired, but found the process of sharing learning histories satisfying to both the students and himself.

Contact
Marty Kingsbury

Our Piece of the Town

This experiment attempted to create engagement in writing projects on the part of adult ESOL students to the extent that greatly de-emphasizing the textbook would become acceptable to the students. In administering this approach, the instructor balanced the use of technology-

computers with presentation of the text. The experiment yielded mixed results. The students were not happy about failing to get through the textbook, but found the time spent on computers quite valuable—and they were often engaged and entertained by the projects.

Contact
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What the Writer Brings to the Teaching of Writing

An adult ESOL instructor had many opportunities within her classroom where shared stories from students benefited the learning process. She discovered that teaching isolated skills or facts without pulling in the experiences of students was detrimental to the learning process. The teacher used several strategies to encourage the students to share their stories such as writing and reading surveys, questionnaires, stories about other students' educational goals and whether they succeeded in fulfilling them, and a weekly in-class writing dialogue journal. In addition, she discovered that in order to be effective as a teacher, you must learn to adapt to surprises that occur in the classroom. She found that in adapting to this classroom environment, she learned from her students' sharing of experiences which, in turn, allowed her to understand herself better and, therefore, be a better teacher for the future.

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Health Education and Adult Literacy (HEAL)

World Education's HEAL project, funded by the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, introduces health education curricula and materials focused on early detection and control of breast and cervical cancer into ABE and ESOL programs across the country. It provides technical information about breast and cervical cancer as well as real life examples of how several instructors chose to approach the topic. The HEAL model is based on a participatory or empowerment model that encourages a teacher and student partnership in the development and design of materials and learning approaches. HEAL also provides a framework for teachers and students to investigate related issues beyond early detection.

HEAL has two main components—a training program kit and a resource kit. The training program is participatory and focuses upon teachers examining their own fears and thoughts around health issues; and it allows them to discover the resources available in the kit. The kit, itself, contains a variety of instructional tools, including videos, books, posters, articles, guides, and examples of curricula.

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There are HEAL projects in 16 states, with coordinators and trainers. Below, please find a list of contact persons within each of the 16 states.

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MATSOL Action Research Group

Since 1995, a group of ESL practitioners has been meeting on a monthly basis to discuss teacher-research projects. This group meets under the auspices of MATSOL, the Massachusetts state TESOL affiliate. Monthly meetings provide a forum for individual teachers to get feedback and suggestions, as well as encouragement, about the research they are conducting. A group of the teachers from the larger group have participated in the Pro-Net Online Action Research project; and some of their projects will be added to the OAR Database. Two of those projects are described below.

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Transitioning to Academic Skills in the ESL Classroom

The research question was, "How can we teach ESL students how to learn biological concepts?" The intervention process included providing context-rich instructional materials, written essays, rote memorization, manipulation of concepts, and exercises based upon videodisc materials. Analysis of the data provided mixed results. Rote memorization seemed to generate positive results, while written essays did not improve learning of biological concepts. Writing was identified as a skill that needed to be practiced regularly.

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Background Knowledge and Second Language Proficiency: How Adult ESL Learners Make Sense o U.S. Television News Programming

The research questions were: (1) does familiarity with the format of US television and/or prior knowledge (including general topic knowledge and topic-specific vocabulary) predict adult

ESL learners' recall and comprehension of US television news? (2) Does Level 2 proficiency mediate the effects of television familiarity and/or prior topic knowledge upon adult ESL learners' recall and comprehension of US television news?

Intervention included student viewing of TV news programs from the ABC-ESL Video series: Focus on Culture, Focus on business and Focus on Health. Several implications for using TV news in ESL curriculum emerged. It appears to be beneficial to engage students in previewing activities that prompt discussion about their knowledge of topics and possible mis-application of their prior knowledge. Students' listening comprehension also seemed to improve, especially when materials were provided that developed an awareness of ways in which certain topics are approached and understood in different cultures.

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Workplace Skills and Limited English Proficiency

This Section 353 funded project, which was completed in 1994, targeted women with limited English proficiency and minimal job skills. The goal was for students to improve their English proficiency and increase self-esteem and confidence in order to help them gain necessary workplace skills. The project tested the hypothesis that a combination of concentrated classroom activities, hands on field experience, and individual tutoring will promote literacy proficiency at a faster rate than other classroom approaches. The methods used were assessment of skill level and self-esteem, goal setting by student, teacher, and tutor based on students' desired outcomes, field trips, speakers on topics such as personal safety, insurance, voter registration, healthcare, and homeowners/renters rights, role playing and cooperative learning; and an eight week internship. Data was collected via conferences, personal assessment, and tutor input.

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Family Literacy and Whole Language

This Section 353 funded project was aimed at promoting family literacy through the use of a whole language approach. The project provided programming for parents and children ages 3-

5 for a total of 6 hours per week. Children and parents were instructed in two separate classrooms for one hour a day and then were brought together for an hour of collaborative activities, such as creating a story and reading stories to each other. Students also received computer assisted instruction. Goals of the program included having parents and children increase basic reading skills by one grade level, having parents obtain reading credit or pass the GED exam, having participants increase their knowledge of basic computer skills, establishing a model literacy program, and encouraging children to become more self confident. Data was collected through identical pre and post tests, and through teacher observations.

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Even Start Follow Up

This Section 353 funded project was developed for the purpose of maintaining ongoing relationships with the successful graduates of an Even Start program in order to help empower them to deal with post-graduation hurdles they may encounter. The project tracked these graduates (8 selected subjects and their families), observing them and offering support throughout the year following graduation. It was hypothesized that such commitment to the graduates would yield continued growth and development of the family unit. Data was collected via an instrument used to measure growth for both children and adults, and via monthly meetings with participating families. The project findings were submitted to the State Literacy Center in 1993.

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Effects of Learning Style and Strategy Training on Adult Learning Gains

This 1994 project, funded through a Section 353 mini-grant, examined the effectiveness, in terms of test scores, of learner-centered instructional style and strategy training on adult literacy students. It was hypothesized that students receiving such training would show a greater gain in language proficiency, based upon TABE scores and a writing sample, than those students who do not receive such training. The project included two sample groups and two control groups from the population of adult students enrolled at Enterprise Learning Labs. The individuals were randomly assigned to one of these four groups. Data was collected using methods that included pre-testing, eight training sessions conducted both individually and in small groups, post-testing, and a writing sample.

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Michigan Adult Education Practitioner Inquiry Project

Funded through Section 353 funds and Michigan Department of Education, Office of Extended Learning practitioners engaged in a series of inquiry projects. Collegial support was provided. Practitioners came together on five Saturdays over a 6 to 12 month period by area of inquiry. Technical assistance was provided through orientation to ERIC and the Internet. Process of reflecting on practice was modeled during meetings and "expert" presenters in the research process provided instruction.

Individually or as members of a team, practitioners identified a research question, collected data using at least three methods, analyzed data, and summarized and shared findings in a final report. Many of the projects incorporated literature reviews. Results were disseminated to ERIC and other practitioners by journal articles and conference presentations.

Student Assessment

To Determine Whether Alternative Self-Assessment Tools Can Be Used in Volunteer Based Literacy Programs to Measure Real Progress that Cannot Be Measured by Standardized Reading Tests

This two year study examined alternative assessment tools in adult tutoring programs. The project set out to demonstrate that student assessment is vital to documenting the success of volunteer based literacy programs and to demonstrate that student self-assessment is a useful tool. It also compared the results of standardized testing with student self assessment. Thirty-five students and their tutors participated and were encouraged to develop a student portfolio for ongoing self assessment. Tutors participated in workshops on student portfolio assessments. The researchers received many favorable comments from tutors regarding portfolios as self assessment. Several students showed changes in behaviors that indicated significant improvement, but negative or no growth measured by standardized tests.

Contact
Nancy B. Geddes, Student Assessment Coordinator, Program coordinator for Oakland Literacy Council in Pontiac, Michigan. Retired.

Feasibility Study to Determine if Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) Can Be Adapted for Use in Adult Literacy Programs to Measure Progress on Student Identified Goals

Staff from five literacy programs individually assisted 40 students with identification of goals the students wanted to achieve in 3-4 months. A Goal Attainment Guide was completed for each student. Outcome achievement for each goal for each student was described on a 5 point

continuum from "Best Possible Outcome" to "Worst Possible Outcome". Thirty-eight students were available for the follow-up. Findings included: (1) GAS is feasible for adult literacy programs but it is necessary to have more training for staff and more consistent feedback and support as goals are being written. (2) The goal-setting process is time-consuming for volunteers. (3) The GAS process provided tutors with a better way to focus learning and do lesson planning for tutoring sessions.

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Learning Strategies

To Determine if Changing the Physical Characteristics of the Adult Education Classroom to Meet the Preferences of the Students Improve Retention

Alternative education students (16 to 19 years old) were given Dunn, Dunn, and Price Learning Styles inventory and also asked to rate the "liking" of their physical classroom environment. Additionally, a student wish list was generated. The classroom environment was modified to accommodate the students' environmental needs for noise, light, temperature, and design. Outcomes: students "liking" of the classroom environment improved but improved retention for these students did not occur.

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To Determine Whether Cooperative Learning Methods are Effective for Adult Learners and Appropriate for Use by Adult Educators.

Cooperative learning is described as the use of small groups working together to accomplish shared goals and seeking outcomes that benefit all members for the group while maximizing individual academic learning. Researchers reviewed the literature on cooperative learning, developed and administered a survey questionnaire of adult educators working in cities, suburbs and rural areas whose students ranged in ages from 16-75 and analyzed data. Survey results: a majority of respondents had some training in cooperative learning but desired more; 76 percent of the teachers thought that most of their students liked cooperative learning; teachers were satisfied with cooperative learning; and the majority had support from administrators and colleagues to carry out cooperative learning practices. Researchers recognized the need for further study of the effects of cooperative learning (e.g., retention).

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To Determine if Small Group Interaction Within the Classroom Aids/Enhances Reading Comprehension and if so, to Identify Which Practices Are Most Effective.

This study involved a review of literature and work with 24 women at a rehabilitation facility. The women worked in both homogeneous learning dyads and collaborative groups for literature, and in collaborative groups (no more than 5 persons) for social studies and science. All students received direct instruction on comprehension, use of context clues, and retellings, prediction, story structure, and decoding from the teacher. Students worked with partners or in small groups during follow-up time. Students used a process approach to writing, and participated in peer revising and editing stages during the process. Outcomes included an increase in student scores on standardized measures of reading, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, as evidenced by comparing pre- and post-test scores on the TABE.

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Learning Strategies for Urban African-American Adults

For a future exploration of what effective, interesting learning strategies could be developed for urban, African American adults in GED classes, the researcher used two separate surveys to define the demographics of the students and identify their interests. Data from the survey illustrated that more student-directed activities need to be developed, because students preferred learning activities would lead to minimal skill development, and the use of computers would reinforce learning skills and information gathering.

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Self-Esteem

Developing a Positive Self-Image Through the Intake Process

The researcher was concerned with helping adult learners in a tutoring program to develop a positive self-image through the intake process. In an effort to change the intake process from assessing what students cannot do to assessing what they can do in a way that encourages self-esteem and retains students she conducted two ERIC searches, one on the intake procedures

used in adult education, ABE, and one-on-one tutoring and one on self-esteem. She developed a new screening process that provided the program with a good profile of the adult student and provided students with a good feeling about starting a new learning experience.

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Workplace

Identifying Workforce Related Skills

This two-year study focused on skills needed in today's workforce. Researchers developed a survey of 25 work-related skills based on a review of materials on skills and abilities employers value in employees, and on the entry level skills identified by the North Central Indiana Workforce Literacy Task Force. In the first year, 100 surveys were sent to local employers asking them to prioritize work skills they believed to be important. The survey results (priority work skills were dependability, ability to receive instruction, take pride in work, is trainable, serves client-customer well, and works well with a supervisor) led to another inquiry question. How are adult educators integrating employability skills instruction into their curriculum? In addition, researchers wanted to identify activities that can be used to teach employability skills in the adult education classroom. By determining what already is being taught and comparing that information to what should receive greater emphasis in the classroom (based on employers' needs) the researchers thought they could help adult students with a smoother process for transitioning from school to work. In the second year surveys were sent to 90 adult education teachers to find out which employability skills were emphasized the most by teachers in the classroom; and to provide a detailed summary of activities used in the classroom to teach employability skills. The results, with great emphasis placed on who receives instruction, who is productive, who understands written work, and who takes pride in work, were compared with employer data. The comparative data provided some guidance for adult educators interested in focusing employability skills training in the areas deemed most important by the sample of employers in their geographical area.

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Employability Skills

This project built upon another Michigan project (McGilvery and Chalut) which compared employability skills deemed important by employers with the emphasis given those same skill areas by adult education teachers. In this study, researchers compared the employer rankings against the rankings by students in adult high school Academics Skills Training class and students in a Marketing and Modeling Research class of a four year college. Survey results found that college students' rankings were closer to the employers than were the rankings by the adult high school students. The data are helpful to the instructors who want to prepare their students to meet the employability challenge.

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Employment Goals

The researcher was interested in determining how aware GED students at a predominately African American urban adult education center were of specific criterion regarding how to reach employment goals that will satisfy their lifestyle. The researcher developed and administered an Employment Assessment Form. Survey data showed that 97% of the students surveyed could not calculate their desired hourly income to obtain an accurate yearly salary. Half the students felt they needed more than $30,000 and were willing to spend at least 40 hours a week working toward their employment goals. Courses students felt would most assist them with their employment goals were math, computer, social studies, communications, reading and English. Findings indicated that an employability skills course that includes life management and communication skills would remedy the gap of knowledge regarding needed salary and employment satisfaction and would provide the kind of employability empowerment students indicated they desired.

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Ohio

Ohio Literacy Resource Center

The Ohio Literacy Resource Center has provided research and development grants for a variety of practitioner inquiry research projects over the last several years. Below are highlights of some of these projects.

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Positive Outcomes of Group Learning in the ABLE Classroom
- Maplewood Area JVS

Practitioners conducted research on how students in the Maplewood Adult Basic and Literacy Education program react to working in collaborative or cooperative learning groups. Three teachers worked with three target groups of students - ABE, GED, and a Steps of Success (SOS) Workshop, in which all students were enrolled in the JOBS program.

One teacher observed a group session in progress, taking notes on one certain focus for the day (e.g., on-task/off-task comments, all questions asked). The teacher who did the teaching was responsible for writing a self-reflection about the observed lesson. These two sets of notes were grouped together to be studied at a later date. Self reflections from unobserved groups were also used.. Field notes were gathered over a nine-month period and compiled and studied for repeating patterns and problems. Teachers met to decide how to analyze the information. They read through all the notes twice, the second time looking for differences and similarities between teachers' self-reflections and observers' notes, and patterns that may emerge. They reviewed their information a third time to see if their "hunches" were right. They also calculated percentages when that strategy was sensible. They came together to share what each had discovered individually, and to develop a final list of findings which they summarized into a short paper.

From their field notes they found five principal indicators of enjoyment for students working in groups. These were participation, human bonding, positive increase in individual behavior,

motivation and physical signs of enjoyment. In addition, the field notes provided the teachers with a sense of satisfaction and reward.

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How Best to Serve JOBS Clients - Canton City Schools

Research was conducted to evaluate the results of a new component of the services offered to JOBS clients (a 16-hour Success Workshop) as well as to compare the effectiveness of a center offering JOBS clients 20 hours a week versus one offering eight hours. The project measured the rate of progress, students motivation, changes in attitudes and behaviors, academic gains, attendance patterns, etc.

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Social and Educational Benefits of Field Trips - Cleveland Public Schools

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the social and educational benefits of field trips for parents and children participating in a family literacy center. Specifically, the project observed and interviewed two families and documented the effects that field trips have on behavior and attitudes toward learning. A checklist of behaviors was developed as an aid in monitoring the parents. It was concluded that: (1) experiential learning is as important for adults as for children; and (2) a family that learns together will help individual members with literacy levels.

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Principles of the Adult Literacy System - Gallia-Jackson-Vinton JVSD

The project researched the use of the Principle of the Alphabet Literacy System (PALS) with adults who show moderate to severe learning disabilities. Twenty-three adults attended one or more sessions of the PALS Reading Program. Results indicated that PALS was not successful in meeting the needs of adult learners due to lack of self-motivation, lack of goal setting, or unrealistic goal setting on the part of the adults. It was recommended that the PALS program be eliminated.

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Effects of Using Published Literature in ABE and GED Classrooms - Ohio State Medical Center

The purpose of this experiment was to determine whether reading and small group discussions of published adult literature would accelerate a GED student's progress in writing, critical reading, and grammar usage. The project involved the teacher reading literature out loud followed by a discussion of assigned questions, ultimately concluding in an essay assignment. Results have indicated that small group discussions have been beneficial for the development of critical thinking and reading skills. Additionally, there has been a noticeable improvement in writing and grammar skills.

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Predicting Outcomes in Workplace Literacy Programs - Owens Community College

The project sought to develop methods to predict student, program, and economically defined outcomes for workplace literacy programs. Materials were redesigned concerning student goals, attendance, and participation, so that predictions could be made regarding the amount of

time required for a student to achieve a specific goal. Forms were developed for this purpose, and data collection began.

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Evaluate the Impact of Culturally Appropriate Curriculum on Learners' Achievement, Retention, and Affect - Urban Appalachian Council

The Appalachian/African American Cultural Education Project was initiated to integrate cultural content into the ABLE/ABE/GED program in order that the curriculum and practice be more relevant to the students and to motivate adult learners to be involved in the learning process. Teachers and students worked throughout the year with Appalachian and African American theater troupes. Key findings included: teachers reporting and exhibiting greater familiarity and comfort with cultural subject matter and more confident of their ability to facilitate group learning and use alternative teaching methods.

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Assessing Educational Needs of Employees - Warren City Schools

The project was intended to review the educational needs of employees and their spouses at General Motors to aid in the design of educational programs. A survey instrument designed to gather information about areas of interest was assembled. Through the survey, it was learned that the program should address such issues as improving reading speed, algebra and geometry, fractions, decimals, percentages, communication skills, psychology concepts, and computer skills.

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Pennsylvania

ESL Online Action Research Project

The primary goal of the Online Action Research Project was to create an infrastructure for supporting and guiding Pennsylvania practitioners through their first practitioner research projects by using the Internet as a primary communication vehicle. Based upon the CASAS 1991-1993 Online Action Research Project, this project coordinated efforts with the National Professional Development Network (Pro-Net) in order to participate in a national online action research database. Prior to beginning their individual research project, 10 participants met for two days of training. One day focused on technology, Internet, E-mail, and online chats. The second day focused on understanding the background, methods, and strategies for engaging in practitioner research.

The summary of findings was that online action research holds great promise as an avenue for ongoing professional development for adult educators. Not only does it help to create a sense of community among practitioners who, for a variety of reasons (including rural locations and varying work schedules), have very little opportunity for regular collegial interaction, but it exposes practitioners to a wealth of information about their field. The combination of practitioner research, Internet technology and collegial interaction creates a powerful professional development tool that adult education practitioners find exciting and insightful.

This project was rated excellent for innovation by the Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.

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*How Can an Orientation Module Aid Students in Goals Clarification and Enhanced Study Skills?

The research question posed was "How can an orientation module aid students in goals clarification and enhanced study skills?" One purpose was to encourage students to articulate their needs and goals so that they could perceive the relevance of the curriculum to their individual life plans. Another purpose was to motivate students to hold themselves accountable to class schedules and work assignments.

Staff development was scheduled as a series for January 1996 on three consecutive Tuesday evenings in order to develop an orientation module. Fourteen adult education program instructors participated in the process. Also, two consultants were hired to impart specialized knowledge to the teams -- one on needs analysis, goal clarification, and goal setting, the other on techniques for team building and for establishing small communities of learning in the classroom.

During and after the development of the orientation, module data were collected from students and teachers. Students completed a written evaluation, for example, and every teacher engaged her or his class in discussions about the impact of the orientation. Based upon

classroom discussions and teachers' personal observations, each teacher also submitted a written evaluation. In turn, teachers discussed the quality and impact of the orientation as noted in their written evaluations at the staff development sessions held in late February of 1996.

The impetus for a second phase was twofold: (1) how to challenge educated professionals in lower level ESL classes who rapidly mastered reading and writing tasks of the curricula although their oral proficiency did not merit advancement to a higher level; and (2) how to teach reading and writing in an ESL context to students who had limited education in their primary language.

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*The Impact of Computer Training on Students and Tutors

The research question was: Will the introduction of computer training with selected reading software, paired with one-on-one tutoring, cause literacy students to achieve a two-grade increase in tested reading rate more quickly than traditional methods (tutoring without the use of computers and reading software), and foster an increase in computer literacy in tutors and students? Pre and post tests were administered, along with surveys and interviews. At the end of the 10 hours of training, all tutors felt comfortable with the software and confident of their ability to use the material provided.

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*Student Motivation to Attend an ESL Class

The research question was "What is going on in IVOC's ESL classroom program that encourages many student to re-enroll term after term?" Students answered a survey and were interviewed, and the findings contributed to shaping the curriculum and teacher training.

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*The Effectiveness of Student Directed Pair Groups

The research question was: Are student directed pair groups effective in developing better communication skills for the individual student? Through surveys and daily journals, the teacher learned about the students' response to a variety of activities. In order to learn more about the subject, she conducted on-line searches for primary sources. Student feedback indicated that the vast majority of participants think they are learning new material and improving their pronunciation through pair learning.

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*The Impact of Support Services at a Resource Center

The research question was: Will students at the Resource Center who use support services have better attendance than those at the Center who do not? Quantitative research data was collected to measure attendance and find the number of services students used at the Center. Qualitative data was collected in the form of dialogue journals and phone interviews in order to improve collaborative efforts between agencies.

The data indicated that use of support services does not mean better attendance. There was no direct relationship between individuals who made considerable use of support services and attendance. Thus, students with the highest attendance record were not necessarily the ones who accessed the most services.

As a result of dialogue journals and phone interviews with volunteer tutors, information gathered from tutors and staff will be helpful in future programming at the Center.

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*Tutor Training Models

This study posed the question, "What can I learn about tutor training from looking at current research and collecting data from tutors, students and colleagues that will help me design a tutor training manual to use in my work site?" The following methods to collect data were used: researching the ERIC database to look for other ESL tutor-training programs; writing letters to tutor-trainers in various parts of the country asking for suggestions or copies of their manuals; analyzing several videos of teaching, analyzing cassette recordings both of one-on-

one sessions with various students and of tutor's sessions with students, reading and analyzing student and tutor journals, as well as keeping a journal of daily observations (in addition to the electronic journals we kept as part of the project), interviews with tutors and various staff members, and corresponding with other tutor-trainers on the Internet, (one in California and one in Florida). An analysis of the data collected in this project has yielded material which is currently being incorporated into a tutors' manual and training program.

From the ERIC material relating to tutor-training it was learned that many programs provide quite lengthy training periods before matching students and tutors, and that many peer tutor-training programs provide a system of rewards and certificates. Ms. Klopp has been exchanging materials and ideas with tutor-trainers in California and Florida who are also in the process of setting up their programs.

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*The Effectiveness of Audiotapes in Improving English Pronunciation

My research question was: If students think using audio-tapes is a helpful way to improve their English pronunciation, in what specific ways is it helpful? This project was implemented in my advanced ESL class of 15 foreign students. I was interested to learn what specific things learners found helpful about using audio-tapes for pronunciation work, so I formulated questions for learners to respond to which I hoped would give me the answers I wanted. Initially, I wanted to determine if students actually understood my feedback to them on their tapes. Once I determined that we understood one another, I felt free to ask specific questions about how the audio-taping worked for them and why they believed it was helpful. In collecting data for this project, I asked the students to respond to specific questions in writing and by conversing with me on their tapes. I also included a focus discussion group, led by a colleague, Jaclyn.

The students prepared for a focus group by writing answers to the questions that Jaclyn then used to guide the discussion. While the students seemed to enjoy the focus group and several students -- even several, usually reserved Japanese students -- were forthcoming, it was interesting that the students wrote more than they were willing to share in an open forum. I had a concern from the beginning about using a focus group to gather data on something as personal as speech. One of my reasons for utilizing audio-tapes, in the first place, is to provide feedback in as unobtrusive a way as possible. I can be much more direct with students about their speech problems when I can talk to them privately on tape. No one else is listening, and I am not physically present. I am just now realizing that I never questioned the students about this aspect of using audio-tapes. This would be another good question to pursue with learners.

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What Staff Development Would Look Like at a Small CBO if Based on Needs Identified by Staff and the Support the Organization Could Provide

Seven researchers (administrator and practitioners), funded through the National Center for Adult Literacy (NCAL) research program, worked together to provide a framework for staff development. They produced a 20-page final report that has served as the basis for a professional development plan. Four years later, the agency is implementing the plan.

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Exploring the Role of the Executive Director in a Small, Participatory Community Based Organization

Funded as an NCAL research project, the executive director of a small CBO, using internal reflections and documenting her behaviors when power is challenged and when power is shared, examined her role as administrator. The result of the inquiry project was a better understanding of behaviors, clearer vision of authority, better recognition of role, and enhanced ability to solicit authentic input from staff and students who have a role in the organization. As the administrator, she learned to ask questions and establish situations to gain responses from individuals.

Contact
Peggy McGuire (see above)

Role of a Child Care Worker in Creating Disciplinary Structures

Funded through 353 funds, teachers, an administrator, and a child care worker are exploring their roles within the organization. The child care worker is investigating her role in creating disciplinary structures. A goal in this collaborative project is to understand the link between what researchers get out of the process and the difference it makes to the organization.

Contact
Peggy McGuire (see above)

Action Research or Staff Development in Four Regional Staff Development Centers and Establishment of a Statewide Action Research Network

A number of Section 353 funded projects were initiated in Pennsylvania under the auspices of the *Action Research for Staff Development in Four Regional Staff Development Centers and Establishment of a Statewide Action Research Network.* Dr. Allan Quigley, an Associate Professor at Pennsylvania State University, served as the Director for these projects. Several research themes emerged including increasing student retention and recruitment, and increasing self-esteem. Projects employed various data collection strategies including surveys of instructions and learners, student interviews, instructor journals, reviewing attendance records, and literature reviews. Several projects are briefly described below. The Project Director, as well as the individual researchers responsible for each project, can be contacted via:

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Improving Retention and Resolving Personal Problems by Instituting a Regularly Scheduled Student Support Group

This project was initiated out of a desire to help those students whose personal problems interfere with school to increase their attendance and performance. Specifically, the objective was to determine whether attendance of ABE/GED students in the Goodwill Literacy Initiative program could be improved through implementation of a student support group that meets every other week for a 12 week period of classes to help them resolve personal issues. Data were collected via a facilitator's journal, field notes, anecdotal records, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education database, used to compare students' completion rates from September through December of 1995, with a second cycle from January through April of 1996. Findings from this research indicate that students involved in the group attended more regularly than those in the previous cycle, without the support group.

Contact
Nicole Despines
Penn State University, Monroeville Center

Helping ABE Students set Realistic Goals Through Instructor/ Student Interviews

This project sought to verify the assumption that ABE/GED students at the Goodwill Literacy Initiative who receive sufficient feedback regarding their performance are more likely to succeed. A student questionnaire was developed as part of a weekly student/instructor interview. Student ratings of their academic progress and goal attainment were compared to their instructor's rating of these same elements. The research question examined was: Is there some way to improve retention of at-risk students by assuring that they frequently receive accurate and adequate information about their academic performance? Data were collected by means of the GLI database (for student attendance records and academic achievement scores), and logs of instructor observations and student responses to weekly survey questions. The project suggested that the best way to accurately gauge a student's perceptions and respond to concerns is through a weekly, personal interview.

Contact
Peggie Hopkins & Judith Aaronson
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Learner Retention Action Plan

This project addressed the problem of retention at the Crawford County READ program. The assumption was made that students would attend tutoring sessions more often if they had contact with a learner mentor. During the period from December 1995 to February 1996, a learner mentor contacted the students bimonthly to get an update on how they were progressing and to ensure that they were attending their tutoring sessions. Data were collected via monthly learner documentation sheets, the tutor monthly calendar checklist, and tutor, learner, and learner-mentor surveys. This data revealed that there was an increase in attendance over the three month duration of the project compared to those same three months the previous year.

Contact
Lisa Schmalzried
Penn State University, Monroeville Center

Increasing Student Retention Through Small Group Tutoring

This project attempted to implement small group tutoring in order to increase student retention at the Literacy Council of Venango County's ABE and ESL programs. The idea for the research project originated from the dilemma that recruitment of volunteer tutors was lower than the recruitment of students needing help. Data were collected via periodic monitoring of students' progress through the use of evaluation sheets, attendance sheets, classroom observation by the program director, exit interviews, and journals reflecting the project director's thoughts. Unfortunately, the project never reached fruition, due to severe inclement weather.

Contact
Maloy Beach
Penn State University, Monroeville Center

The Retention of Students Through a Counselor Support System

The purpose of this project was to identify potential drop-outs and create a support system for these students. Reluctant learners were identified through a "Prior Schooling and Self-Perception Inventory" as possible drop-out students and assigned a counselor for help outside of the classroom. Data were collected via biweekly interviews of students, logs of student comments, a counselor diary, weekly meetings with counselors, and anecdotal notes of classroom experiences involving participating students. The project yielded an increased retention rate, but failed to reach the rate expected.

Contact
Bonita Miller
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Improving Attendance of Adult Learners in a Rehabilitative Setting

This project examined one possible way of improving the attendance of adult learners in remedial classes. The research question was: Will attendance of GED students in a Center for Educational Development program be improved if they are given the opportunity to receive a reward for attendance? Students were rewarded with points for attendance that could be exchanged for canteen tickets to the school store. Data were collected through instructors taking daily attendance and distributing points. The outcome revealed that external rewards were not effective in improving attendance.

Contact
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Increasing Retention by Providing Support Contact from Staff

Through this project the Office of Community Education at Carlow College attempted to increase attendance in their ABE-GED classes. It was proposed that increased contact from staff could help students overcome certain barriers (e.g., health problems, work schedule, transportation, lack of support at home, and low self confidence) that hindered attendance. Staff members contacted all students in the program by phone or mail to probe for reasons why students were not attending more frequently so that help could be provided. Data were collected via comparing rates of students retained in classes with the intervention of staff and the current 40 percent average retention rate, attendance records, interview or questionnaires given to students, and anecdotal records from discussions with students. The research indicated that although there was a slight increase in attendance of students, there were other barriers, primarily motivational, that even regular communication from staff could not eliminate.

Contact
Pat Scott
Penn State University, Monroeville Center

How Will Classroom Tests Affect Students' Sense of Progress?

This project sought to determine how classroom testing would affect ESL students. The goal was to see if such testing would increase feelings of success for the students or, conversely, discourage them. Students were given weekly spelling and vocabulary quizzes for one month. Data were collected via survey questionnaires, class discussions, and teacher observations. Based upon the data collected, the addition of weekly quizzes did not significantly contribute to student feelings of frustration or discouragement. Yet, it was inconclusive as to whether this testing led to student feelings of success and progress.

Contact
Kathleen Moon
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Building Self-Esteem Through Reading

This project sought to build self-esteem through reading in a predominately African American ABE class at Bidwell Training Center, Inc. in Pittsburgh. Six students were the subjects for the project. Nine aspects of self-esteem were identified and lessons were then developed around readings by or about African Americans based on these identified aspects. Data were collected through attendance records, a journal, observation of the instructors and counselor on student attitudes, a pre- and post- Self-Esteem survey, and reading comprehension test scores. Results suggested that there were no measurable changes in self-esteem or attendance, yet there was an increase in scores on the reading comprehension test.

Contact
Susan F. Cooper
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Implementing a Portfolio System in the Adult Reading and Writing Classroom

This project was undertaken to determine if implementation of a student portfolio system at the Center for Adult Education would improve student awareness of academic progress and assist students in setting specific academic goals. Folders were placed in a public area of the classroom so that ABE, ESL, and GED students would have access to their completed writing assignments and rough drafts. Data were collected through a student survey to determine attitudes and perceptions, a goals checklist to define and prioritize needed skills, in-class portfolios for accumulating and assessing student assignments, teacher field notes, and student interviews. Based on this research, it was concluded that portfolio systems are a successful tool to increase student self confidence and the visibility of academic progress.

Contact

Karen Tuminello
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Increasing Recruitment in the Gateway Program

This project was undertaken in response to low enrollment at the Latrobe Gateway GED class. The purpose was to increase awareness of adult education opportunities and recruitment of students. Two strategies were incorporated in this project holding a three-day open house visitation at the site, and including the Gateway program in an advertising campaign. Data were collected through agency records of student enrollments, records of student attendance, and the instructor's journal of observations, feelings, and so on. The first strategy failed to yield an increase in enrollment, although the second strategy was successful in recruiting nineteen new students.

Contact
Paige Thomas & Gail Campbell
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Linking Adult Education Programs to Post Secondary Institutions

This project sought to use a connection with post secondary education agencies to assist in the recruitment of upper level students to reading and math classes at the Center for Adult Education. The goal was to establish a direct referral process between adult basic education and post secondary training and education. Data were collected through the ACA report, which indicates the average class attendance, and enrollment information provided by a student intake form. The research, too, indicated that there was a small gain in the enrollment of referred students.

Contact
Barbara Kroh
Penn State University, Monroeville Center

Recruitment of ABE Students Through Structured Strategies

This project was instituted for the purpose of more effectively recruiting ABE students. The following research question was addressed: Is it possible to increase ABE enrollments at an urban adult learning center, in an efficient and cost effective manner, by initiating enrollment strategies using current students as a recruiting resource? The Erie Adult Learning Center used new ABE students as a resource by having them supply names of other possible recruits (i.e., family members and friends) upon enrollment and implementing a "Bring a Friend Day." Data were collected via a statistical analysis of past enrollment records versus enrollment following the recruitment efforts, surveying the current student population to determine how they were recruited, and anecdotal information gathered from new enrollees and staff. Following an analysis of the research, it was determined that both of these recruitment efforts resulted in an increase in enrollment.

Contact
Gary Narbut & Joseph Mando
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Increasing Students' Critical Reading Skills

This project hoped to improve teaching strategies that develop learners' critical thinking and critical reading awareness. The research questions addressed included: (1) How can I more effectively teach critical reading skills? (2) How much practice in simulated tests do students need to increase their critical reading skills, so they can pass a standardized reading comprehension test at the end of a developmental reading course? (3) What strategies can I implement to increase students' critical reading skills? Data were collected through reviewing current research on metacognition, critical thinking, and critical reading, probing student awareness of critical thinking by a questionnaire, analyses of quizzes and tests, and review of written reflections by students and instructor. The project was successful in demonstrating growth in awareness and application of higher level critical thinking and critical reading skills. It was predicted that all 16 students in the study will pass the next administration of the Basic Skills Test.

Contact
Monica McAghon
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Reducing Waiting Lists With Small Group Instruction

This project was conducted by the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council in order to ascertain whether an increase in the number of small literacy groups would help decrease the lists of students waiting to be matched with an individual tutor. The intervention created was to promote small group tutoring as an option. Information was collected on the number of active and waiting students in each area the number of tutors willing to work with a group after training, and the actual number of small groups in each area. Data were collected via document analysis, logs, and interviews with area coordinators and tutors. It was found that the number of tutors willing to work with small groups did not increase, and the waiting list, therefore, failed to decrease. However, the number of students that received services increased, as well as the number of small groups.

Contact
Hedy Miller
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Increasing the Return of Monthly Progress Reports

This project evolved out of a concern regarding the gathering of information about student progress at the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council. The goal was to encourage consistent return of the *Monthly Progress Report*. Changes, therefore, were made to the format of this report which included adding a section for student feedback. Data were collected via a log of returns, a journal to record ideas that surfaced during the process, and document analysis. As a

result of the new form, there was an increase in the return of the *Monthly Progress Report*, and it was determined that student responses were helpful in allowing the area coordinators to gather information.

Contact
Debbie Thompson
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Increasing Vocabulary levels of Deaf Students

This project was designed to teach students in the Deaf Preparatory program vocabulary at an accelerated rate so that the students would be able to enter their major area of study more prepared. This advanced rate of instruction was intended to compensate for the limited experiences to enhance students' vocabulary outside the classroom. Data were collected through the use of vocabulary comprehension tests given each week for one month.

Contact
Patricia Palmiscno
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Utilizing Alternative Assessment Tools with Individuals Having Developmental Challenges

This project was conducted at the Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Center Adult Literacy Program, which caters to individuals having mild to moderate learning challenges. It compared the current method of assessment *The Woodcock Test of Reading Mastery* with an alternative method *The Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Basic Skills*. The goal was to examine whether this alternative assessment tool could enable the students to show greater progress than what was currently being observed. Twelve students were selected to be pre-and post-tested using both assessment methods. Data were collected through the use of: (1) entry and exit scores of the tests; and (2) attendance records. An analysis of the research indicated that the participating students failed to show greater gains using *The Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Basic Skills*.

Contact
Joy Zamierowski
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Tutors' Willingness to Tutor Math

This project attempted to answer the question: Would teaching math to volunteer tutors increase their willingness to, in turn, teach math to adult students? The tutors who indicated that they were uncomfortable teaching math were given 24 hours of math instruction. Data were collected via telephone interviews of the tutors, and a seven-point "Range of Feelings About Teaching Math" scale, given before and after the 24 hours of instruction. Three out of the four tutors that participated in the program increased their willingness to teach math, while the other tutor remained the same.

Contact
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Pennsylvania Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Network (PALPIN)

Funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education beginning in 1995, PALPIN is working to create a state-wide professional development network dedicated to supporting and strengthening the use of inquiry for improving practice and program development for practitioners. Using a variety of formats including regional, program-based, online and intensive institute inquiry groups, PALPIN creates inquiry communities in a variety of contexts around the state.

PALPIN inquiry communities read research literature and write and talk about it in relationship to practice. They support data collection and collaborative analysis around inquiry topics based on the day-to-day interests, concerns and questions of participants.

During the first year of PALPIN, teacher and tutor participants posed inquiry questions related to improving classroom practice by looking closely at the learning process or by getting a better understanding of learners' needs, concerns and expectations. These inquiries usually gathered information from various students' perspectives, thus altering traditional teacher/student relationships. In addition, participants often tried and documented a new practice or focused on a specific area of their program that was not working well. Administrators often posed questions that examined broader issues in the workplace or the field. Such projects tended to question structures and relationships that are commonly taken for granted in programs and the wider field. For additional information please contact Alisa Belzer, Project Director.

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Tennessee

Health Education and Adult Literacy (HEAL) Project

This is a follow-up to a 1992 World Education (MA) project funded through the Centers for Disease Control to raise awareness about breast and cervical cancer in ABE and ESL programs. World Education using a Freirian approach, built a health education curriculum and materials and prepared a Health Education and Adult Literacy Kit (e.g., print materials,

artifacts, posters, anatomy models) for use in ABE and ESL programs. In 1995 World Education conducted training on these materials in various parts of the country. From this initial training, the Tennessee Center for Literacy Studies began an inquiry project in five counties, replicating the initial training and introducing the concept of inquiry research. Partnerships were formed between ABE teachers and health educators in each county to follow World Education's approach in using learners' lives to build an awareness of breast and cervical cancer among learners in lower level ABE literacy classes. In year two, ABE teacher participants in each of the five counties are expanding the project by soliciting mentor partners. In the second year, nine teachers are involved in working with various levels of literacy classes.

Participants received initial training as well as materials prepared by World Education including *The Source Book* as support for the project. Throughout the project, teachers keep journals responding to key questions that help them focus their research. Journal entries are shared among participants who meet on an average of every four to six weeks. Support also is provided by the staff at the Center for Literacy Studies and through the resource materials at the Center.

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Civic Participation Standards Project

The purpose of the *Equipped for the Future* (EFF) initiative, funded through the National Institute of Literacy, (NIFL) is to reform the adult literacy and lifelong learning system to enable all adults to build the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to fulfill the roles of parents, citizens, and workers. A primary focus of this effort is to develop voluntary curriculum standard for these key roles. The Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee, in partnership with the New England Literacy Research Center and the Philadelphia Commission on Literacy, under the Civic Participation Standards Project, are leading the effort to develop content and performance standards that link teaching and learning in adult literacy to what adults need to be able to do as citizens. Forty teachers from different parts of the country will engage in classroom inquiry projects. They will utilize in their instruction the Citizen-Community Member Role Map, which identifies broad areas of responsibility and activities necessary to carry these responsibilities out, and which was developed in an earlier phase of the project. Based upon their experiences, teachers will provide feedback for revisions of the role map.

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Virginia

VAACE Assessment of Virginia Staff Development System

In 1991, Hanna Fingeret and Sue Cockley conducted an evaluation of Virginia's staff development efforts. Their report, *Teachers' Learning: An Evaluation of ABE Staff Development in Virginia* recommended that Virginia create a staff development system reflecting the principles of an inquiry based model. As a result, a team of 30 practitioners was given the task of designing an inquiry based staff development system to meet their needs. In 1996, the Virginia Adult Education Office awarded a 353 evaluation contract to the Virginia Association of Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE), in partnership with Albemarle County Schools and DFS Associates, to evaluate the Virginia staff-development system.

Eight practitioners are conducting research to evaluate the five components of the Virginia staff-development system -- Centers for Professional Development (conducts regional workshops and training on professional development plans), the Resource Center, the Summer Conference, the quarterly newsletter, and the Adult Education Research Network. The design for the evaluation is practitioner-centered and collaborative. The assessment answers questions about how effectively the above components are operating from a practitioners perspective and how well the components fit together? In this collaborative effort, working with a lead investigator and a consultant Cassie Drennon practitioners were trained on how to collect data (e.g., what questions to ask, how to conduct interviews), analyze data and code responses, and conduct focus groups. Data collection included interviews with system component project directors, other staff, and practitioners (e.g., identifying key professional development experience and impact on their teaching), onsite visits; case studies; document analysis; and focus groups. In addition, researchers use information collected from the literature. Practitioner investigators communicate via E-mail, snail mail, and telephone. The anticipated outcome of this project is to develop an experienced group of evaluators who can take the lead in future projects.

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Virginia Adult Educators Research Network

Funded through Section 353 funds through the Virginia Office of Adult Education the Research Network is the sponsoring forum for teachers and administrators working in the field of Adult Education who want to study issues related to the teaching and learning of adults and/or the administration of adult education programs. The Research Network provides funding for practitioner-initiated research. Their focus is on projects conducted by groups of

teachers and administrators who come together in Educator Study Groups to research a single issue or who work on a variety of issues while providing support for one another for their projects. In addition to funding, the Research Network provides assistance in developing research ideas and in preparing, publishing, and disseminating study group findings. The Research Network also prepared a *GUIDE* for beginning researchers that provides an introduction to practitioner research, a list of steps for conducting the research with suggestions for each step, and a series of case studies that illustrate the steps. Each practitioner researcher meets with the Research Network Coordinator three times: initially to finalize research designs, after data has be gathered to analyze findings as a group, and once individually to assess progress. Researchers prepare written reports for the Research Network and present their findings before their peers.

Each year, the Research Network publishes *The Year in Review, Reports of Research Conducted by Adult Education Practitioner-Researchers in Virginia*. The publication contains abstracts and the final reports of the research conducted that year. Copies are available through the Virginia Adult Educators Research Network and through the Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Resource Center in Richmond. Summaries of projects are provided below.

Various approaches are employed, depending upon the nature of the research project. Practitioners conduct literature reviews, student and teacher interviews, focus groups, and surveys; and examine student writing.

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Why Tutors Do What They Do

Volunteer literacy tutors in three Virginia literacy programs were interviewed in focus groups about their expectations for the tutoring experience. They were also asked about their training and how well it prepared them. The researchers examined the responses to discover the characteristics of successful tutor-student relationships. It was found that several things can be done during the intake of new tutors (e.g., providing in-service workshops, encouraging tutors to look for small successes, provide clear job descriptions and offering one-on-one advice) to help prepare for many of the frustrating aspects of tutoring.

Contact
Karen Cook, Executive Director, Skyline Literacy Coalition.
Jean Dooley, Volunteer Tutor, Albermarle County LVA Program.
Charles Fuller, President (retired) LVA-Augusta County.

Reflective Journal Writing and Its Effects on Teaching Adults

This research project was designed as an evaluation of a journal writing activity which teachers at the Adult Career Development Center (Richmond, Virginia) undertook during the summer of 1993. The teachers were interviewed and their journals were examined for indications that they had improved their teaching skills or had become more reflective practitioners. A helpful list of criterion for analyzing journals is included. Although the journal writing was more observational than reflective, it was helpful to several teachers. The journals, however, did not affect their teaching in any measurable way.

Contact
Susan Holt, Graduate Student (Reading), Virginia Commonwealth University.

The Use of Portfolios by the Adult Learner/Job Seeker

Entry-level employers in the Fredericksburg, Virginia area were surveyed on their opinions of student portfolios as sources of relevant information about persons applying for employment. Through this research it was discovered that there is a significant interest on the part of employers in using a portfolio during an interview. Other findings included: the need for documentation of educational skills, the types of specific training that would be essential for employment, and the fact that employers provide on-the-job training for most in their businesses positions.

Contact
Christina Seanor, Middle School Reading Specialist (day), Adult Education Teacher (night).

Adult Education for the Night Shift Worker

After conducting an extensive literature search on the special needs of night shift workers, the researcher interviewed adult learners who work during the night to discover their learning needs and patterns. The findings indicated that night work affected nearly all of the students' families and social lives to some degree. The majority of students reported some sort of sleep problem. As a result of these findings it was suggested that: (1) adult educators and industries employing night shift workers develop tailor-made educational programs for these students; and (2) instructors be sensitive to night shift workers' special needs.

Contact
Cheryl Spainhour, Teacher, various workplace programs and ABE-GED programs.

Learner Participation in Multilevel Class Activities

This research project examined the characteristics of successful group activities conducted in a multilevel ESL setting. Data were gathered through student and teacher questionnaires. This data revealed that the variables which both students and teachers perceived as having the most positive effect on student participation are those which are intrinsic to the activities themselves. Although these variables were important, pairing and grouping arrangements were significant factors affecting participation.

Contact

Ellen Grote, previously taught ESL classes in Fairfax, Virginia; currently pursing doctorate in Adult Education, Surrey, England.

Why Did I Drop Out of School?

This article described the reasons adult learners in Amelia, Nottoway, and Prince Edward counties give for dropping out of public school. In addition to reasons documented in the literature, researchers found an interesting connection between student dropout rate and an historical event in Prince Edward County. The research indicated that students most frequently left the program due to pregnancy and frustration with teachers. Other, less significant factors, included marriage, sickness, suspension, and family problems.

Contact
Yvonne Harris and *Ophelia Bragg,* Teachers, ABE/GED classes. Yvonne also teaches kindergarten (daytime); Ophelia is her aide.

Perceptions of a Family Learning Program

This project was a case study of a small family learning program on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The researcher interviewed parents and elementary school teachers and examined school records to document the academic and behavioral improvements among children in the family learning program. The data indicated that parents, principals, and teachers had a very positive view of the program and all but one of the children, showed an increase in performance based on standardized test scores.

Contact
Muriel Howard, Former Elementary School Teacher; currently teaches adults, Family Learning Program.

Adult Education Non-Participation

This project examined the reasons adults give for not completing high school and not enrolling in adult education classes. The researcher interviewed adults in rural Rockbridge County and Harrisonburg, Virginia. The data collected confirmed reasons for non-participation cited in previous literature. The interviewees indicated both situational and dispositional reasons for not participating.

Contact
Sue Cockley, Coordinator, Virginia Adult Educator's Research Network.

Mentoring: Its Effects on the Experience of African American Women in GED Programs

Current and post-GED students were interviewed about the relationships they had with mentors and how those relationships impacted their educational efforts. Through this project, the researcher was able to more clearly understand the significance of having a mentor and how

it helps while enrolled in a GED class. Those GED students who had mentors enjoyed a far easier time in making it through the program than those students who did not have mentors.

Contact
Dawn Deveaux, Adult Education Specialist. Currently pursuing doctorate.

Goal Setting Practices in Adult Basic Education

This project was a follow-up to earlier research into factors influencing adult student retention. The researchers concluded that realistic goals were essential for retention, and, in this study, set out to determine some effective means of establishing goals and what factors need to be addressed in the goal setting process. The data indicated that students lacked the information about themselves and the options needed to frame realistic, rewarding goals. In addition, data indicated that students did not have an understanding of effective goal setting processes. This project, therefore, pointed to the need for using a reliable job skill and requirement inventory along with a comprehensive list of currently accessible occupations.

Contact
Antigone Barton, Teacher, Adult Education.
Luke Fleischman, Advisor, Adult Education Programs, Adult Career Development Center.

A Study of the Learning Styles of Academic Adult Basic Education Students in a Correctional Center

Correctional Center/ABE students were interviewed to determine their various learning styles as well as some of the environmental conditions impacting their learning. The data collected indicated that more students found reading to be their best subject compared to math, most students did their math studying in small groups and their reading work individually, most students preferred studying in a quiet environment, most students benefited from individual instruction, the most impressionable facilitators of learning were visual aids, and tutorial assistance was an essential factor in students' performance. Based upon these findings and the related literature, the report made recommendations for enhancing the learning of inmates.

Contact
Barna Anyadike, Academic Instructor, Department of Correctional Education.

How Do Students Perceive the Adult Education Program at Eastern Shore Community College?

Past enrollees of the adult education program were surveyed to determine what effect the classes had on them. It was found that approximately half of the survey respondents were employed; 45 percent of the participants said adult education classes helped them to obtain a job, promotion, or improved job performance; most of the surveyed students indicated that their teacher was the best aspect of the class; and the vast majority of students were generally satisfied with the program's preparation. Their answers were used to make specific recommendations for change in the program.

Contacts
Grace Cormons, ABE Instructor.
Jacqueline Craft, Team Secretary, Adult Education Program, Eastern Shore Community College.
Maureen Dooley, Adult Education Specialist.

Surprise! Reading Is Not Perceived as a Survival Skill by Non-Educators

This report examined the answers given by a wide range of respondents when questioned about the necessity of reading in our society. The survey data indicated that many people felt reading was not a necessary life skill while skills related to coping, counseling, and mental health were considered to be essential survival skills. The responses led to questions about the program's adult education offerings and attraction to adult students.

Contact
Barbara Gutherie, GED Teacher and Director of the Literacy Volunteers of America.

It's Almost Like Having Two Brains: A Study of the Collaborative Action Research Experience of Adult Education Teachers in Virginia

This study examined a group of 22 adult education teachers in Virginia to find out how they viewed their collaborative action research experience and what their perceived gains were. The instrument used was a self-designed survey that was sent to a group of 11 ABE teachers and 11 ESL teachers. In analyzing the survey responses, it was discovered that there was an increased awareness of the relationship between teacher and learner, and an increase in understanding the role of teacher as learner in the classroom; a willingness to try new ideas, strategies, and generally be creative; and teachers sharing and learning from one another. Results seemed to mirror much of the current research about the benefits of collaborative action research.

Contact
Laura Doyle and Susan Erno

West Virginia

Software Evaluation for ABE

Funded by Section 353, this study will take an action-research approach to reviewing software appropriate for ABE. The research question is: What is the best system for sharing ideas about the quality and appropriate use of specific software? The plan is to compile software reviews and relate them to curriculum and to create activities for the reviewed software. Three state technology specialists will conduct research during spring, 1997 on a pilot project. They will present the results of pilot projects at the West Virginia state-wide adult education conference in August of 1997, and plan to expand action-research methods into other arenas at that time.

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Family Literacy

Functional Context Education

GED

Goal Attainment/Clarification

Health

Organizational Roles

Professional Development

Reading Skills

Recruitment

Retention

<u>Writing Skills</u>