12 Cups of Coffee (or How to Find a Mentor in Adult Education)

An Interactive Presentation for Beginning Teachers in Adult Education
Why Talk About Coffee?

- Inspired by Megan Gebhart’s blog and book
- Meg’s personal challenge: to have a cup of coffee with a different person every week for 1 year
  - Traveled to 29 cities across 7 countries
  - Gathered many lessons on life and career choices
- Book chronicles her personal growth and celebrates the “power of connection”
“The Power of Connection”

“You will be the same person in 5 years as you are today except for the people you meet and the books you read.”

Quotation by Charlie Jones.
“The Power of Connection”

“You will be the same teacher in 5 years as you are today except for the people you meet and the lessons you teach.”

Adapted quotation of Charlie Jones.
Why 12 Cups of Coffee?

- 12 cups = 12 weeks in a semester or summer break
- Many teachers don’t have access to a “teacher’s room.” This approach encourages you to find connections wherever you are.
Presentation Goals

1. To invite reflection on mentorship as seeking connections and conversations (less on finding the “right match”)

2. To come up with your own “12-cups-of-coffee” action plan
We seek mentors out of a basic need for connection with other teachers.

Photo by Scott Liddell, morguefile.com
“Conversation is a powerful, and generally unrealized, vehicle for professional learning” (Danielson, n.d.)

“[Professional] conversation can provide a space...where new teachers can come to terms with themselves in their new role. Conversations provide a place where new teachers can explore the connections and contradictions between their previous life and the new one, make sense of their identity in relation to the institution and the culture. Regular professional conversations can also provide a safe environment for the new teacher to test out personal expectations of the job. They can help new teachers to not only do the work of a teacher but to grapple with the infinitely complex work of being a teacher” (Haigh, 2005, p. 10).
Making a “12 Cups of Coffee” Action Plan

SEVEN STRATEGIES


Photo by Luke Chesser, unsplash.com
Strategy #1: Start With a List of Three to Four People

- No need to come up with the full list of 12 at the start.
- Start with colleagues and friends.
- Rekindle past connections.
- Think one degree of separation: ask a colleague to introduce you to a colleague.
- Venture outside your teaching area.

Adapted from Thomson; Gebhart
Strategy #2: Focus on your goal

- Schedule the meeting for under 45 minutes.
- Meet at the teacher’s classroom or office, and use the walk to/from the cafe to converse.

Adapted from Thomson (2013); Gebhart (2014); The Bamboo Project
Strategies #3 and #4

Be clear about your intentions
- Tell the other person you want their input on starting your career in the teaching profession in adult education.

Be open to where the conversation takes you
- Don’t ask for job leads or recommendations.
- Don’t interview the person. You are interested in spending time with the person, getting their advice, and hearing their story.

Adapted from Thomson (2013); Gebhard (2016); The Bamboo Project
Photo by Erol Ahmed, unsplash.com
Strategies #5 and #6

Plan ahead
- Think of 2 to 3 questions that you think would be interesting for the person to answer and would help you think through your own teaching goals and questions.

Document your thoughts and reflections
- Keep a small notebook just for these coffee meetings.
- Taking notes conveys your purposefulness.
- If you don’t jot thoughts down, you won’t remember the specifics of this conversation.

Adapted from Thomson (2013); Gebhart (2014); The Bamboo Project
Strategy #7: Share What You Learned With Others

Adapted from Thomson (2013); Gebhart (2014); The Bamboo Project
Finding the Confidence to Make Connections and Have Conversations

- Overcoming fear of being turned down
- Finding the courage to ask
- Having coffees “without an ulterior motive” can boost one’s confidence in meeting people

(Peter Thomson)
Meet Estefany

Coordinates a service learning program and teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) in Boise

- Received her Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at San Francisco State University in 2010
- Taught ESL at community college and intensive English programs in San Diego, Albuquerque, Chicago, and Boise
On Making Connections

As you listen to Estefany:

How did Estefany make connections with other teachers?

How do you go about making connections?

To what extent are these connections intentional, or “by accident?”
On Making Connections

Meet Erin Lake

- ESL teacher at the American Academy of English in San Francisco
- Taught in South Korea
- Received her MA in English at San Francisco State University
- Interested in understanding the intersection between technology and TESOL
On Making Connections

As you listen:

- Erin talks about “not being afraid of taking on responsibility” for outreach to other teachers. Can you relate to the fear that Erin is talking about?

What advice would YOU give to other teachers who are fearful of reaching out?
Creating Your “12 Cups of Coffee” Action Plan

SEVEN STRATEGIES

Photo by Iván Melenchón Serrano, morguefile.com
Strategy #1: Start With a List of Three to Four People

- List names of colleagues and friends.
- Think about rekindling past connections.
- Think one degree of separation. Ask a colleague to introduce you to a colleague.
- Venture outside your teaching area.
Strategy #2: Plan Ahead

Think of two to three questions that you think would be interesting for the person to answer and would help you think through your own teaching goals questions.
Summary

- Conversations are (under-appreciated) opportunities for professional learning.
- In pursuit of mentorship, we can focus on seeking connections and conversations, not merely on finding the “right person” to be our mentor.
- By expanding the kinds of conversations we participate in about teaching and learning, we signal our growth as teachers.
- Your individual conversations help to cultivate a culture of connection in our adult education profession.
Gail Weinstein, 1955–2010

Professor, San Francisco State University
Former TESOL Board Member
Textbook Writer, *Collaborations, Stories to Tell Our Children*
Creator, *Learners’ Lives as Curriculum* model
Mentor, daughter, mother, kayaker, avid lindy-hopper, and lover of life
Gail Weinstein, 1955–2010

“I imagine communities of teachers who can’t wait to get to work, who meet with one another in faculty rooms and living rooms to share what their students have said, and who create together a blueprint for other teachers who want to go down this road. They will be the pioneers, and their experiences will be extraordinarily valuable.”

(Cited in Hoffenberg-Serfaty, 1999, n.p.)
Special Thanks

- Erin Lake, ESL Instructor, American Academy of English, San Francisco, California
- Estefany Giehm, Coordinator and ESL Instructor, Services to Older Refugees, English Language Center, Boise, Idaho
Teacher Effectiveness in Adult Education

Research indicates that teacher effectiveness determines student achievement and performance. To develop successful students, one focus of adult education programs should be on developing and supporting effective teachers, especially those new to adult education or the profession. This page includes a variety of resources and tools to enhance teacher effectiveness in adult education.

Adult Education Teacher Competencies

The Competencies identify the knowledge and skills expected of any adult education teacher. A Self-Assessment, introductory online course, and interactive framework are also available.

Evidence Based Instruction

Learn about evidence-based instruction principles and strategies highlighted in the National Research Council's Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Supporting Learning and Motivation.

Information Brief: Evidence-Based Instruction and Teacher Induction

- Online Courses on Evidence-Based Instruction
  - Principles of Learning for Instructional Design
  - Motivating Adult Learners to Persist

Teacher Induction

Teacher induction is an evidence-based strategy to accelerate the effectiveness of beginning teachers and those new to adult education or a new content area.
References


Sources for stock photography: https://unsplash.com/

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