

BACK TO BASICS

FOR FLORIDA ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS

Looking Ahead

Much work has been going on in Adult Education in Florida. Checklists, resource guides, correlations and more have been updated and will be distributed on CD and published on the www.ABEFLorida.org webpage. The five new or newly revised documents now available to you include:

- The proceedings paper for the Reaching New Horizons ABE Florida Summit, an overview of the events at the Summit
- The updated checklists for ABE
- The revised resource guides for ABE. These will be field tested in the 2004-2005 school year, but take a look this summer to get some good ideas. Comments and input from Adult Education Practitioners in the field are solicited and will be appreciated.
- The Technical Assistance Paper for assessment will be added as soon as it is published. Please take a look and note the changes in state board rules and assessment procedures.
- The correlations between the Sunshine State Standards assessed on the FCAT at grades 3, 5 and 8 and the Adult Basic Education frameworks to help teachers identify skills being taught to younger students so that adult learners who are parents or caregivers can help children at home.

That is a lot of new and helpful information. It may take a summer to digest it all! So please take a look or two or three and let us know what you think. Your suggestions got us this far; where would you like us to go next?

Thank You, Legislature!

For the first time in several years, the School District Workforce Education Fund will receive a \$10 million increase to its budget. The Florida Legislature passed the state budget on the last remaining days of the 2004 Legislative Session in March to make it official. Many thanks go to Representative Dennis Baxley of Ocala and Representative David Simmons of Altamont Springs, two champions for Workforce Education in the House of Representatives. Because of their efforts through the Education Appropriations Subcommittee, of which Representative Simmons is the chairman, the \$10 million increase was pushed through the budget process. These two legislators fought hard to keep the increase intact throughout the conference committee negotiations with the Senate and in the end the workforce fund received the \$10 million increase.

Take the time to write Representatives Baxley and Simmons and thank them for supporting workforce education. Have your students write, too. Let them know we are paying attention and appreciate their hard work in support of Workforce Education.

YOU CAN WRITE REPRESENTATIVE BAXLEY AT:

Capitol Office:

323 Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
Phone: (850) 488-0335

District Office:

111 SE 25th Avenue
Ocala, FL 34471-9179
Phone: (352) 732-1313

YOU CAN WRITE REPRESENTATIVE SIMMONS AT:

Capitol Office:

223 Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
Phone: (850) 488-2231

District Office:

Suite 1427
393 Center Pointe Circle
Altamonte Springs, FL 32701-3444
Phone: (407) 262-7520

*The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.*

“The Learning Friendly Classroom”

A Safe Portal To Learning In The Hostile Corrections Environment

by Nikitas M. Hourdas, Academic Teacher

My requirements are:

- Safe, clean, nonthreatening environment
- Comfortable atmosphere where students are not afraid to ask questions.
- A place where students are not afraid to make mistakes or fail.
- Rules are clear and adherence is required.
- Expectations are stated.
- Students are encouraged to work through defeat.
- Conditions are such that a student can take charge of his own learning future.

LIGHTS:

- I strive to keep a bright, airy and colorful environment.

CAMERA:

- The student's eye captures a group of learning aides at every turn.

ACTION:

- Stimulating, thought provoking lecture and dialogue is centered around Philosophical and Current Event discussions.

Some of my thoughts concerning my teaching practice in Corrections:

- Most adult learners in the Corrections educational setting have already failed once, in the public education system.
- To learn one must build on prior knowledge. Most inmates have only a knowledge of street survival.
- The same formula of providing a safe, secure, stimulating environment, i.e.; a colorful room, stimulating conversation, for children should be carried forward to the adult learning environment.
- I can't control the environment outside of my classroom, but, to a large extent, I can control the environment inside it.
- Everything I do is geared to evoking positive emotions for my students in the hope that this will enhance the students' ability not only to learn but to retain what is learned.
- The change in atmosphere from one side of the classroom's threshold to the other is discernable. It is as if the student has gone from darkness to daylight.
- Wall hangings and pictures are grouped into subject matter whenever possible. This also applies to color contrast.

Signs with inspirational messages are hung from the ceiling to provide visual stimulation. I was concerned at first that they would prove to be a distraction, but that hasn't been the case. Some signs that depict the picture of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. with the class motto, “**Aspire to go Higher,**” have suspiciously disappeared only to re-appear taped to the doors of some students' lockers.

My experience in observing the metamorphosis of the physical environment vis-à-vis the growth in learning interest of the student has been one of constant amazement to me.

The learning friendly classroom that I created and am still working on came about in a journey that started about seven years ago. This is how it began. When I first came to Corrections to teach I arrived with a lot of preconceptions and misconceptions about what teaching in a prison environment was all about. My prior teaching experience had been in a police academy teaching motivated young adults the professionalism and ethics expected of them in the law enforcement profession. Motivation, a safe learning environment and teaching and re-teaching the basic learning foundation skills was never an issue.

I arrived at my teaching position prior to the advent of mandatory education in the Department of Corrections. That was a time when most of the students assigned to education were interested in learning. The court mandated student was the exception and consisted mostly of special education students who hadn't reached the magical age of twenty-two yet.

The biggest challenge that I faced then was what to teach. Not only did the class range from the non-readers to the pre-GED student, but the coming and going of students into and out of the program was enough to drive a sane person to distraction. Some of these students were taking short term sabbaticals to “The Box” (confinement), only to return in 15, 20 or 30 days to pick up where they left off, or worse start all over again.

The advent of mandatory education followed after a few years and the student numbers started to skyrocket. Coincidentally a drastic budget crunch was imposed and a vocational teaching position was eliminated. The elimination of this position led to the availability of the old shop area which was to become my ABE Laboratory classroom.

The space was dark and dingy and the walls were covered with custom-made shelving that had previously held TV tubes and other electrical-type paraphernalia. There were long work tables and benches bisecting the room at different angles which had been used for the testing and repair of the TVs and VCRs, and other electrical appliances that needed repair. The ceiling was covered with tiles that had an aluminum foil light absorbing lining, for what purpose one can only guess. These tiles are still in place today since there is no money available to replace them. There were twelve double tube fluorescent fixtures in the ceiling that gave off a light that you could barely read by. The concrete floor was painted a light battleship grey, but the paint was scraped away by shoes and chairs over time leaving more bare concrete than paint.

The remodeling, such as it was, took over two months to accomplish. The shelves, work tables and what seemed like tons of electrical equipment, parts and doodads were removed to a storehouse elsewhere on the compound. Bookshelves were placed around the perimeter of the walls, and since there was no money to buy paint, every available wall space was covered by a poster or sign. The only requirement was that it was educationally appropriate for the ABE Laboratory classroom and that it was a bright color. We also used maps depicting different parts of the world as well as the migration paths that humans followed after crossing the Bering land bridge from Asia to settle what was to become the American Continent. We used posters showing various math functions, Earth Science, Anatomy, Biology, Entomology, etc. - you get the idea. Anything we could get our hands on that was educational and colorful went up on our walls. Some persistent begging produced five new ceiling light fixtures that helped brighten up the room, but, alas, no amount of begging could produce paint or tiles for the floor.

The learning friendly classroom that I created is and will remain a work in progress. I believe that only with periodic movement and flow of the visual, will the student tendency to develop sign fatigue be thwarted and the receptiveness to learning be maintained.

Multiple Intelligences Multiple Intelligences Multiple Intelligences

In past newsletters we have looked at ways to involve the kinetic, verbal, visual and musical learner. This newsletter will focus on the Intrapersonal and Interpersonal intelligences and you will find that you already teach to these intelligences in many ways. Recognizing intrapersonal and interpersonal skills as intelligences, though, will help both you and your students appreciate both those with these intelligences, and those for whom such thinking is very difficult. Challenge yourself to offer both an intrapersonal and an interpersonal learning activity for each major performance requirement in your classroom. Your learners will blossom.

The student showing strengths in **intrapersonal** intelligence is a self-reflective student. This student is introspective, insightful about the human condition and her own motivations, and aware of emotions, values and beliefs in operation in your classroom and beyond. This student wants to know the meaning, purpose and significance of things and will be the one to ask "Why?" and "How?" and "What does that mean for us?" This student may prefer to work alone but is often sought out by other students seeking advice. This student possesses a great deal of inner motivation. Learners with intrapersonal intelligence often choose careers such as therapist, researcher, writer, lawyer, and entrepreneur.

Offer intrapersonal learners the following activity options and see them thrive:

1. Write connections between math concepts and real life situations.
2. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses in understanding math skills and construct a strategy for using those strengths and overcoming those weaknesses.
3. Keep a journal. Consider one of the following topics: "Questions from life history might be able to answer;" "Reactions to characters in a novel;" "Explanations and questions about math;" "Places I'd like to visit and why;" "A Feelings Diary in response to current events."
4. Analyze literature for connections to life today.
5. Design, implement, and evaluate a one-month long "Be Healthy" project.
6. Do a "pluses and minuses" analysis of key historical decisions.
7. Track different thinking patterns for different kinds of math problems.
8. Analyze ways other cultures would enhance and clash with American cultures.
9. Set learning goals and plan strategies for meeting those goals.
10. Give a written assessment of your own progress.

The **interpersonal** learner is perhaps what we expect all learners to be, otherwise we wouldn't need a classroom, only tutoring sessions! A learner with strong interpersonal intelligence learns through interaction with other people, communicates well with a variety of people, and enjoys the social interactions of the classroom. This learner usually has highly developed empathy, is a good team member, is sensitive to others' feelings and is skilled in conflict resolution. This person gains energy from being with others. Students showing interpersonal intelligence often choose careers such as clergy, therapist, community organizer, consumer service advocate, politician, social worker, nurse, lawyer, teacher and secretary.

Interpersonal learners benefit from all kinds of group work. Consider offering your students the choice of these interpersonal activities:

1. Solve complex math story problems in a group.
2. Conduct an interview research project and calculate the results as percentages.
3. Conduct language drill exercises with a partner.
4. Experiment with joint story writing; start a story and take turns with another student writing the middle and end of it.
5. Share research and presentation responsibilities with other group members.
6. Discuss controversial topics and write team position papers where team members must reach a consensus.
7. Learn a skill and then teach that same skill to another classmate.
8. Describe everything you do to solve a problem to a partner.

9. Assume the perspectives of different cultures and discuss a current news item representing those perspectives.
10. Analyze the message or moral of a story with a group; reach a consensus.
11. Make reading assignments in pairs and have the pairs discuss the developments in character and plot at several points in the reading.
12. Have teams construct math problems linking many math operations then solve them.

Many of these ideas may sound familiar and may echo what you already do in the classroom. Three cheers if they do. The challenge is to make sure that your teaching strategies don't unfairly favor a particular kind of intelligence when learning could just as easily be demonstrated in another fashion. Think diversity...think choice...remember scenarios where you are most comfortable and where you are least comfortable and see how the gap between the two could be bridged. That is the thinking of an educator aware of multiple intelligences, and lucky is the learner who has one of those.

Sources: A list of careers associated with particular intelligences is found at <http://www.casacanada.com/career.html> or on the *Integrated Technology Resources* website at <http://www.leesummit.k12.mo.us/its/Resources.htm>

David Lazear's website located at <http://www.multi-intell.com/> is a free source for lesson plans and definitions of multiple intelligences that are also published in his *Eight Ways of Teaching*, available for order on his website.

Check Out These Sites!

<http://www.marcopolo-education.org/>

The Marco Polo website is a rich resource of quality online content for teachers and students. It does require registration, but registration is free and takes only a few minutes. After you register, you can access lesson plans such as "A Suitable Job for a Woman;" "Arthur Miller and *The Crucible*;" "Food Preservation;" "Demand Shifts," which is about changes in the economy; and lessons on organization. All of the lessons have links to interactive sites, are aligned with national standards, have sophisticated photography and text appropriate for adult learners. Lesson plans are explained to teachers and the websites are ready for students to access. Marco Polo reviews other quality websites and includes a section on how to integrate online content into your teaching. If you have computer access in your classroom, you should definitely check out this site.

<http://mathforum.org>

Math Forum is a website offering everything you ever wanted to know about teaching math. There are complete lesson plans aligned to national standards, online discussion groups, an Internet newsletter, a teacher exchange and an interactive Student Center that not only offers all kinds of activities, but offers some of them in Spanish, French and German. Published by Drexel University, this site was named among the "Top 101" by PC magazine. It is easily searchable and carefully monitored. It is well worth a look.



Math Activity - Level: 2.0-3.9

Standard: 15
Benchmark: 15.3
Title: Equal, Not-Equal, Lesser Than and Greater Than
Contributor: Rochel Abrams, Leon County
Materials: Pencil, paper, computer (optional)

Procedure: Introduce the class to the symbols for equal, not equal, lesser than and greater than. Have the students work in groups to write three true statements with each symbol and three false statements with each symbol. Collect all the work and have one student type all the statements onto one worksheet. Print out a copy for each student and have each student decide which statements are true and which are false. Check the worksheets as a class, with different groups being the experts for different questions.

This is a good learning activity for the Interpersonal Learner.

Language - Level: 2.0-3.9

Standard: 1 14
Benchmark: 14.6
Title: How To
Contributor: Jenny Helms, Leon County Adult and Community Education
Materials: Pen and Paper

Activities: Have each student pick something he or she knows how to do, such as make a sandwich, give a haircut, or change a tire. Once the student has chosen something, have him or her write a paragraph telling someone else how to do it. Remind the student not to skip any steps. He or she should assume that the person reading the instructions knows nothing about how to do this.

This is a good MI activity for the Interpersonal Learner.

BACK TO BASICS

Back to Basics is always looking for good ideas. If you have an article or activity you believe would be helpful to other adult educators, please e-mail it to Lynn Cunill at cunill@ACE-Leon.org or mail it to Lynn Cunill, 283 Trojan Trail, Tallahassee, FL 32311. We look forward to hearing from you.

PARENT AND CHILD ACTIVITY



Parent/Child Activities for Summer 2004

Summer is a wonderful time to take a trip to the public library. Check the schedule at the library for special guests and events. There are performances, contests, book clubs and enough ways to volunteer that all ages of children can find a place to belong at the library.

What can you do when you are not in the library? Try these ideas for your preschool and elementary aged children.

Pre-school – Have your child help with groceries. As you are putting them away give him/her practice with counting. For example: How many bananas did we buy? How many cans of beans?

Elementary School – Play a game of role-reversal. Your child can be the parent for a day. Be sure to help your child see both the freedom and the responsibilities of being an adult.

Leon County Schools

ACE Adult & Community Education
 283 Trojan Trail • Tallahassee, FL 32311 • (850)922-5343

www.ACE-Leon.org

PRSRT. STD.
 U S Postage
PAID
 Permit #8
 Tallahassee, FL



Florida Department of Education

This newsletter is made possible by state leadership funds from the Florida Department of Education Division of Workforce Development. The School Board of Leon County is an equal opportunity institution for education and employment.