

BACK TO BASICS

FOR FLORIDA ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS

Welcome!

Welcome to the first issue of Back To Basics, a quarterly newsletter designed for the teachers and volunteers who provide instruction to Adult Basic Education students in programs statewide. This newsletter is part of the ABE Florida Project, which was awarded to Leon County for 2001-2002 to continue development of a comprehensive basic skills program for this state. The purpose of the newsletter is to offer adult education practitioners a means for exchanging articles, ideas, activities and up-to-date information to enhance ABE classroom instruction and classroom management. Practical topics of interest such as tips for teaching adult students, accommodating students with special needs, technology in the ABE classroom, lesson plans in math, reading and language, and workplace skills will be included in this resource.

Practitioners statewide are encouraged to contribute articles to this publication. Lynn Cunill, Project Director, will be coordinating this activity in conjunction with the ABE Practitioners' Committee. Please e-mail your articles to Lynn at cunill@ACE-Leon.org.

As an adult education administrator and facilitator of the ABE Practitioners' Committee, I am excited about this resource and see it as a newsletter that will be valued by teachers and volunteers statewide.

Barbara Van Camp
Facilitator



My Dog Ate My Homework

Remember the days when you didn't do your homework so you blamed it on the family pet? Usually it was your loving dog. You told the unbelieving teacher extravagant stories of how you left it on the table, and the dog, in a hunger-fed rage, gobbled everything up off the table, including your precious homework.

Yes, my dog ate my homework too many times. That's why most of us are in the GED Program here at Roberts Elementary. All of us are different—coming from different places, backgrounds and families. We are learning from each other's past mistakes and doings. We all do share one thing, though—at some point or another, the dog ate our homework.

Written by
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TABE Test Scores

By Veronica Sebrt



When using the TABE for placement or for documenting progress, it is essential that the correct test be used. In order to select the correct level to give to a student, the TABE Locator Test should be administered first. To assure that the Locator Test isolates a student's correct level, it is important that the Locator Test be administered and timed as the Examiner's Manual indicates. The chart shown below is taken from page one of the TABE Complete Battery Forms 7 & 8 Examiner's Manual. This chart shows the grade range score that is acceptable for each test level.

TEST LEVEL	GRADE RANGE	VALIDITY RANGE
L (LITERACY)	0.0-1.9	0.0-3.9
E (EASY)	1.6-3.9	0.0-5.9
M (MEDIUM)	3.6-6.9	1.6-8.9
D (DIFFICULT)	6.6-8.9	4.6-10.9
A (ADVANCED)	8.6-14.9	6.6-14.9

Dan Gall, CTB McGraw-Hill representative, has stressed the importance of these grade ranges. Dan stresses that any score *two or more grade ranges outside of the range* for a particular test level is an **invalid** score. For example, the "M Level" grade range is 3.6-6.9. If a student is tested using the "M Level" and scores 8.9 or higher or 1.6 or lower, this score is invalid and indicates that a different level of the TABE should have been used in order to get a valid score.

Marketing TIP...

SOURCE: Get Your Message Out... Gaining Recognition for Your Adult & Community Education Program

Promote your organization's programs and successes. Public relations can prove that an organization exists, educate the public about who might benefit from programs provided by the organization and gain support for the organization when it is needed the most. Take time to list some of the good things your organization has done, or is currently doing...things that you have not shared with the public. How can you share these good things?

ABE

The Adult Basic Education Practitioners Committee represents adult basic education practitioners in Florida by working with the Florida Department of Education to obtain its vision for adult education programs in Florida. The Florida Department of Education Division of Workforce Development envisions that all adult education, workforce development, literacy education, community education and community involvement programs and activities in Florida will be delivered through a cost-effective and accountable process by qualified practitioners.

The following individuals serve on the Practitioners Committee for the 2001-2002 year:

Barbara Van Camp, Facilitator
Leon County Schools Adult & Community Education
Tallahassee, Florida

Barbara Jones
Okaloosa - Walton Community College
Niceville, Florida

Sharon Hastings
Jacksonville Public Library
Jacksonville, Florida

Sandy Smith
Hillsborough County Public Schools
Tampa, Florida

Rose Martin
D.A.Dorsey Educational Center
Miami, Florida

Denise Horne
Goodwill Industries Big Bend Inc.
Tallahassee, Florida

Linda Neel
Jackson County Schools
Marianna, Florida

Lori DeVilbiss
Sarasota County Schools
Sarasota, Florida

Jack Newell
Panhandle Adult Literacy Center
Tallahassee, Florida

Susan Buchanan
Brevard County Public Library
Cocoa, Florida

Jan Lichtenwalter
Brevard County School Board
Viera, Florida

Ruthann Tormey Martin
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Sandra Davis
Bay County Public Schools
Panama City, Florida

Mary Davis
Washington - Holmes Technical Center
Chipley, Florida

Dr. Kim Armellini
Brevard County Schools
Rockledge, Florida

Lynn Cunill
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Roberta Thomas
Florida Community College at Jacksonville
Jacksonville, Florida

Barbara Spears-Corbett
Miami - Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida

Sheryl Walden
Department of Corrections
Tallahassee, Florida

Dr. Rochelle Kenyon (ex-officio)
Rockledge, Florida

Frequently Asked Questions

Adult basic education has undergone some major changes in the last few years. Terminology has changed; documentation procedures have changed; funding protocols have changed. Look here for answers to your questions about adult basic education. Ask any questions you have and we will try to find an answer. Send your questions to cunill@ACE-Florida.org or mail to ABE Questions, Adult & Community Education, 283 Trojan Trail, Tallahassee, Florida 32311. Look for answers to your questions in the newsletter or on the web page, www.ABEFlorida.org.

What is adult basic education (ABE)?

ABE is a noncredit course designed to develop literacy skills necessary for successful employment and citizenship. Adult basic education prepares students to enroll in GED preparation courses. Students enrolled in ABE are performing at or below the eighth grade level. The content areas included are math, reading, language and workforce readiness.

What are the different levels in adult basic education?

There are four levels in the math, reading and language content areas. There is only one level of workforce readiness.

Level	Grade Equivalency
Beginning Literacy	0.0-1.9
Beginning Basic Education	2.0-3.9
Intermediate Low	4.0-5.9
Intermediate High	6.0-8.9

What are curriculum frameworks?

The Florida Department of Education Adult Basic Education Curriculum Frameworks is the structure for what students are expected to learn in the ABE course. Frameworks are the minimum performance standards developed by adult education practitioners and adopted by the State to improve instruction and accountability procedures by focusing on outcomes as measures of performance. The frameworks assist with consistency and accountability in programs across the state. Copies of the frameworks are available on the ABE Florida web page www.ABEFlorida.org.

Why are the frameworks important to the classroom teacher?

The frameworks are the basis for the ABE course. This is the content a teacher should be teaching to his/her students.

What is included in the frameworks?

The frameworks include standards and benchmarks as outcome measures of students learning. A standard is a general expectation of knowledge and skills development. A benchmark is knowledge or skills achieved at a specific level including the individual skills the student will achieve. A benchmark answers the question: What do we want the student to know? The performance standards and benchmarks have been developed to facilitate documentation of learning gains. It is not required that students progress through the standards sequentially.

Net Catches for Adult Ed

Check out the following Adult Ed friendly sites.

<http://literacy.owcc.net/>

Literacy CyberSpace is a project of Barbara Jones of Okaloosa Walton Community College. It is aimed toward the adult education student and includes lessons in reading, language and math that are correlated to the state frameworks. There is also information on getting and keeping a job, and a directory of community resources.

www.blackfacts.com

Black Facts is a quick search site where teacher or student can search for facts about Black history by date or by word. For example, a search by word for "inventors" reaped 45 biographies of black inventors. Those interested can sign-up here to receive a daily email with a "black-fact."

www.teachersfirst.com/

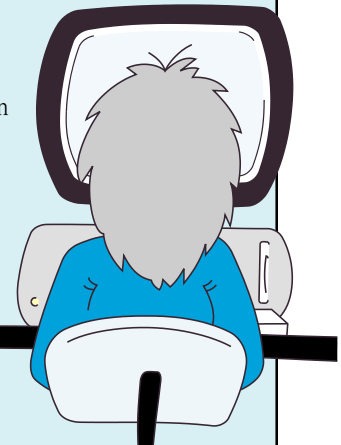
Teachers First includes brain twisters, a highlighted featured site, and a teachers' lounge for the exchange of ideas. Classroom information is plentiful and can be searched by subject and grade level to reveal both web resources and lesson plans.

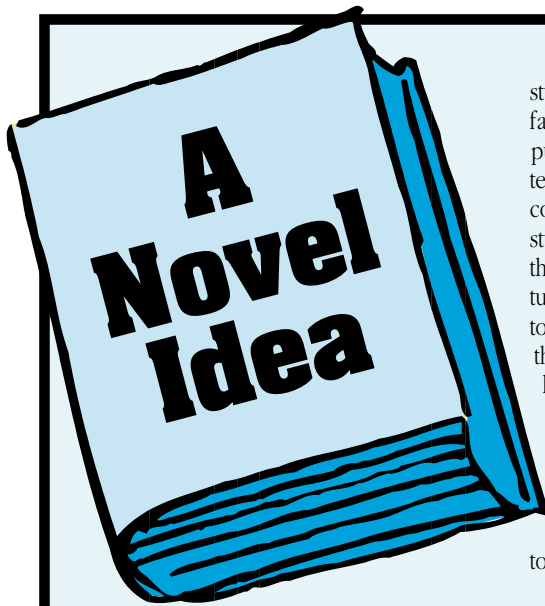
www.aceofflorida.org

The official website of ACE of Florida includes a Florida directory, a professional development calendar, grant opportunities, a helpdesk and up-to-date info on the GED.

www.ABEFlorida.org

ABE Florida is an ongoing project to aide Adult Education professionals. It includes the complete Curriculum Frameworks and Checklists, Assessment Guide and Resource Guide as well as health information, all available for downloading, printing and even dispersing to students. Also included are the ABE Florida mailing list and list of directors, a list of online resources and free tutorials in technology.





Roberta Thomas
 Professor of Adult Basic Education
 Florida Community College at Jacksonville

Reading a novel is a large task for the ABE classroom. Sometimes even reading the newspaper is a monumental accomplishment. I once used a form to help me get acquainted with new students that asked them to list their favorite book. It was an eye opener to find that many of them had never read an entire book. The most memorable book that had been read and chosen as a favorite was *The Cat in the Hat!* I suspect that this was the only book that student had ever read. Knowing this, why would I attempt to teach an entire classroom of adult education students a novel?

The seed for teaching a novel came from a workshop that FCCJ sponsored as part of our annual Teaching and Learning Conference. The instructor who taught the workshop was using the novel to teach her college prep students. It was successful for her, and, I felt, was really a quality of life issue for my students. If the skills they were gaining in my classroom were to serve them for life and to make them lifelong learners, then it should make them lifelong readers as well. What better way to be a lifelong reader than with a novel? So, with some major modifications on the workshop model, my colleague, Hope Clayton, and I created a novel course for our ABE students who TABE tested in the 6.0 to 8.9 levels for language.

Hope and I knew we had to keep in mind that by the end of the term our students had to be able to pass the TABE with a minimum score of 9.0 and earn for our program those ever-important LCPs. To facilitate success on the TABE, we decided to spend the first half of a two-hour class working on basic grammar skills and the last half reading our novel.

The grammar was taught using the independent study method with which most adult educators are familiar. Using various series from the main publishers for adult education, as well as some teacher developed material, we assigned work that covered the state curriculum and prepared the students for the TABE. As the students completed their assignments, we checked their answers and tutored them on their mistakes. They were allowed to work as quickly as they wanted or as slowly as they needed to. They were encouraged to take work home, and most of them did. We tried to assign books or worksheets that had answer keys, so the students could obtain immediate feedback.

When the students completed all the grammar assignments, they were given a practice test before they were sent to the assessment center to take the TABE.

Though teaching grammar was familiar, teaching the novel was not and the first hurdle in developing the novel section of the course was selecting the perfect novel for our students. Hope and I knew the right choice would make all the difference. We were not looking for a classic; our primary measure was that the book be of interest to our students and provide an example of good language writing skills. We wanted a book with which our students could identify, sort of a *The Young and the Restless* for the classroom. In addition, we were looking for a book that had language appropriate for mixed company. Finally, we decided on Bebe Moore Campbell's *Singing in the Comeback Choir*. The main character is a successful young, married, African-American woman who suddenly faces many problems. We felt that she and her husband were good role models for our students.

Our second hurdle was supplying copies of the novel. We knew we had to obtain copies for our students if we wanted them to attempt this program at all. Our program coordinator, Warner James-Copeland, went to a used bookstore and purchased enough novels for the class. She was able to get a discount even on the brand new copies. We were grateful for her support and so were our students. This first classroom set of novels was the beginning of a nice library for our classroom.

Finally, we had to decide what to actually do in the novel section of class. We decided to begin with oral reading. Each class period we assigned roles and read aloud eight or nine pages of the novel. The narrator is by far the largest role, so we were happy when one of the better readers volunteered for this part. After the roles were set, we asked someone to be the word translator. This person looks up any unfamiliar words that appear in the passage. We also asked for someone to be the critic and rate the day's reading as one star, two stars, etc. These last two roles allow students who are shy about reading aloud to participate in less threatening ways.

One of the great benefits that comes from reading aloud is that the students become much more

aware of punctuation, especially quotation marks. They learn that a character starts talking when they see the left quotation mark and stops talking when they come to the right quotation mark. In addition, the "dramatic reading" approach really helps to bring the characters alive for the class and builds self-esteem when students are complimented for their reading skills. We are very supportive during the oral reading, helping with pronunciation when necessary. We strongly encourage everyone to read a part at some time in the course, but we never force anyone. At the end of the day's reading we discuss what we have read and try to relate it to our everyday lives. Sometimes we even interrupt the reading and discuss something if we feel the students don't understand a valuable concept that is essential to understanding the book as a whole.

This experience of reading together and discussing issues that are relevant to their lives breaks down the sense of isolation that can dominate the self-paced classroom. The students seem to develop a group identity. They get to know each other, begin to support each other, and celebrate each class member's success on the TABE. They build positive classroom skills and learn about teamwork.

How successful has our novel idea been? We are currently preparing for a fourth semester of reading a novel in our ABE class. Most students who regularly attended classes have passed their TABE. In fact, we see some indication that our reading is a retention tool. We have noticed that though students are often late for our 8:00 A.M. start time, they manage to make it to class in time for the novel. It's usually a full house by the time the reading begins. We have also had a few students who have passed the TABE and for a while kept returning to class just for the novel portion. These are students who are free to go, who have completed the course, but want to come back to read and to discuss their reading!

Hope and I continue to refine our approach. We recently found a new web site, www.chapteraday.com, that has excerpts from popular books and we have found it helpful in selecting future novels. Next summer, we plan to refurbish the grammar portion of the course with more teacher-developed materials that use common FCCJ student names, local settings, and relevant contexts. We might even include excerpts from the novels that are appropriate. If we are successful, some of our students will one day independently read a whole novel that is longer and a bit more complex than *The Cat in the Hat* and their quality of life will be enhanced.



Retention Strategies

Contributors: Rochel Abrams, Fran Riotte, Karen Shipman, Susan Pittman, Marianne Kearsley, Phil Jones
Source: ABE Florida 2001 Resource Guide



There are three essential elements to student retention in Adult Education Programs. They are: make each student feel welcome and valued; make each class worthwhile; make each student believe in a positive personal future. The following are some suggestions for keeping your students once you have them. Many of the suggestions are simple, common sense and common courtesy suggestions; others are more involved suggestions that take some planning. All of the suggestions offered are possible for any teacher in any setting and reading through them should help us remember that mostly our students come to us to learn to believe that they matter.

1. Know your students. Know and call them by their names. Know and ask about their interests outside of class, their problems, their jobs, and their families.
2. Call after several absences. Encourage classmates to call friends who are out. Check with an employer or family member about an absent student. Find some way to get the message to them that they are missed and are missing important work in your class. After a teacher has tried calling numerous times, have someone else from Adult Education call students who have poor attendance. Sometimes it is a conflict with the teacher that is keeping a student out of class and contact from someone other than the teacher allows the student a forum for working through this.
3. Encourage students to become friends with each other. Build new friendships by pairing students together who could benefit from each other's personalities or skills. Encourage students to bring old friends to class with them. Allow friends to work together who can do so effectively.
4. Invite graduates back to class to encourage others and to serve as mentors.
5. Interview students about current work and family situation. Express understanding of current responsibilities and work out a variety of study plans to accommodate for the student's work or family schedule.
6. Interview students about career goals. Help students set realistic short and long-term goals. Consider working on a literacy contract with your student.
7. Remember birthdays of students.
8. Make work relevant. Teach students one new skill everyday that they can use at home or work.
9. Give students a choice in selecting materials.
10. Vary classroom activities. Do group and individual work everyday. Use "brain breaks" such as brainteasers, crossword puzzles, etc. to break up the class time.
11. Have newspapers available for reading and activities. This makes students a more active part of a broader world. Spend a few minutes at the beginning of each class to share opinions and ideas about current events.
12. Score work on the basis of number of correct answers rather than noting only wrong answers.
13. Praise, praise, praise.
14. Maintain a positive attitude; leave outside troubles outside.
15. Listen, listen, listen.
16. Allow non-messy snacks. Plan potluck lunches at the end of class, allowing students to organize, calculate amounts or fees, etc.
17. Celebrate successes with verbal congratulations, potluck parties, awards, etc.
18. Be attentive to all students, checking with them daily to monitor progress and make sure that they understand directions and goals.
19. Help students focus on the positive they have to offer.
20. Review Lois B. Queen's booklet *Retention Plan for Student Success*.
21. Have a family night with food some evening or weekend. This gives the students and the teacher another way to connect with each other.
22. Give monthly attendance awards and include awards for being on time.

Easy Activities for Writing Development

From Curriculum for the Adult Beginning Reader Level 0.0-3.9

A cooperative learning activity for developing complex sentences

First, give the students a "basic sentence" (example, The woman is in the park). Next, ask the students to expand on the topic using descriptive words (example, addressing what the woman is wearing and doing in the park). This activity is useful as a cooperative group activity with each student adding a word or phrase. Students designate a group spokesman to present their final work orally to the class.

Calendar of Training Opportunities

March 5	Health and Literacy Summit - Radisson Riverwalk Jacksonville Contact: Jill Dotts 800-237-5113 dotts@floridaliteracy.org
March 6-8	Florida Literacy Conference - Radisson Riverwalk Jacksonville Contact: Jill Dotts 800-237-5113 dotts@floridaliteracy.org
March 18 & 19	Panhandle Adult Literacy Center Teacher Training - Hampton Inn Pensacola Beach Contact: Jack Newell 850-922-5343 newell@ACE-Leon.org
April 11	ABE Florida Teacher Training Institute - Tallahassee, Florida Contact: Lynn Cunill 850-922-5343 cunill@ACE-Leon.org
April 23	ABE Florida Teacher Training Institute - Melbourne, Florida Contact: Lynn Cunill 850-922-5343 cunill@ACE-Leon.org
June 4-7	Adult Secondary/GED/VPI Symposium ER! Essential Resources for Adult Educators Radisson at the Port, Port Canaveral Contact: Christalee Burkett, 407-622-8951 or your regional RPDAC

Your Comments Are Important

We hope that you enjoy this issue of Back To Basics. If you have any comments or questions, please contact:
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Florida Department of Education

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