

BACK TO BASICS

FOR FLORIDA ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PRACTITIONERS

What Can a Teacher Do?

“What can a teacher do that would make you want to continue to attend class?” Do you have enough nerve to ask your students that question? Mary Davis in Chipley did. Certainly, the youth of her students at the Graceville Youth Camp showed, but the answers are honest and valuable for students and teachers both young and old.

“Encourage and motivate the students.”

“Make the assignment more interesting.”

“Go around to each student offering help to them, not making them find you to receive help. By doing so the student will be more eager to learn more.”

“Some adults may have to work so maybe you could incorporate what they do for a living with how you may teach them what they need to know.”

“Pay for gas money.”

“Make it fun; turn our lesson into something game related so we will have more fun doing it.”

“Hand out snacks everyday.”

“Care about the student’s success.”

“Have parties; give out attendance awards.”

“Adult students have jobs, children, and other things that may keep them from attending class every day. Maybe a homework package would work for some, and the days they attended class would be for computer training and testing.”

“Teach naked.”

With the exception of teaching naked, which could be a hindrance as well as an incentive, all of these ideas can work in our classrooms. Think of your own workplace and how nice it is, every now and then, to celebrate a co-worker’s birthday with cake or a special luncheon, or to feel encouraged, or to find that person you needed in their office ready to answer your question. How can you motivate your students this week? Why not ask them: “What can a teacher do...?”



Pre-GED Course Approved For Statewide Use

(Source: *the GED Connections newsletter, Vol.3, Issue 1, 2002*)

In July of 2002, the Division of Workforce Development approved a new course for Adult General Education. This new course is a Pre-GED course and is designed to serve upper level ABE students ready to start preparing for the GED.

Students enrolled in Adult Basic Education (ABE) at the 6.0-8.9 level are eligible for the Pre-GED course. The course content includes all five GED subject areas, along with applicable study and employability skills, with correlations to the Sunshine State Standards. New emphasis on content knowledge in the 2002 GED Test will make it difficult for some students to acquire sufficient knowledge to pass the test, if their first exposure to the content is in the GED classroom. The Pre-GED resources have been designed to introduce these content areas in a suitable way for upper level ABE students. Also, the new GED addresses higher order thinking skills that require more time to develop.

The design of the Pre-GED course is user-friendly, focusing on both large and small group instruction. This emphasis is appropriate since research has shown that higher order thinking skills are best developed in group problem-solving situations where participants can apply their own skills, as well as learning from others.

So survey your upper level ABE students and see how many are ready for the challenge of the Pre-GED course. It will keep them focused on earning that GED.

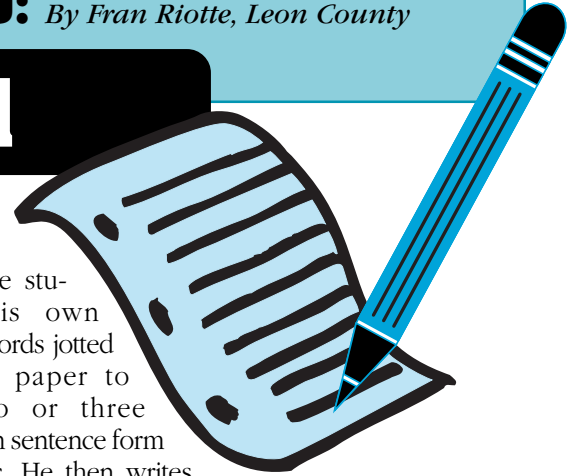
Bob Wofford of the DOE contributed to this article.

**BACK TO
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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 283 Trojan Trail, Tallahassee, FL 32311 Attn: Lynn Cunill. **We look forward to hearing from you.**

TEACHING WRITING PART TWO: *By Fran Riotte, Leon County*

Getting Involved



Getting involved—whether in a relationship or an essay—takes courage. Therefore, one of a teacher’s responsibilities as essay facilitator is to dispel any fear.

“How long does it have to be?” If there is a student out there who hasn’t asked that question when faced with an essay, I’ve yet to meet him. If he hears an exact word count - be it 250 or 250,000 - he (and the girl in the next seat) will panic. From then on, their writing will be inhibited by the secret need to count the words and to use the guerrilla tactic of sticking in extra “the”s and “so”s and “because”s. In fact, there is no exact word count required for the new GED essay.

When you reply, “Oh, about a page and a half,” you diffuse a lot of worry. True, some wise ones will write in huge script but you, as teacher, can be grateful. That author’s work will be much easier to read than the tiny writing of the inhibited scribe. (Remind yourself that GED essay graders will be equally grateful.)

Now, armed with a topic and three ideas (see September 2002 *Back to Basics* article), the essayist faces not one blank sheet of paper but TWO. These papers will produce a first draft, but blood will run cold at the sight of all that white paper. Your job is to make it manageable. Here’s a technique to try:

Direct your student to fold both sheets in thirds (like a letter going into a business envelope). Open the sheets and number the sections as follows:

<i>first page</i>	<i>second page</i>
1	2
5	3
(Leave blank)	4

Spaces 1 and 5 are for the opening and closing paragraphs, 2,3, and 4 for the body of the essay.

Assure the student that he will be asked only to fill up one section at a time. The student then writes his topic at the top of Page One and sets it aside. When you mention that is all he has to do at this point, pause to listen to the sigh of relief. On the second page, in the margin of each section, the writer enters a word or two describing one idea he has listed previously about his topic and sets it aside. The student now has a bare-bones outline of his essay.

Then the student takes another piece of lined paper that will be used as scrap paper and will not be turned in. At the top, the student writes his key word(s) from Section 2. Using a timer, instruct the student to begin writing at your signal everything he can think of that goes with that Section 2 heading. No worry about spelling or grammar or making sentences; the only goal is to get as many words down as possible on the page in one

minute.

Finally, the student uses his own thoughts and words jotted on the scrap paper to stimulate two or three concrete ideas in sentence form on his subtopic. He then writes these sentences in Section 2 on the folded paper. Here’s where you reveal the concept of and need for examples.

Now you and the student are ready to repeat the process for Sections 3 and 4. If a writer’s ideas outgrow the space allotted in a section, urge her to use that blank section of Page One for expansion. Rejoice with her that she has an abundance of ideas. The body of the essay has taken shape.

It is time to revisit the opening paragraph section designated ‘1’ on Page One. Draw out a simple “I” statement from the student. New writers find that one-letter word difficult to justify - somehow having gotten the idea that it is (1) egotistical or (2) soul baring. Perhaps he or she never feels safe giving a personal opinion. Your reading aloud a few examples of first person writing can illustrate its power and its freshness in essay writing. “I get really annoyed when my husband doesn’t take out the garbage,” could begin an essay on one’s pet peeve. Demonstrate how the student can then use her three ideas to fill out that opening paragraph: “Leaving the garbage in the house makes the kitchen look messy, encourages bugs, and smells bad.”

It’s conclusion time and there’s just one more space to fill. By this time, a student writer usually has a good ending in mind. If not, suggest simply using different words to restate the opening premise. Our pet peeve writer might conclude, “I like a neat, sanitary, and pleasant smelling kitchen. Since I also like my husband, I plan to show him this essay and hope he comes around to my way of thinking.” With that sentence, the student involves herself in her writing and she is ready to rewrite her composition and submit it.

Once again, dear teacher, you have done your job! You’ve inspired; you’ve involved students in their work. In the final part of this series, I’ll address how you interact with a writer in the polishing of an essay.

LANGUAGE LESSON

LEVEL:	4.0 – 5.9
STANDARD:	21
BENCHMARK:	21.8
TITLE:	Parts of Speech
CONTRIBUTOR:	Karen Shipman Ft. Lauderdale
MATERIALS:	Several colors of highlighters/colored pencils
ACTIVITIES:	Put the definition for whatever part of speech is being studied (such as “NOUN”) on the board. Pass out a one- or two-paragraph text and have students label the page “NOUNS” and underline every noun with a pencil. Then, students highlight all the “person” nouns in one color, all the “place” nouns in another color, and all the “idea” nouns in another color.
	Additional Information: This can be used to distinguish between singular/plural and common/proper nouns. The replacement of nouns or verbs with more “vivid” ones using a thesaurus is a similar activity for a higher level (6.0 – 8.9).
	Note: You could use a newspaper article for this exercise.

MATHEMATICS LESSON

LEVEL:	4.0 – 5.9
STANDARD:	27
BENCHMARK:	27.6; 27.11; 27.12
TITLE:	Converting Recipes
CONTRIBUTOR:	Mykin Brady, <i>TLC Resource Guide</i> , Broward County
MATERIALS:	Recipes with a large number of ingredients (most ingredients should be in fraction form)
PROCEDURE:	Assign each student a partner. Give each team a recipe. Each team is to calculate the recipe for a number of servings other than the one indicated on the original recipe. Students may increase or decrease the original recipe (for example, they may calculate for 6 servings instead of 9 or for 2 servings instead of 8). Set a time limit. The team who has the most correct “fraction conversions” at the end of the time limit wins. (A small prize for the winning team is appropriate.)
	Note: Each team should have recipes with approximately the same number of ingredients and approximately the same skill level. Be prepared to award several small prizes, for teams may tie.

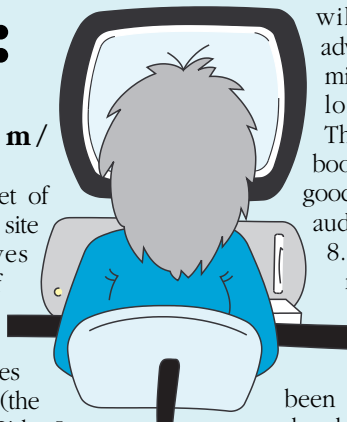
Websites:

Grammar Gorillas www.funbrain.com/grammar/

Grammar Gorillas is a subset of funbrain.com. This particular site opens to a page that gives practice in identifying parts of speech. There are beginner and advanced levels. There are also links to other games including 2Bee or Nottoobee (the verb “to be”) and The Plural Girls. In addition there is a section containing resources for parents as well as a separate section for teachers.

Chapter a Day www.chapteraday.com

The student will need to have an e-mail address in order to participate in this online book club. Each day Monday through Friday, a portion of the book chosen for the work



will be e-mailed. It is advertised as taking about five minutes to read but may take longer for ABE students.

There is a wide variety of book clubs including fiction, good news, mystery, teen, and audio. In our ABE class (6.0-8.9 level), we are orally reading a short novel that we found in the teen club called *Spellbound* by Janet McDonald; it has been extremely successful. We ordered seventeen copies and have three copies available in the library.

Math Lessons That are Fun! Fun! Fun! <http://math.rice.edu/~lanius/Lessons/>

This site is a project of Cynthia Lanus at Rice University. She is “especially interested in increasing the participation of women and under-represented minorities in the computational sciences.” Although some of the lessons are too difficult for most ABE

students, there are several that are very good. There is one on fractions that students should like called “Who Wants Pizza?” that is designed for levels 3 to 6.

Read Write Now! Activities

http://www.ed.gov/americanreads/kids_rwn.html

Originally designed to be a summer reading program, this site is full of ideas that instructors can use with students that are interested in helping their children become better readers. The excellent reading and writing activities are subdivided into three age groups: Birth to Preschool, Preschool through Grade Two and Grades Three through Six. Resources include a Reading and Vocabulary Log which encourages learning a new word each day as well as reading for thirty minutes a day. There is also a reading certificate that can be presented to award the child and his or her learning partner for reaching their goals.

Character First! Education Works

By Linda Neel, Jackson County Schools

As part of the School Improvement Plan for 2002-2003, the Jackson County Adult Education program has implemented the *Character First! Education* program. *Character First! Education* is a program designed specifically for public schools, although it is used in many other venues. *Character First! Education* offers training and resources to help teachers and parents build character traits, such as stewardship of time and talent, honesty, patience, and initiative, in the lives of their children.

Character First! founder Tom Hill of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, became aware of the fact that he was spending more time addressing personnel problems than production in his manufacturing plant. He developed a character plan in which his managers encouraged personal character development in the lives of the employees. After two years, management noticed a decline in worker's compensation, a rise in productivity and an increase in profits. "Character training has promoted better relationships in the family and in the workplace and has improved the physical, moral, and mental health of our employees," according to Mr. Hill. Because of the success in Mr. Hill's business, other businesses, school officials, and government leaders have implemented the program with much success.

"*Character First!* offers tools to strengthen character in the classroom, impacting each student's life on an individual level. Lasting solutions to educational problems come when teachers model good character and encourage students to build character qualities. Through emphasizing, requiring, and recognizing these positive character qualities, teachers can change their school to have a 'culture of

character."

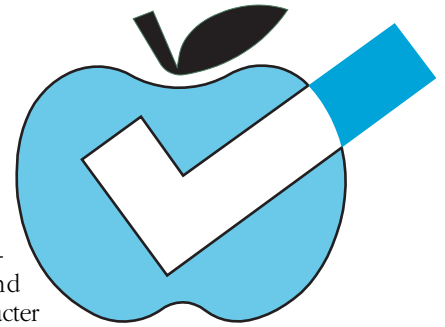
Getting started with character emphasis requires three main steps: emphasize, require, and recognize character. Character

is emphasized by teaching one quality at a time and how it applies to school or home. The standards of character are required as teachers hold their students and each other accountable. Finally, when students demonstrate character qualities, teachers recognize this with praise.

The Jackson County Adult Education program is working with the Character Council of Northwest Florida (CCNWF) in this endeavor. The CCNWF initiative began under the guidance of David H. Melvin, owner of Melvin Engineering. Mr. Melvin was instrumental in starting this council after implementing the *Character First!* program in his business.

The CCNWF, a non-profit organization, was organized for the purpose of promoting, supporting, and encouraging good character awareness, education, and recognition for the citizens and residents of the Northwest Florida region. The Jackson County Adult Education program will work closely with the Character Council of Northwest Florida as we endeavor to implement this valuable program.

(Some information cited from *Character First!* website and Character Council of Northwest Florida website: www.ccnwf.org)



Your Comments Are Important...

We hope you enjoyed 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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