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FIELD NOTES

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Classroom Management Classroom Climate

SABES
System for Adult Basic Education Support

System for Adult Basic Education Support
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Clues to Classroom Management in ABE

By Lenore Balliro

As adult educators, we often shy away from terms rooted in the business world. We have students, not clients; we have classrooms, not venues; we look for educational gains, not the bottom line. Still, a term like "management" can be a useful construct as a way to talk about all those extra-content aspects to teaching that make a class a comfortable environment or one filled with conflict.

What do we mean by classroom management? According to Wesner (1999), "Classroom management is a planned effort on the part of the teacher to make the classroom a comfortable place for students to learn." How we structure class time, attend to the needs of a multi-level class, plan for periodic student conferences—all of these elements relate to classroom management and take an enormous amount of teacher energy. A great deal of the literature on classroom management focuses on elementary and high school and offers advice for preventing and addressing discipline problems. But some educators take a broader view on the topic. For example, Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (2002) looks at the following categories when defining classroom management: getting off to a good start, keeping the class flowing, cooperative learning, anticipating and handling problems. By unpacking what we mean by classroom management and by looking at teachers' strategies for facilitating a well-run class, we can expand our understanding of, and increase our repertoire of classroom management tech-

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Foreword

From time to time, a member of the Field Notes *Advisory Board suggests the topic of "disruptive students" for an issue of* Field Notes. *Teachers often get frustrated with students who monopolize class time, make racist comments, or in other ways trigger discomfort among the class. I have chosen the topic of classroom management and classroom climate as a way to broaden the topic of "the disruptive student" but can still include it. While resources on classroom management almost entirely relates to elementary and high school, I found a literature review useful to clarify my own thinking on the subject as it relates to teaching adults.*

As editor, I can never predict which topic for Field Notes *will resonate strongly with practitioners and will yield the most submissions. The topic of classroom management/classroom climate did not spark a lot of writing. We have a slim volume this winter, and not all articles relate to the theme. For example, Carey Reid writes of his experience with passing the adult subject matter test and offers tips for teachers. Shana Berger describes her experiences teaching creative writing to unionized health care workers. Mary Ann Sliwa contributes an article on job readiness training in her adult ESOL program.*

We welcome your feedback in the form of letters to the editor, and we always welcome submissions. For submission guidelines, please go to the SABES Web site at <www.sabes.org> and click on Field Notes. *Please contact Lenore Balliro, editor, at lballiro@worlded.org with your ideas.*

Lenore Balliro
Field Notes editor

Field Notes Mission Statement and Editorial Policy

Mission

Field Notes is an adult basic education (ABE) quarterly, theme-based newsletter. It is designed to share innovative and reliable practices, resources, and information relating to ABE. We attempt to publish a range of voices about important educational issues, and we are especially interested in publishing new writers, writers of color, and writers who represent the full range of diversity of learners and practitioners in the field.

Field Notes is also a place to provide support and encouragement to new and experienced practitioners (ABE, ESOL, GED, ADP, Family Literacy, Correction, Workplace Education, and others) in the process of writing about their ideas and practice. Editorial support is always provided to any writer who requests it. Teachers, administrators, counselors, volunteers, and support staff are welcome to write for *Field Notes*.

Our Funder

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Our Editorial Policy

Unsolicited manuscripts to *Field Notes* are welcome. If you have an idea for an article or wish to submit a letter to the editor, contact Lenore Balliro, editor, by phone at 617-482-9485, by email at <lballiro@worlded.org>, or by mail at 44 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210. Submission deadlines for upcoming issues are published in each issue of *Field Notes*.

Opinions expressed in *Field Notes* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editor, SABES, or its funders. We do reserve the right to decline publication. We will not publish material that is sexist, homophobic, or otherwise discriminatory.

Our Reprint Policy

Articles published in *Field Notes* may be reprinted in any publication as long as they are credited to the author and *Field Notes*.

Field Notes Advisory Board 05–06

Editor:/ Layout: Lenore Balliro
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The Homework Dilemma

By Deborah Lerme Goodman

I had a class in which three-quarters of the students regularly did not do any homework. Because many of these students were exactly the ones who most needed the practice, I really wanted them to do it, even if it meant taking up class time for them to finish.

On the other hand, I did not want to punish the few students who had done their homework at the right place—home.

One morning, I announced that I would take the few students who had completed the homework outside to the hall to do verbal drills and pronunciation work while the others did their homework. The students with me in the hall relished the personal attention. The next day, the number of students who got to go out to the hall with me increased slightly. More and more students started doing their homework at home, and it got to the point where it made more sense to send the dwindling number of students working on homework out to the hall and keep the majority inside the classroom.

I never achieved a 100% success rate, but the ratio changed dramatically. More importantly, I found a fair way to manage the problem. For this, I owe thanks to my colleague, Myriel Eykamp, for her wise advice!

Deborah Lerme Goodman teaches at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, MA. She can be reached at <dlg@mac.com>

Homework Ideas

- On occasion, have ESOL practice new language structures by calling and leaving a message on your answering machine.
- Assign homework partners for students to support one another in getting homework done.
- Discuss barriers and solutions for getting homework done, including time management techniques. Discuss hidden pockets of time for doing homework: the subway, laundromat.
- On occasion, devote 30 minutes to receiving very short phone calls from students so they can practice social language.
- Consider having students read to their children as part of their homework.
- Have students tell you what they want for homework, or have students create homework assignments for the class.
- Assign a television show and spend some time in the beginning of class discussing what students remember.
- Give homework holidays from time to time
- Assign dialogue journals with students to practice their writing. Exchange written conversations with students on subjects of their choice.

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Clues to Classroom...

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niques. When teachers are comfortable in the role of effective manager as well as effective content area teacher, everyone benefits.

Effective classroom management, especially in adult education programs, can help students feel comfortable, safe, respected, and challenged, leading to student empowerment rather than detracting from it. New teachers, however creative and well-steeped in their content areas, often have no way of anticipating classroom management issues that can blindside and derail the teaching and learning process.

Establishing Guidelines with Students

Creating a comfortable climate for adults means including them in the decision-making process from the beginning of the class cycle. In fact, some progressive educators would maintain that it is largely students' responsibility in an adult education class to develop the guidelines and expectations they will follow throughout the cycle. According to Brigitte Marshall, (2002) an adult educator from Oakland, California, "The foremost goal of classroom management techniques should be student responsibility. Involving learners in the establishment of class rules and procedures helps develop student responsibility as well as the student support that is critical to the success of classroom management techniques. Simple strategies can give learners control over how a classroom functions and can encourage them to make decisions collaboratively, solve problems, think creatively, and exercise responsibility. Suggestion boxes provide opportunities for student input on issues from interpersonal conflicts in the classroom to furniture layout. Instructors and learners together can develop a list of classroom jobs and a job-assignment rotation."

Establishing guidelines with student involvement illustrates a proactive stance in the classroom and helps prevent problems from occurring in the first place. Early in the learning cycle, teachers and students can discuss guidelines for maximizing their learning time in and out of class and for treating each other respectfully. They can ask questions like (Hopkins, 2005)

- How do you want me to treat you?
- How do you want to treat one another?
- How do you think I want to be treated?
- How should we treat one another when there's a conflict?

While most adult education programs have institutional attendance and other requirements, an in-class set of agreements created by students personalizes the rules and makes them more binding since students are responsible to each other. For example, at the Taunton Public Schools ABE/BCC Partnership program, students created a student handbook: a manual by students, for students to introduce the program and give students guidelines and other information. Most adults are willing to engage in this process, especially when literacy, writing, language, and grammar skills are made explicit in the process.

Clarifying Expectations

Like younger students, adult learners want to know what to expect—for the day, the week, and the entire learning cycle. When teachers have a blueprint for teaching–from daily lesson plans to syllabi, and when they share this plan with students, classroom management is facilitated. Having a blueprint doesn't foster rigidity: even with clear expectations about where the class is headed, a teacher can still be responsive to teachable moments or unusual opportunities for ad hoc learning that arise in the class.

Many teachers, including myself, have difficulty with time management within the microcosm of the classroom. It feels impossible at times to stop an intense classroom activity or discussion. We don't want to derail students' enthusiasm. For this reason, the use of a buzzer or timer may be helpful as an auditory reminder to stop and move on. Even if we choose to ignore the timer, at least that choice is a conscious decision.

Effective classroom management often involves knowing students and paying attention to cues; facilitating effective transitions between different stages of the class; setting up and maintaining good stu-

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The Classroom as a Job: One Way to Manage a Class

By Mary Ann Sliwa

I had the great pleasure of participating in Martha Oesch's workshop: Teaching Job Readiness Skills in the ESOL/ABE classroom training. I was most amazed at the idea of having students treat their class as though it were a job.

Martha suggested having students write a job description for being a student in an ABE program. In her workshop, we examined various classroom jobs, including timekeeper, resource manager, and grammar monitor.

Martha also helped us to articulate how teachers often use the SCANS and EFF competencies intuitively as the basis for classroom instruction. (Editor's note: see definition of SCANS and EFF on this page.) She also gave us tools to make these competencies explicit to students, illustrated how the competencies and skills transfer from classroom to job, and explained how to help students with skills self-assessment.

Martha modeled many of the strategies she uses with students. For example, she took job want ads, matched them to SCANS competencies, and had participants identify the skills they already had that could be applied to the job in the ad. A simulated auction showed us that employers are looking for the SCANS competencies, but number one on their list is the interpersonal qualities students may already have or are developing in cooperative learning situations. Martha's treatment of the classroom as a job site offers a creative classroom management approach that gives students job preparation while structuring the learning environment. I have already started using this model in my writer's workshop with classroom jobs rotating on a monthly basis.

Mary Ann Sliwa is the technology coordinator and writing workshop teacher at Blue Hills ABE Program/ Norwood Adult ESOL. She can be reached at <masliwa@comcast.net>

What Are SCANS Competencies?

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) was formed by the U.S. Department of Labor and Education to research the competencies that workers need to succeed in today's workplace. The five basic SCANS competencies include:

- Resources: Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources
- Interpersonal: Works with others
- Information: Acquires and evaluates information
- Systems: Understands complex interrelationships
- Technology: Works with a variety of technologies

For more information,see *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000* <http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS/whatwork/>

What Is EFF?

Equipped for the Future standards were collaboratively developed nationwide under the leadership of the National Institute for Literacy. They define knowledge and skills adults need to successfully carry out roles as parents, citizens, and workers in the 21st century. These skills include strong reading, writing, and math skills as well as the skills we need to communicate, work well with others, solve problems, and keep up with change.For more information, go to <www.nifl.gov/nifl/eff.html>.

Career Exploration: A Student Leadership Minigrant

By Mary Ann Sliwa

A very strong relation ship exists between the Norwood Adult ESOL (NAESOL) program and the Metro South/West Employment and Training Resources (ETR) One-Stop Career Center. Students are referred back and forth, and an ETR team member is on the NAESOL Community Advisory Board. Ellen Borgenicht, the NAESOL program counselor, wanted to expand the positive relationship and to ensure that all students in the NAESOL program were thinking about how their career and educational needs were being served. She also wanted to have the most accurate and up-to-date information at the program about "hot careers," pertinent Web sites, and other students' successes. To accomplish these goals, Ellen applied for a student leadership mini-grant from SABES Southeast and Massachusetts Alliance for Adult Literacy (MassAAL).

All NAESOL classes, although leveled by assessments, are in reality multilevel. Each individual comes with a set of strengths and weaknesses in learning styles and in response to life's stresses and opportunities. In this mini-grant project, we targeted the advanced ESOL class. This class could be loosely grouped into students who were unemployed and receiving the services of ETR; those who were underemployed due to their lack of proficiency in English; and a number who wanted to continue with their education. Of course, some students overlapped groups.

Building on Experience

In starting up the minigrant, we drew on our experience in implementing a successful student leadership minigrant the previous year, allowing us to manage our time effectively. Since this particular class had lower level English skills than the former one, along with fewer social interactions with native speakers, we thought the best approach was to present a framework to student leaders, all the while asking them to vote on the possibilities we presented. This was critical in keeping to the tasks involved, developing skills for new leaders, and seeing that the resources were presented to all the levels of classes. Yet we remained very flexible and at times we were not able to stick to our agenda. For in- stance, both Ellen and I had thought that health care careers would be popular. We couldn't have been more surprised when the student leaders found only a couple of students in the entire population with that interest.

Once the calendar was negotiated, I went to work with the students designing a survey of their areas of interest, both in careers and education. We specifically asked for students' desired field trips, guest speakers, and materials. At first, the advanced ESOL class took the survey, and then they conducted the survey by interviewing the other level classes one-on-one. From that exercise, we charted our course. After much discussion, we invited an immigration attorney, a realtor, and mortgage loan officer, to speak to us in class. We also set up a program field trip to ETR and the Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce, where we were joined by a small business development center counselor from Massachusetts Small Business Development Corporation (MSBDC).

During class time, we used Richard Bolles' *What Color is Your Parachute?* to clarify students' interest and give them a working career exploration vocabulary. Sometimes I would have them vote after an exercise had been worked on for five minutes—whether to continue, whether students would use this with the other classes, and whether we would want to use this in the statewide workshop for student leaders in May (sponsored by SABES and MassAAL. Other times, I would outline five possibilities for class time and they would vote

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Drawing the Line

By Richard Goldberg

Sometimes, teachers have to draw the line. From February to June 2005, my high intermediate ESOL class included a man in his early 20s who was the most challenging and disruptive student I have seen in my 13 years of teaching. "John" was bright, a good writer, and had very strong oral English skills. Despite my repeated attempts to work with him before or after class, he was often uncooperative, especially in pair or small group work. His classroom behavior included numerous side conversations in his first language with whoever was sitting next to him. This was annoying while I, or more important, a classmate, was trying to speak.

I gave the class a week to complete one of the most important writing assignments of the cycle. On the due date and the following day, John was absent and didn't call to let us know he wouldn't be in (a program requirement). When John returned to class and I asked him for the assignment, he just gave me a shrug of the shoulders and a smirk. I told him to step out into the hallway. "If you don't bring your homework tomorrow," I told him, "don't come back." The next day, John returned with his homework and for the rest of the cycle he was, for the most part, more cooperative, mature, and responsible. In September, he was among 9 of the 11 students in the class to enroll in a community college.

Because of John and a few similar situations with other students, program staff developed a set of criteria by which students in all four intermediate classes would be evaluated for class participation, behavior, homework, speaking English in class, punctuality, and attendance. Evaluations

occur during the first two to three weeks of each cycle, at midcycle and at the end of the cycle. Students with poor evaluations meet with the counselor and are required to improve problem areas or risk being dropped from the program. Like most other ABE/ESOL programs, we have a waiting list of qualified, motivated people. No one has been asked to leave the program since the evaluations have been put in place.

Richard Goldberg is the director if education for the Asian American Civic Association in Boston. He can be reached at <Richard@aaca-boston.org>.

The Perfect Classroom: An In-Class Strategy

Ask students to write a paragraph that tells what they think the perfect classroom should be like. (This is not fiction/fantasy writing; they should describe the atmosphere of an ideal real classroom.) Arrange students into groups of four. Ask each student to underline in his or her paragraph the "most important words or phrases." After students have done that, they should pass their papers to the person in their group who is seated to their right. Students should continue passing papers and underlining important words until the original writer has her/his paper back. At that point, students will share with the group some of the important words and phrases in their own writing; a group note taker will record the words and phrases that might best describe a perfect classroom. Group members will review the list and decide on five words or phrases to share with the class. When the class has a fully developed class list of words and phrases, they will use some of those words and phrases to write a "class statement" that will be posted on the wall for all to see. When things are not going "perfectly," it is time to review the class statement.

Reprinted from *School "Rules"!In Front of the Class* by Gary Hopkins, *Education World*®.

I Took the ABE Subject Matter Test and Lived (I Passed It, Too)

By Carey Reid

The Massachusetts Department of Education has completed development of the subject matter test for ABE, which brings the ABE teacher's license closer in line with other state teachers' licenses. Because the ABE teacher's license was designed for teachers of all ABE populations (ESOL, literacy, basic skills, or GED/ASE), the ABE subject matter test was designed to ensure that licensed teachers have sufficient knowledge and skills to function well in a range of classrooms.

With the test now officially ready, all applicants for the provisional level of the ABE teacher's license must now pass both the communication and literacy tests and the ABE subject matter test (minimum score: 70). After October 1, 2006, applicants for the professional level must pass these tests as well.

Because our license is a general one, the ABE subject matter test requires that test takers know something about language acquisition theory, math through algebra and geometry, basic history and science, and writing and editing skills. This array might seem daunting at first, but if you assess your current knowledge and skills honestly and then set up a plan to address them (before taking the test, of course!), you can, in my opinion, pass the test without much trouble. You can access good information about the test at either <www.doe.mass. edu/mtel/> or <mtel.nesinc.com/> and even download test prep materials, including sample test questions. The prep materials advise you to set up a test preparation plan, which I did. I'll give details of my plan below.

You are given four hours to complete the test, which I believe most people will find more than sufficient. My guess is that you'll spend roughly two-thirds of your time on the 100 multiple choice questions and one -third on two writing tasks. The multiple choice questions cover language acquisition theory, English language arts, history/social science, science, and mathematics. Let's take up each in turn.

Language Acquisition Theory

I knew something about this but not a lot, so I checked out from the ALRI library the text used for SABES's two ESOL license-compatible courses—H. Douglas Brown's *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Regents, 1994 and later editions—and read a chapter a day and took notes. The text is well-written and very interesting. I supplemented this with a great glossary that I printed out from <http://earthrenewal.org/secondlang.htm>. These two resources prepared me very well for the language acquisition questions on the test.

English Language Arts

I gambled that my basic teaching experience would stand me in good stead for these questions, and it did. The test uses predictable sorts of questions about repairing faulty sentence or paragraph structures and grammar.

History/Social Science

I did not study for this section and found that I could answer the questions very easily simply by being educated in this country, or by comprehending information from supplied passages. If you are feeling iffy about your American history, though, I think reading the American history section in a good encyclopedia would be sufficient preparation.

Science

Again, I did not study ahead for this section. I found that the 10 questions touched on common sorts of discrete knowledge or the ability to comprehend the information in a paragraph or short passage.

Mathematics

Fortunately, I've been a math instructor, but I didn't

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I Took the ABE ...

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want to take any chances with my aging brain. So I reviewed the Princeton Review GED test preparation book by going through content that I'm rusty on: stats, coordinates, algebra, and geometry. This took only a few hours total and put me on a solid footing for the math questions.

Writing and Editing

The test includes a sort of mini-communications and literacy test, in that test takers must write a short passage that is well-organized and grammatically sound and, secondly, revise at least five parts of a printed passage that contains problems with organization and clarity. I did not find these tasks difficult, and I do not believe that most teachers will; however, it does require a pretty high English fluency level, so some teachers for whom English is not their first language might find them challenging without some form of preparation and practice.

Carey Reid provides ABE licensure support for SABES. He can be reached at <creid@worlded.org>

Resources for Classroom Management

Tips for Creating a Peaceful Classroom
<http://education.indiana.edu/cas/tt/v2i3/peaceful.html>

The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution
<http://trinstitute.org/ojpcr/>

Teaching Multi-level Adult ESOL Classes
<www.cal.org/caela/esl%5Fresources/digests/SHANK.htm>

Teaching Tolerance
<www.tolerance.org>
Classroom resources for conflict resolution.

Managing Disruptive Student Behavior in Adult Basic Education.
Cheryl Harrison, 1986
ERIC Digest No. 54. 1986
ERIC Identifier: ED272700

English That Works: Preparing Adult English Language Learners for Success in the Workforce and Community
<www.cal.org/caela/esl%5Fresources/digests/Englishwks.html>

Gentle Teaching
www.gentleteaching.nl/
This site addresses classroom approaches to children and adults with special needs.

The Really Big List of Classroom Management Resources
<http://drwilliampmartin.tripod.com/classm.html>
This practical list covers a wide range of topics—from getting better organized to integrating conflict resolution in the classroom.

Educators for Social Responsibility
<www.teachervision.fen.com/page/3038.htm>
ESR uses the Peaceable Classroom model which it has practiced for over 20 years. The Peaceable Classroom emphasizes six themes: Cooperation, Communication, Appreciation for Diversity, The Healthy Expression of Feelings, Responsible Decision Making, and Conflict Resolution

Approaches to Conflict Resolution
<www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr171.shtml>
This article provides a clear overview of the different approaches for integrating conflict resolution into classroom and schools, including Process Curriculum, Mediation Program, Peaceable Classroom, and Peaceable Schools.

Career Exploration ...
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Students contacted the requested speakers, arranged the field trips, and some sought out their own informational interviews by asking Ellen and me for referrals to local professionals in their particular field. Web sites were investigated and compiled, then a handout was reviewed orally with their partners in the other classes. The advanced students were our experts, acting as guides to less experienced students.

Before you think that I am smug about our project, I must tell you how the structures in place just barely saved us. For three months I had organized an interactive workshop for the current students to present at a statewide leadership meeting. Pia Lalli, the classroom teacher, had whipped out index cards as drafts of student presentations. The drafts were then typed in Microsoft Word during computer class, and a student who had just joined the class was recruited to provide constructive input on peoples' oral presentations. I had planned on a dry run with the intermediate class, and a dress rehearsal with the advanced beginners with Ellen in the audience to critique. Despite all this planning, the students were unprepared at the rehearsal. Perhaps this was a group that needed to stumble before they ran. By the time we reached the state workshop, they were professionals. A local TV station filmed part of the workshop. Everyone was raving about the exercises, information, and the way it was conveyed. There was a payoff!

Thanks to Sally Gabb, SABES SE, and Ernest Best, MassAAL, a great deal was achieved. Students grew to meet their multiple roles as family, program, and community leaders. Two students had articles published in the local paper, along with an article in *Field Notes*. Poster boards and handouts were provided to the Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts at Morrill Memorial Library and the Norwood Town Hall. These same leaders went on to translate our program registration flyer into eight different languages. Additionally, two of our students presented at the MCAE Network Conference on student leadership.

We had a lot of fun, especially when videotaping students' 30-second self-promotion commercials One student proudly ended his ad with "and that's why you won't make a mistake by hiring me!" He showed this tape during the state workshop. Our group photo made the local paper. Students felt empowered and proved to be leaders. They have even begun to think of new projects for this school year!

Mary Ann Sliwa is the technology coordinator and writing workshop teacher at Blue Hills ABE Program/ Norwood Adult ESOL. She can be reached at <masliwa@ @comcast.net>/.

Embracing Our Humanity Series Sponsored by SABES Southeast

Creating Transformative Learning Environments Through Communications, Collaborations, and Cultures

Session I ● December 9, 2005 ● 9:30–4:00
Are We Communicating? Tools & Strategies for Conflict Resolution
Presenters: Pam Steager & Bill Eyman

Session II ● Friday, February 10, 2006 ● 10:00–2:30
Creating Collaborative Communities: Participatory Practices and Decision-Making in Adult Education
Presenters: Andy Nash and Lisa Jochim

Session III ● Friday, April 7, 2006 ● 9:30–4:00 Education for Diversity: Creating Culturally Affirming and Empowering ABE Programs & Classrooms Presenter: Margery Freeman

Session IV ● Friday, May 5, 2006 ● 9:30 –2:00
Embracing Our Humanity: Creating Transformative Learning Environments through Communications, Collaborations, & Cultures
Wrap-up, Next Steps, and Celebration
Facilitator: Mev Miller

For more information,Contact Mev

Workers Read and Write in Union-Sponsored Program

By Shana Berger

At a recent "coffeehouse" reading, a lucky audience was treated to a tear and joy-filled evening of stories and poems about political struggles in Haiti, a first job on a landscaping crew, and a dream deferred. The reading was the culminating event for the Service Employee International Union (SEIU) Local 2020 members immersed in a 10-week creative writing workshop organized by SEIU's Worker Education Program (WEP). Workers at more than 10 sites across the country will participate in similar workshops as part of a national labor writing initiative funded by the Nathan Cummings Foundation. Geared to providing a forum for workers to write and share their stories, the idea for the initiative took shape in 2000 when poet Jimmy Santiago Baca conducted a writing work-shop to give voice to workers' lived experiences at an Indiana steel mill.

Participants in WEP's creative writing class are full-time health care workers; with only one two-hour meeting each week, students had a lot to accomplish in a short amount of time! To provide a basis for their own writing, students began by reading, discussing and writing about a variety of poems, short stories, and personal narratives drawing primarily on *Working* by Studs Terkel, *Working Writers,* a collection of stories written by WEP students and *The Heat: Steelworkers Lives & Legends,* an anthology of stories and poems developed in Baca's workshop. Through written responses to the readings, students gathered ideas and material for stories that they would draft, revise, edit, and present at the final reading.

One of the highlights of the workshop took place when Barbara Neely, an African-American novelist, short story writer, and author of the popular Blanche White mystery series, visited the class to share her experiences as a writer. The students had many questions for Neely about her ideas, process, and method of writing. Much to their relief, Neely emphasized that worrying about nit-picky editing is one of the last steps in the writing process and that getting ideas down on paper is what writing is all about. Students were surprised to hear that—and from a published writer no less! Neely also explained to the class that everything she has published has gone through at least 12 drafts. What a perfect introduction to the writing and revision process.

The second half of the series was devoted to the students' writing. Participants worked in class and at home to develop and revise their stories

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Shana Berger and SEIU writers

Workers Read and Write ...
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with help from classmates and the teacher. One student wrote a story about how her mother never gave her praise, only criticism. The student said that she had kept this story to herself for years, and telling her story was therapeutic. The author Zora Neale Hurston wrote, "There is no agony like having an untold story inside of you." This was definitely true in this creative writing class.

In the final phase of the labor writing initiative, stories written by union worker participants around the country will be published in an anthology.

Shana Berger teaches high school diploma classes with the SEIU Worker Education Program, the Cambridge Community Learning Center, and GED Plus. She can be reached at <shanadberg@yahoo.com>.

For more information about this project on a national level, please go to <www.workplacelearning.org>.

Excerpts of SEIU Student Writing

On my first day at my landscaping job a guy named Dugard asked me, "Where do you think you're going?"

I said, "I'm going to work."

He was teasing me and he said, "You don't have to be mad. You're so small and skinny, but you are going to have to dig a big hole and break through many rocks."

We walked to the farm and I saw a wheelbarrow with a shovel, a broom, a pitchfork and other tools in it. The poor people use the wheelbarrow at home to carry other people's stuff. When I saw that I thought I would go back home, but I had to finish the day.

—Lermond Mettelus

On my wedding day after everything was over, the preacher told me of the dream he had about me the night before. He said, "Daughter, I saw you in a dream walking alone, and I saw you approaching a mountain and you was standing at the bottom looking up." It was then he said, "BUT YOU WILL MAKE IT." Just to hear those words made me feel that there must be a great challenge before me, and I did not know what to expect. I pondered the dream and the words he spoke to me in my heart for many years and with each challenge that life would present I found myself asking the question, "Lord, is this my mountain?"

—Lilly Fountain

Sometimes I ask myself a question: "What makes me so afraid to go to school?" When I think back, I remember sitting in the kitchen with my mother. I was 12 or 14 years old. I don't remember what I did, but I remember the words my mother told me, "You will never be nothing!"

—Marie Mylluste

Killing will not solve the problems of Haiti.

When the sun sets, we are afraid it might not rise in the morning.

When our stomachs are full, we are afraid of indigestion.

When our stomachs are empty, we are afraid we may never eat again and when we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed.

—Pierre St. Loth

Managing the Multi-level Class

By Lenore Balliro

Experienced teachers have learned a great deal over the years about making multi-level classes run more smoothly and inclusively. The following suggestions have been distilled from my own classroom experience as well as years of working with other teachers who have helped inform my practice.

Clarify Realistic Goals

Negotiate realistic learning goals with students early on to help prevent false expectations that could lead to frustration. Once goals are established, find ways to check in with students regularly, even if informally. Regular check-ins help students evaluate their progress.

Create a "Student File Center"

A file box filled with individual folders for each student allows for a convenient classroom management tool. If some students are finished before others, or if the teacher is working with one group to the exclusion of another, students can go to their files and select independent work for short periods of time.

Establish Ground Rules

Ask students early on what they think they should be responsible for, and what the teacher should be responsible for, in a good classroom. Once ground rules are codified and posted, teachers can refer to them throughout the year

Use Experiential Learning

The initial focus on *doing* something rather than *reading* something allows everyone in a multi-level class to participate. Cooking, conducting a science experiment, viewing an art exhibit are projects that allow language to emerge from the participants as well as the teacher. Follow-up requires structured language practice based on the activity: a multilevel language experience story, pair work for reading and writing.

Create Long-Term Projects:

Long-term projects allow students to assume responsibility for a variety of tasks, some of which do not involve a high literacy or language proficiency level. Long-term projects can include student publications, filming, writing and performing plays, community activism.

Adapt Videos

Select materials with a strong narratives and vivid characters so the dialogue does not have to carry the entire meaning, and students of varying abilities can still participate. Develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities around the viewing segment, depending on what students can handle.

Teach to Different Groups at Different Times

Teach with an emphasis on the more proficient group of students at certain points in the cycle and to the less proficient at other times in the curriculum. Such an approach bypasses the tendency to always teach to the middle. If you opt for such an approach, explain to students what you are doing so they do not feel left out.

Use a Topic-Driven Curriculum:

Negotiate themes with students, allowing them to unite around shared interests. Use whole class grouping to introduce a lesson around the topic, then group or pair students according to abilities.

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Clues to Classroom Management ...

dent records, and of course, developing and using strong instructional strategies.

Classroom Climate

How does creating a positive classroom climate connect to classroom management? Some of the literature in this area refers to classroom climate as the physical nature of the teaching/learning space. Is it clean? Does it smell good? What sounds do you hear in the classroom? Are there supplies at the ready for teachers and students so you don't waste time searching for paper, pencil, chalk, markers? Of course, all the successful management strategies in the world cannot substitute for teaching from the heart. Excel-lent teachers must truly care about their students and carry a passion for their work into the classroom. They must be able to see the big picture at all times (well, most of the time) as they attend to daily routines. It helps, too, when a teacher feels comfortable with her authority without being authoritarian. But an effective management structure can allow passionate, caring teachers to work even more effectively with their students; it helps provide a container, of sorts, for all the quirky, wonderful, messy, and very human stuff that happens in the classroom.

Lenore Balliro is the editor of Field Notes. She can be reached at <lballiro@worlded.org>.

Notes:

Wesner, M, Erwin,D, & Hanlon, E.,*Concept Definitions <http://students.ou.edu/E/Deborah.L.Erwin-1/concepts.htm>*

Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth, *Classroom Management <www.jhu.edu/gifted/teaching/classroom.htm>*

Classroom Routines and Rituals

According to Brigitte Marshall (2002) of Oakland (California) Adult Education, "Classroom routines provide a context in which organizational skills, self-management, appropriate attitude, and personal responsibility can be modeled and practiced. Rules and routines enable learners to be systematic as they learn and operate effectively within social, professional, and technological systems. Procedures and rules can be documented and displayed in the classroom, and learners can be asked to accept responsibility for informing new students about the procedures and rules. Instructors can create systems in the classroom that set expectations for personal organization, preparedness, and responsibility, and also provide opportunities for learners to document that they are meeting those expectations. For example, learners can maintain weekly checklists to keep track of what they need to bring to class and tasks they need to complete in class. Those with school-age children can compare their own charts and checklists with the ones their children bring home from school. In this way, parents can help their children learn as they themselves are learning." Below are some suggestions for establishing rituals and routines in an adult education class. Remember, observing routines does not mean a teacher cannot offer surprises and newness in a class to keep it fresh. A structure sometimes allows this to happen more easily.

Beginning of Class: Play soothing music. Have a task ready for early arrivals. For example, have a question on the board posted for journal writing, ask students to review homework, direct students to take work from a prepared folder in the back of the room.

End of Class: Try to reserve 10 minutes (more or less) at the end of class for wrap up: reflect, review, have students write one question or concern for the teacher on a note card. Practice a song in English, do a short visualization.

This Day in History: Present a fact about a well-known person or event. The *Boston Globe* presents facts daily. Or assign students to bring in a fact each day.

Monday Catch-up: Have students review their weekends for the first 15 minutes of class. Use the information for a weekly one-page newsletter to acknowledge special events in students' lives.

Note: Brigitte Marshall (2002) E*nglish That Works: Preparing Adult English Language Learners for Success in the Workforce and Community* Oakland (California) Adult Education <www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Englishwks.htmlJuly 2002>

Mark Your Calendar

Check the SABES Web site <www.sabes.org> for local and regional activities. This list was prepared by Lou Wollrab

March 8, 2006

Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC), 3rd Annual Statewide Conference: Sharing Skills–Building Connections
Location: Worcester, MA
E-mail: cedac@cedac.org
Web <www.cedac.org/>

March 10–11, 2006

Women Expanding / Literacy Education Action Resource Network (WE LEARN), 3rd Annual (Net)Working Conference on Women & Literacy. Location: New Haven, CT
Contact: Mev Miller, E-mail, <welearn@litwomen.org>
Web site <www.litwomen.org/welearn.html>

March 14, 2006

The Massachusetts Correctional Conference,16th Annual
Location: Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester, MA
Contact: Cathy Coffey, 413-547-8000

March 15–19, 2006

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), 40th Annual Convention
Location: Tampa, FL . Contact: TESOL, 888-547-3369
Web <www.tesol.org/>

March 19–21, 2006

National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), 5th Annual National Conference.
Location: Louisville, KY
Contact: NCFL, 877-326-5481
Web <www.famlit.org/Conference/>

April 7–11, 2006

American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting Location: San Francisco, CA .
Contact: AERA, 202-223-9485,
Web <www.aera.net/annualmeeting/>

April 27–29, 2006

Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) National Conference Location: Houston, TX.
Contact: Texas A&M University, 800-441-7323
Web <www.coabe06.org/>

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enough
to matter,
small
enough to
win.
—On **Being**
a Teacher
by
Jonathan
Kozol

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Curriculum Frameworks
...Submit by April 15.

Fall 2006
ABE Math
....Submit by June 15.

Winter 2006
...Watch for details.

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