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From Low-Tech to High-Tech: Promising Practices in Integrating New Media into Adult Literacy and ESL

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Computers and multimedia technology can make a tremendous difference in adult literacy and ESL. Teaching with technology (“literacy for new times” as the Australians call it), not only fosters engagement and develops confidence and competence in using new tools for learning but it also plays an important role in language and literacy development. Technology integration can breathe new life into conventional classrooms and volunteer tutoring and offers opportunities for the kind of learning that counts in the world beyond school. Students often share a common perspective with employers. They know that the ability to work with smart tools, participate in teamwork, and create a professional looking product counts as success. Technology allows students to be part of a new kind of club, comprised of people who know how to use digital video and still cameras, computers, PowerPoint, and the Internet to create work that astounds others. The new media allow students to feel and look smarter before they have acquired full literacy and proficiency in English.

Linking Technology and Adult Literacy on the US-Mexico Border

During the last two and a half years, Jim Powrie and I have had the opportunity to help teachers and students integrate technology into their Adult ESL and Family Literacy Program in Socorro, Texas, a small town on the U.S.-Mexico border. Participating in the project were an Even Start Family Literacy program and a program for displaced workers who were offered pre-employment education and retraining under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Working as a team with the Socorro program, we designed a model based on research in professional development and research in literacy and second language acquisition for adults who are new to English. To provide a common framework for the training and technical assistance, we used the adult learning principles that we had developed as part of the federally funded CyberStep project.¹ To provide opportunities for students to work together and use technology as a means to develop a wide array of skills, we centered our efforts on Project-Based Learning

(PBL) and used a model of “Engaged Learning” that calls for technology as a means to help students both absorb knowledge and create knowledge for themselves and others. Both Project-Based Learning and Engaged Learning were part of Texas state-wide efforts that I had been involved with previously through Project IDEA and Project INTERALT.² The team received funding through EL-Civics to develop curriculum materials, projects, and activities that integrated adult ESL with technology and linked classrooms and community.

Bringing Literacy to Life: Pictures, Story Boards, and Video

In our training we included both low tech and high tech options since the teachers represented the full spectrum of attitudes and experiences toward technology: early adopters on the one hand, reluctant users in the middle, and resistant users toward the far end. We introduced high quality visual materials to stimulate discussion (“Material World” by Sierra Publishing was one of our favorites) and demonstrated how video lessons can foster second language acquisition. Of the videos we previewed and discussed, the teachers and students chose to work with *English for All*; I was partial to “Only in America” largely because of its great acting; after all, it’s not every day that one gets to see Ed Norton in an ESL video³. To encourage students to use English in a variety of settings in the community, we developed a set of problem-solving scenarios. Students developed their own situation skits with a focus on “English for Self-Defense” using the story-boarding techniques we had introduced to organize their thoughts and lay out their shots in creating videos.⁴

On the higher end of the technology spectrum, one group of students learned to use digital video to create and edit a series of vignettes, based on “Coming to America” (stories shot in Chicago with Bosnian refugees).⁵ Another group created a series of “How To” videos to demonstrate such things as how to change a flat tire and how to do traditional Mexican embroidery. A third class decided to do a short exposé: videotaping potholes in the parking lot that were filled with water. The group then confronted

flabbergasted officials in the city manager's office with the evidence - a real 60 Minutes moment that delighted students and teachers. Students also documented local art and artists on video and interviewed a successful small business owner of a local bakery that specializes in making "pan dulces" and cakes using family recipes from Mexico. Students were successful using storyboards to organize their shoots and became very proficient at uploading digital pictures and editing their videos on a computer.

PowerPoint is King

Students' absolute favorite tool for creating informational texts was PowerPoint. Initially, classes went wild trying out different fonts and colors, importing pictures and clip art from the Internet, creating fancy borders, and using sound and animation to make their presentations lively. Ultimately, however, a sense of design prevailed and students decided on a simpler format for their final products. With some initial training by the teachers, even beginning level students had few difficulties managing the multimedia capabilities of PowerPoint. The final products contained explorations into culture (alphabet books and poems about living on the border), a community mapping project, and research into hot topics, such as presentations on diabetes and an inquiry into the training possibilities available to displaced workers in El Paso.

Showcasing Projects for a Wider Community

The opportunity for students to "strut their stuff" in front of an audience beyond the classroom is an essential part of Project-Based Learning.⁶ We knew that through a showcase we could push students gently into using English in front of others - a significant challenge in a community where daily life can easily be negotiated using Spanish. Students worked in groups to get their projects ready for public display, practice their English presentation skills, and debate what final videos, plays and PowerPoints should look like. In the process, they spent many hours outside of class (sleepless nights and stomach aches were part of the process) to get both the language and the look and feel of the materials just right. Finally, it was SHOWTIME and students got a chance to showcase their work.

They presented their projects twice: at a special gathering of the school community where audience members included other parents and teachers as well as representatives from the school district, and a second showcase for teachers and coordinators in the wider El Paso area. Teachers asked that all the presentations be given in English since not everyone in the audience spoke Spanish, but students had the option to present in Spanish if they felt their English was not adequate (in earlier years all student presentations and talks had been in Spanish). Much to the surprise of the teachers and staff, all students elected to speak in English, taking turns and supporting each other.

Since this project was resource intensive, it might raise the question: was it cost effective to train adult literacy teachers and students for two years in using different ways of integrating technology into an existing curriculum? The positive student

(and teacher) outcomes answered with a resounding - yes! Materials, activities, lesson plans, and "how to" guides were developed by the team and are now available on a Web page. Student and teacher responses have been enthusiastic and fluency scores on a standardized BEST test were significantly higher than they had been for similar students in previous years.

In the weeks following the showcase, students who had never talked with school staff in English not only started responding in English, but actively sought out individuals so they could practice their English. Increasing their confidence and competence—and realizing that they could gain respect for their work from those outside of the classroom—quickly moved the students to a higher level of proficiency (a level not easily attained by most of these students in traditional learning).

What made the biggest difference ultimately? According to students and teachers: setting high expectations and gently pushing students into using English in front of an audience.

“Teaching with technology not only fosters engagement and develops confidence and competence in using new tools for learning but it also plays an important role in language and literacy development.”

This strategy established standards that students wanted to meet and could meet. Working as part of a group provided support and some healthy competition - since no one group wanted to be left out.

But most importantly,

the technology made it possible for students to create work that was not defined by their struggles with English and literacy, but by its content and creativity. Having the work itself take the spotlight took the pressure off having to give a speech in a new language in front of an audience. In the end, students were proud of the work they had accomplished. Using technology allowed them to create professional-looking products that surpassed the work generally done by literacy students and second language learners. For the displaced workers in particular, having high-end technology at their fingertips brought a newfound confidence, and "they were better than their teacher" in creating technology-mediated products. One student told their instructor, "Mr. M. - we like you, but when it comes to technology, you don't know jack." Students making the technology their own and in the process leapfrogging over the skills of their teachers may be the ultimate outcome of linking technology and adult literacy.

Border Civics

El Civics on the Border included several projects and promising practices. Additional examples can be found at www.bordercivics.org under "tools."

Alphabet Books for Adults

Students review a number of alphabet books and picture dictionaries to get a sense of the range of pictures and texts used in the books. Students are invited to create an alphabet book that reflects ideas and concepts important to them and to their community. Students brainstorm ideas and select

LINCS Special Collections

Electronic Gateways to Information

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The *LINCS* Special Collections (www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/collections.html) are one-stop electronic gateways to specialized information on high-quality literacy practices and materials. The Collections present annotated links to Internet sites useful for teaching and learning in the adult education and literacy field.

LINCS Special Collections are built around specific content areas, specific settings or contexts, and professional development topics. Each Special Collection is reviewed by a group of subject experts to guarantee the quality and timeliness of the resources.

Features common across all of the collections include:

- **Audience-based** — Based on the goals and objectives of the collection, every collection targets a specific audience(s).
- **Instructional** — Where applicable, the focus of the collections is to provide instructional resources.
- **Customized** — Each collection features subject specific and customized “Calendar of Events” and “News Flashes.”
- **Appropriate** — for students with lower level literacy skills. Currently available in most of the collections, this feature will be part of all collections soon.
- **Research-based** — New NIFL requirements include a focus on providing more research-based resources and *LINCS* is moving in this direction.

Currently, ten Special Collections provide valuable resources to adult literacy and education practitioners, program managers, and adult learners:

Assessment Collection focuses on resources regarding a variety of assessment types, assessment topics, and assessment instruments in Adult Basic Education/ABE and family literacy. Resources in the collection include: information on standardized assessment types, as well as alternative assessment (e.g., elements of authentic assessment/project based and reports from EFF Performance-Based Assessment). The Teacher/Tutor section of the collection highlights **Adventures in Assessment**, which is published by SABES, System for Adult Basic Education Support. Within the next few months, the collection will focus on providing instructional-based assessment resources.

Correctional Education provides a single access point for instructors and administrators who teach basic skills and literacy in a correctional setting. The site also provides information about the link between literacy and incarceration. One of the resources that the Collection features is the report from the U.S. Department of Education – Office of Correctional Education and the Correctional Education Association—**Three State Recidivism**

Study. The study was an exhaustive and methodologically rigorous test of the impact of education on the success of offenders upon release from prison. It tracked over 3,000 inmates from Maryland, Minnesota, and Ohio for a period of three years. Data were collected from a variety of sources including surveys of the participants and employment data from the state labor departments.

English as a Second Language includes access to high-quality ESL curricula, Web-based resources for instructors and learners, professional development reports, and statistics. The ESL Special Collection uses large icon buttons to identify different categories and graphics-based pages simplify the user’s experience, and lead to faster, more accurate searches. Another strength of the ESL Collection is its emphasis on over three dozen resources and materials that learners can access directly. The learner resources focus on multimedia materials, such as: Practicing Language, Citizenship and Immigration Information, and How to Do Things in the U.S. The “Materials for Classroom” section features resources for teachers and tutors on Civics, Using Technology, Immigration Issues, and Skills Practice.

Equipped for the Future provides information about EFF including the **EFF Content Framework** – which introduces the elements of the framework EFF used to develop the sixteen “EFF Content Standards for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning.” Since 1994, the National Institute for Literacy has led the EFF initiative to develop adult learning standards that can guide instruction and assessment and improve the quality and results of adult literacy programs.

The standards are the core tool EFF provides to organize and assess curriculum, instruction, and quality materials relevant to standards-based education and program improvement. The collection plans to

“Student/Learner resources are displayed with graphic images next to the resource titles and descriptions to help students in the selection process.”

add major new resources: EFF Tool Kit, an online resource for teachers containing instructional tools and supporting information along with examples of their use in learning activities; EFF Assessment Framework, including accounts of research, performance continua for the five communications skills standards, and resource information for using the Assessment Framework in instruction and system wide assessment. An additional resource contains EFF Reading Project information and materials, demonstrating support for the *Read with Understanding* reading research standard.

Family Literacy offers a rich resource collection and provides parents, family literacy practitioners, and family literacy program administrators access to a variety of materials related to parenting skills, instructional resources for parents and children working together, children's activities, and the classroom. The Practitioner section is organized according to the four components: Adult Education, Children's Education, Parent Time, and Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time. Many of the parent resources are interactive for parents and children. The Program Administrator section covers resources on Funding and Grant Writing Resources, Planning and Evaluating Family Literacy Programs, and the latest Research on Family Literacy.

Health & Literacy provides information on health curricula for literacy or ESOL classes, resources on basic health information presented in "easy to understand" language, information about the connections between literacy and health status, and links to organizations dedicated to health and literacy education. On the Health & Literacy Collection homepage, there is a link to over 150 interactive tutorials presented by MEDLINEplus—<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorial.html>. These tutorials, appropriate for lower level students, describe over a hundred health topics in an easy-to-read format, and utilize audio and illustrations. Students can listen to the text being read and look at the illustrations describing the topic while reading along. Teachers consistently rate the tutorials as very useful.

Literacy & Learning Disabilities showcases the Institute's "Bridges to Practice" project. This site provides a single point of access to information on Learning Disability/LD issues that are important to adults with LD and their families; adult education teachers and tutors; staff of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, One-Stop; and employers. The collection includes the latest news and research reports on LD, such as: *How do learning disabilities affect an English language learner? What are the problems in identifying LD in an ESL/ESOL learner? How can adult education programs support these learners?* The collection highlights stories and tips from adults who live with LD and links to **The Learning Toolbox**—<http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/> where students will find tools that will help them to become better learners. For educators, there are resources for Professional Development, such as the online distance learning series: **Teaching Reading and Writing to Adults Who Think and Learn Differently**—http://www.inlincs.org/page.asp?bd=ld&hd=ld_top.

Science & Numeracy contains content rich and comprehensive multimedia resources for teaching and learning about science and numeracy, especially for students working toward their GED. The Core Knowledge Group for this site consists of a team of scientists and educators with an interest in adult learning. The topics, which are arranged according to the National Education Standards in Science and in Numeracy, include many instructional guides, lessons and activities for both educators and students. "What is Science?"—a recently added feature—is a comprehensive resource that includes lessons and activities for the classroom. Eight research scientists and members of the Core Knowledge Group were interviewed and each addressed several questions regarding the nature of science and the reasons why they became scientists. The lessons and activities

can be found at: <http://literacynet.org/scienceLINC/whatissscience>. This lesson, which focuses on reading and writing, addresses the National Science Education Standard "The History and Nature of Science," which is one segment of the GED science exam. It also has a workplace focus, where scientists talk about the skills and abilities they need in order to do their work, and their likes and occasional frustrations with their jobs. Future plans include an audio component for low-level learners.

Technology Training utilizes multimedia and features a broad range of resources: using technology in teaching and learning, developing technology based resources, professional development topics, and training users on the **LINCS** system. The site enables Teachers/Tutors and Managers/Administrators to: improve their technology proficiency; and, access technology-based resources in curriculum development, online courses, software review/evaluation, technology planning, and Web-based tools. In addition, the collection offers a selection of resources for students. Learner resources are displayed with graphic images next to the resource titles and descriptions to help students in the selection process. By clicking on an audio/ speaker icon, students can hear the text of the title and have a description read to them. Depending upon their literacy level, students can use tutorials found in the Student/Learner category either with guidance from teachers/tutors or independently. Tutorial content ranges from "learning how to use a mouse and beginning keyboarding" to learning Word, PowerPoint, Access, Excel, effective search techniques, and Web page design.

Workforce Education focuses on the main issues related to workforce education, demonstrates the value of workforce learning, fosters and promotes the development of high-quality workforce education programs, and provides guidelines for planning and supporting these programs. The intended audiences for the collection are employed or unemployed workers, and those who seek to aid or encourage workers to upgrade their skills: workforce instructors, program administrators, Human Resources personnel, employers, case managers, unions, economic developers, state staff, and policymakers. An independent, unsolicited evaluation of the Workforce Education Special Collection rated the site "Superior for Innovation" and awarded ratings of Excellent in the categories of Effectiveness, Adaptability, Design, and Readability. ■

Most of the collections also link to an online discussion list on topics relevant to the subjects. The online discussion lists provide thousands of literacy stakeholders opportunities to discuss the literacy field's critical issues, share resources, experiences and ideas, ask questions of subject experts, and keep up to date on literacy issues.

To subscribe to any of the Institute's Discussion Lists, go to: http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/subscribe_all.html

Low-Tech to High-Tech, *continued from page 2*

worthwhile items to show and write about. They take pictures of the final items selected and write descriptions and why they are important. Alternatively, pictures can be selected from the Internet, but real pictures of students and their families are often much more powerful. Students select various fonts for their pages, trying to keep a similar look and feel for all pages in the final product. Pages are edited and bound together (e.g., spiral notebook) as a book to be shared.

Variations and follow-up: Artists could visit classes and discuss ideas with students and help them with their layouts. Alphabet books can also be created around foods and holidays, and recipes. Parents can read other alphabet books and decide what they like or don't like about them. They can read official reviews of bilingual books on www.amazon.com and select books they want to get from the library to read with their children. They can select their favorites, write short reviews, and post them on the [amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) Web site.

Artifact Activities

Following a discussion of local cultures and childhood memories, students are invited to bring in an artifact that represents their culture and has personal meaning for them. Examples might include: an instrument, a tool, food item, cooking implement or religious icon. Students then answer three questions about the item: "What is it and when is it used?" "What memories do you have about it?" "What do you want your children to know or remember about it?" Take pictures of individual students and their artifacts; print them and display them. Ask students to write a few sentences or a story about the artifacts, and add them to the pictures. Create a book or a Web page so that stories can be shared.

Variation and follow-up: In family literacy programs, parents create memory books for children, with the kids doing some of the illustrations. In workplace programs, participants discuss the tools they have used at work or present their favorite work tools to the rest of the class and describe and explain what they are and how they are used. Variations for adult ESL classes include asking students to bring in a favorite cooking implement, a gadget or a tool used in the house, the garage, or the garden. Teachers can bring in catalogues from stores and ask students to select a cool item they would love to buy if they had a gift certificate of \$100. Students describe and justify their choices and hold a vote for the "coolest tool."

Scenarios and Skits

Students discuss some of the problems they have had in stores or with service agencies. Alternatively, they read a short list of problems (see "I have a Problem" on the Bordercivics

Webpage) and discuss what they would do in each situation. Organize the problems that students generate into categories: everyday, work, legal, or community problems. Introduce scenarios from "Somebody Ought to Do Something" (www.bordercivics.org) and have students discuss issues and relate them to their own experiences. Ask students to generate some of their own ideas and role play what might happen (this allows students who work better without a written script initially to improvise.) Students can use video to document their skits. However, opportunities for live performances allows "students to shine" in different ways.

Variation and follow-up: Work with other teachers to decide which community agencies might send representatives to talk with students about community problems and issues. Have students work in a group to generate questions to ask; write down 5-10 questions to be shared with the community person. Consider developing a community map with your students that identifies where agencies are located in the area. If you are technologically savvy, create an interactive map that allows students to click on the name of the agency and see a short "pop up" description of services.

Storyboards to Demonstrate a Process

Ask students about the kinds of things they know how to make or fix that other people don't know about but might be interested in. For example, look on the Internet for examples on "how to do laundry" (maybe some students have always had someone else do it!) http://www.upenn.edu/resliv/laundry_howto.html or "how to cut a pineapple" <http://luauking.com/cutpine.html>.

Invite students to bring in materials to document a process that helps others learn. You could try making salsa or making tortillas from scratch using a tortilla press. Create a simple storyboard (a series of boxes laid out next to each other in a Word Document) and ask students to draw the steps they want to teach as part of a process. Ask students to add some key words to each part of the process to guide their work. They then lay out their materials and go through each step following the storyboard sequence. Part of the team takes pictures to illustrate each step and pictures are printed with short explanations. Posters of these processes are displayed for other students to see. Other examples might include "how to fix a flat tire, how to check oil in a car, how to give CPR, or how to treat a burn."

Variation and follow-up: Storyboards can be used in many different ways to help students decide on sequences and to lay the foundation for telling a story. Use storyboards to help students tell and illustrate their life stories, focusing on the key events in the students' lives. Use storyboard techniques to help students organize a skit or decide on key scenes to shoot in a video.

"Consider developing a community map with your students that identifies where agencies are located in the area. If you are technologically savvy, create an interactive map that allows students to click on the name of the agency and see a short 'pop up' description of services."

Low-Tech to High-Tech, *continued from page 5*

References

- ¹ See www.cyberstep.org/tesol.
- ² See an overview at <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/newsletr/sum00/sum00f.htm> and an article in Focus On Basics at <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/1998/wrigley.htm>. For the agenda and a hand-out on engaged learning through technology, see <http://cie.ci.swt.edu/interalt/handouts.html>.
- ³ To see a trailer of the video, check out http://www.viney.uk.com/resources/trailers/oia_trailer.htm.
- ⁴ I first heard Elsa Auerbach use that term. Ingles para defenderse - a phrase common on the border connotes both needing English to get along and English to make sure one does not get cheated or taken advantage of.
- ⁵ The videos were produced for the Coalition of English Speaking Elderly for a project funded by the Department of Education, the Illinois Retirement Research ..., and the Illinois Department of Human Services. See <http://www.clese.org/videos.htm> for both the video and teaching materials to use along with the video.
- ⁶ For an explanation of Project-Based learning and additional examples, see Wrigley (1998) Knowledge in Action in Focus on Basics along with related articles by Susan Gaer and Anson Green <http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fob/1998/wrigley.htm>.

just-in-time CIVICS on the border



program model

| [project](#) | [model](#) | [tools](#) | [contacts](#) | [learner stories](#) |

Engaged Learning Model

Builds on students' interests through projects, technology, and scenario-based problem solving

Our just-in-time approach to presenting learning opportunities is based on a student needs assessment, interest inventories, and goal setting. In this way, civics content is focused on issues that are compelling to students. Instructors stress real world contexts in which language and literacy are developed. Students work in groups to explore roles and responsibilities related to living in America and navigating the institutions that most impact their lives. They develop projects that involve interaction with their communities and put students in charge of their own learning. Through these projects, students gain:

- familiarity with resources and systems that influence their lives
- knowledge of their civic rights and responsibilities in their roles as family members, community members, and life-long learners
- access to resources and services and experience in navigating systems related to parenting, health, law, education, employment and finances
- opportunities to build "SCANS" skills through collaboration on projects and participation in other group activities
- perspective on how advocacy for change can impact the lives of individuals and groups

<http://www.bordercivics.org/pages/model.htm>

English For All: 50,000 People Worldwide Used This Free Web-based Multimedia ESL Program in 2003

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English For All (<http://www.myefa.org>) is a free Web-based multimedia system for adults learning English as a Second Language. Each day, an average of 500 learners and teachers spend about 30 minutes using the *English For All* Web site, which in the language of the Web adds up to a whopping 25,000 ‘hits’ per day!

The Web site is the core of *English For All’s* multimedia program. It features high-quality videos, reading and listening activities, and a quiz at the end of each lesson. The site also includes a simple e-mail tool for sending messages between the teacher and learners, and tracking of learner results. What makes the site so popular? Of course it helps that it’s all free, but according to both learners and teachers, it’s the videos that hold people’s interest and keep learners engaged. Each of the five stories features characters and situations that are relevant to the real-life concerns of ESL learners, and the quality of the video rivals a Hollywood production. “One of my favorite examples of how EFA lessons can impact students occurred after we had watched the episode about transferring foreign professional degrees,” says Caroline Bjorklund, a teacher in San Juan Unified School District in California. “When I asked some of the students why they had missed the following class, they explained that they had gone to speak to the international academic advisors at nearby universities about transferring their degrees! It’s pretty amazing how they latched on to that information and acted on it the very next day!”

English For All offers more than just good stories, however; it’s an effective learning tool, too. In a recent study comparing four learning approaches, the results for learners studying *English For All* online with an online instructor for several hours per week were second only to a classroom course using EFA materials that met for 15 hours a week. Furthermore, the online learners completed more episodes than learners in all other settings. The study compared pre and post-CASAS (the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) scores for learners in six settings, four using the *English For All* materials: a traditional classroom, a computer lab with a teacher available, the Web-based system, and an interactive cable television course. A second classroom and computer lab, not using the EFA materials, were included as control groups.

The table below summarizes the results:

Model	CASAS Gain	CASAS Benchmark Gain	Episode Test Completed @ 80%
Traditional Classroom	11	.93	38%
Lab	5	.69	38%
Online	5	.69	80%
TV Broadcast	/	/	74%
Control Classroom	4	.5	N/A
Control Lab	1	.62	N/A

Source: Porter, Dr. Paul, *English For All: Four Models of Delivery*, September, 2003

The study concluded “...that adult intermediate level ESL students in all models made better progress using *English For All* than did the control groups in classroom and lab settings using other curricula. It can also be concluded from this study that an online model using EFA in students’ homes is particularly effective in having students make progress through the program and successfully complete episode tests.”¹

In addition to formal conclusions based on quantitative data, several other important things were learned from interviews with staff and observation of learners as part of the study:

“The online model presented an appealing and popular alternative for students wishing to learn English. The flexibility of time, location, and self-pacing made enrolling in this model a competitive choice. Computer literacy seems to be an adjunct benefit for students using technology-associated models. Students in the online class reported great comfort with using computers, and students in the lab class were enthusiastic about their time in the lab.”²

“Project teachers reported that there were many instances of students commenting on their interest in and enjoyment of using the EFA program. While at school, students in the online model were noticed communicating with each other, discussing lessons, and generally being supportive and collegial in their learning. More peer support led to more practice in English skills. Study teachers indicated an increasing level of openness among more resistant instructors to the use of technology in

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instruction as a result of the project being at the school. The reluctant teachers saw that the participating students were enthusiastic about the online class, and that they made good progress in language acquisition.”³

English For All was developed as part of the Cyberstep Project funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Cyberstep is a partnership of four California literacy service innovators: The Sacramento County Office of Education, Los Angeles Unified School District, the Adult Literacy Media Alliance, and Aguirre International. The project has been pioneering the use of cutting edge technology to create and distribute multimedia learning materials for the hardest-to-serve ABE and ESL adult learners. To learn more about Cyberstep and the other ABE and ESL educational tools it has developed, visit the Cyberstep Web site at <http://www.cyberstep.org/>.

In addition to the *English For All* Web site, the EFA program includes five stand-alone videotapes, each containing four 15-minute programs, and five CD-ROMs designed to work with the EFA Web site. EFA lessons focus on a variety of life skills important to all refugees and immigrants, such as renting an apartment, reporting an unsafe condition at work, communicating with teenage children, and appearing before a judge. The characters in the five different story lines from various walks of life include Latinos, Russians, Africans and Asians.

Complete directions for obtaining the videotapes or CD-ROMs can be found on the EFA Web site. Print materials for EFA students and teachers are also available on the site as downloadable files in Portable Document Format (PDF) or in Rich Text Format (RTF, compatible with most word processors).

English For All incorporates California’s Model Standards for High-Beginning ESL and the Skill Modules of the Latino Adult Education Skills Project (LAES). To learn more, visit the LAES Web site at <http://www.otan.us/webfarm/laes/home.html/>.

Visitors to the *English For All* Web site are greeted by a home page designed to be simple enough for adult English language learners to navigate and use the site successfully. The homepage identifies the site immediately and simply as “A free site to help adults learn English.” There are only six navigation choices, and each is simply and clearly explained. The almost total lack of reported navigation problems despite many thousands of users is a good indication of the effectiveness of this approach.

Anyone can jump right in to the videos and learning activities, without registration or sign-in, just by clicking the ‘Visitor’ button. Visitors can do everything that registered learners can do, but records of completed activities and activity scores are not retained. There are five stories, each focusing on an aspect of life in contemporary America that would likely be of interest to adult English learners. Each story consists of four episodes, making available a total of twenty episodes with accompanying learning activities. Each episode begins with a video, which can be viewed alone or with the script.

There are five practice activities in each lesson. The items are selected from a pool of items, so that if a learner chooses to repeat an activity, the items will be different from the ones presented the first time. This is also true for the post-test at the end of each lesson. Upon completing an activity, learners are given immediate feedback and an opportunity to review the lesson, re-do the activity or move on to the next activity.

The screenshot shows the homepage for the English For All website. At the top left is the 'efa English For All' logo. To the right is a banner image of diverse people. Below the banner is a navigation bar with icons and labels: HOME, Learn More About EFA, Sign In, Visitor, Student Registration, Teacher Registration, and Questions and Answers. The main content area has a heading 'Welcome to English For All' and a sub-heading 'A free site to help adults learn English'. Below this is a table of navigation options:

Sign In	Already registered as a student or teacher? Sign in and begin.
Visitor	Don't have a class password? Go to lessons from here.
Student Registration	Want to register as a student? Get started today. (You must have a class name and password from your teacher to register.)
Teacher Registration	Want to register as a teacher? Create a class now.
Questions and Answers	Questions or problems? Find answers here.

Below the table, a message states: 'You'll need these free plugins to access all the features of English For All. If you don't have them, click on the buttons below to install:'. At the bottom are three buttons: 'GET Macromedia FLASH PLAYER', 'Get QuickTime Free Download', and 'Adobe Get Reader'.

The homepage for the English For All Web site (<http://www.myefa.org>)

English For All

Powered by Babulon.com All languages Go! My EFA Sign Out

Edit Profile | Teacher Guide | Manage Classes | Competencies | Email List | Print Materials | Preview Courses | Help

Currently signed in as: Teacher

Episode One Job and Career Advancement Introduction

(Turn off Text of Video)

WIZARD (to himself): (LAUGHS) I love coffee. Hmm, but it needs sugar. Oh, hello. Welcome to English for All where you will learn helpful English skills as well as important life skills -- like renting a place to live or looking for a job. In today's episode, you will learn how to talk about the things you like to do, the things you want to do, the things you need to do and the things you hate to do. Oh, let me give you an example.

I hate to drink black coffee.

(He grabs the sugar)

I want to make it sweet.

(He pours some sugar)

I need to add sugar.

I like to drink sweet coffee.

Today, you will also learn about job and career advancement. How do you find a job? Well, it's time for our story. Please pay close attention.

Continue

The video introduction to the first episode

Each lesson includes a listening discrimination activity, grammar practice, life skills reading practice, and critical thinking. In each lesson there is a choice point. For example, should the family sign the lease, or should they wait and look it over and be sure they understand it first? The learner makes a choice, and then views the results of that choice. He or she also has the opportunity to review what the results would be for the opposite choice.

Registered students are given their own personal homepage. It shows which episodes they have completed and provides a simple way for the student and teacher to exchange e-mail messages.

Teachers are able to review the progress of each of their students by using the class management tools on the teacher's personal homepage. These tools also allow teachers to change class information, open or close classes, view class rosters, delete students and send or read student e-mail messages.

The teacher's home page also provides access to a series of printable guides to EFA, quick links to ESL, LAES, CASAS and

SCANS competencies, a teacher newsgroup, and student print materials. Teachers can also view the videos and learning activities as seen by students. Future enhancements to the site will include a materials exchange area for teachers to contribute or find supplemental materials developed around the EFA program.

While the *English For All* Web site has proven to be an effective and popular learning tool on its own, the videotapes and print materials allow the program to be used successfully in a variety learning settings, either as core curriculum or supplemental material. In the words of one learner, *English For All* "is very good way for study and teaching." ■

References

- ¹ Porter, Dr. Paul, *English For All: Four Models of Delivery* September, 2003, p. 14.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Op. Cit., p. 15.

What do I need to use English For All?

You must have a computer with an Internet connection, sound card, video card, and speakers. English For All works best with:

- 200 MHz or faster computer with 64 MB or more RAM
- Either: 56 Kbps or faster Internet connection (*) and EFA videos on CD-ROM, or a sustained T1 line or faster to view videos online
- Windows (95, 98 ME, 2000, NT, XP) OR Macintosh (OS9, OS10 booted and running as OS9)
- Internet Explorer 5.5 or Netscape 6.0 or later
- Acrobat Reader, Quicktime Player, and Flash Player plug-ins

* The English For All CD-ROM should be used when possible for best quality and fastest loading of the video segments. You must have a printer to print the supplementary print materials.

Verizon Literacy Campus

Paula Meseroll

Freelance writer and a former editor for ProLiteracy America
Syracuse, NY

Editor's Note: ProLiteracy Worldwide and the National Center for Family Literacy recently changed the name of Verizon Literacy University to Verizon Literacy Campus (VLC). They added "Campus" to the title to better reflect VLC's mission – to be a resource for literacy-related information, linking literacy providers and the general public online.

Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers – Online Campus Offers Free Help

Verizon Literacy Campus (VLC), www.literacycampus.org, is a free, national online training resource for adult literacy and family literacy practitioners and prospective volunteers. Launched in 2002 and funded by Verizon Communications, VLC was designed by project partners ProLiteracy Worldwide and the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) to be a useful tool to help recruit, orient, and train literacy volunteers.

Visitors to the VLC site can learn about adult and family literacy, find out about the many volunteer opportunities in the literacy field, and take online courses in literacy and related subjects. The site provides a link to a comprehensive directory of literacy programs, which allows potential volunteers to locate the nearest adult or family literacy program. Literacy programs can download a customizable brochure, bookmarks, and flyers from the site to attract potential volunteers, or to inform current volunteers about the online courses and learning opportunities.

"Program managers from Texas, Pennsylvania, California and New York tell us that VLC is a valuable resource for the recruitment and training of volunteers," said Susan Ohlsen, VLC project manager for ProLiteracy Worldwide. "Programs are finding creative and productive ways to use VLC and the current courses. We will continue to add courses, making VLC an informative Web site for anyone who wants to learn about volunteering in literacy. Our goal is to make VLC a must-visit site for those who want to acquire the skills necessary to support literacy programs."

Susan McLean, executive director of Literacy Partners in New York City, notes that her program uses VLC in a number of ways. "We decided that for us, the best use of VLC is as a supporting tool for new and ongoing training," she said. "We now suggest to all prospective tutors that while they are waiting for the next training session, they can get a head start by going to VLC. We also use the brochure available on VLC and distribute copies to all prospective adult literacy tutors."

McLean expects that in the future, VLC will become even more useful as a volunteer recruitment tool.

"We are now starting to get referrals through the Internet," she said. "I expect and hope that VLC's online instruction can cover a wider range of instruction directed toward the 'seasoned' tutor. I find that VLC has a number of strengths: it's flexible,

self-paced, has potential growth areas, and is content driven."

Jane Rockwell, Eau Claire coordinator for Literacy Volunteers – Chippewa Valley, Eau Claire, Wis., finds VLC to be a convenient way to help volunteer tutors improve their teaching skills.

"We are always looking for ways to provide our tutors with in-services throughout the year, and it's very hard for some of them to come in to our offices for those in-services," she said. "We're hoping to start referring our volunteers to the VLC site to take courses. They can show us the certificate of completion, which they receive at the end of each course, and we can add the course to their in-service list. We would like to see our tutors be recertified each year. Participation in at least one in-service and a VLC course could be one way to do that, especially for those tutors with computers at home."

As tutor training coordinator, Rockwell holds pre-service trainings twice a year. Quite often, potential volunteers call the literacy program shortly after a training session has just ended and they have to wait about six months to take the next training. To keep the potential volunteers interested in the literacy program, and to give them a taste of what volunteering entails, Rockwell refers them to the VLC site. "They can learn more about tutoring and about literacy in general at VLC," she said. "It gives them a place to start."

Volunteers already working with students can use the courses on VLC to strengthen their teaching techniques, according to Rockwell. "They can brush up on the skills they may be a bit weak in," she said. "The 'Writing Without Fear' course is very helpful. Topics such as conversation practice ideas or learning disabilities, would be good – anything they can think of to add to the site that would be helpful to a tutor. A tutor could work at his or her own pace and not feel intimidated."

Margarete Cook, Chippewa County coordinator for Literacy Volunteers – Chippewa Valley, sees VLC as offering volunteers a wealth of information on a user-friendly site. "I think the site will be very useful once more courses are available for existing volunteers," she said. "It will be a good

resource for them, somewhere they can go for teaching tips if they are looking for ways to work with their adult learners."

Cook recently conducted a tutor in-service on computers, which focused in part on the VLC site. The tutors were asked to complete questionnaires about VLC and to offer their opinions on what kinds of courses should be included on the site.

"I can see VLC as being helpful to people who are new to an area and want to know what's available for volunteer opportunities in the community."

VLC can also inspire potential volunteers to contact their local literacy program, according to Cook.

“We find that our recruitment efforts are most successful through local church bulletins and word of mouth - our tutors talking to other people,” she said. “But I can see VLC as being helpful to people who are new to an area and want to know what’s available for volunteer opportunities in the community. They might be likely to go online if they don’t know of any local resources.”

Cook has visited the VLC site numerous times and encourages other literacy practitioners to do the same. “It should be stressed that VLC is in the early stages of development,” she said. “More courses are going to be available in the future. I think VLC will be a good resource and support for volunteers and tutors looking for additional tools to use in teaching students.”

To find out more about VLC and how it can support literacy programs, log on to www.literacycampus.org. Take the interactive tour and explore the resources in the Campus Center. The “Orientation to VLC for Program Staff” and “Orientation to Volunteering in Literacy” courses are good starting points for understanding how VLC courses can be integrated into orientation and training programs. ■

Verizon Literacy Campus (www.literacycampus.org)

Currently available self-paced courses, 30–60 minutes in length:

- Citizenship: What Volunteers Need to Know
- Culture and English Language Learners
- Connecting Families and Computers, Part I
- Family Literacy - An Intergenerational Approach to Learning
- Orientation to Verizon Literacy Campus for Program Staff
- Orientation to Volunteering in Literacy
- Parents and Children: Natural Learning Partners
- Succeeding as an Online Learner
- Supporting Children’s Education
- Volunteering in English Language Learner Literacy Classes
- Volunteers in Parent Education
- Writing Without Fear
- Working With Adult Literacy Learners

Distance Learning Teacher Sees Potential in VLC

Pattie Hogan, lead distance-learning teacher at OCM BOCES in Liverpool, N.Y., first learned about Verizon Literacy Campus (VLC) in the August, 2003 issue of *Connecting the World of Family Literacy*, a quarterly magazine published by the Family Literacy Alliance.

“My supervisor, Kathy Byrnes, gave me a copy of the magazine noting the VLC story, Learning Virtually,” Hogan said. “She asked me to check out the site and see what I thought of it.”

OCM BOCES distance-learning instructors send paper-based learning packets to adult basic education and GED preparation students, then talk to them on the telephone about what they learned and answer their questions. Hogan, whose own experience with online learning is limited, wanted to find out what it would be like for someone unfamiliar with computers to take a course through VLC. She logged on to the VLC site, and took the introductory course, Succeeding As an Online Learner.

“The course is self-paced, so you can go through it as quickly or slowly as you like,” Hogan said. “The course offered all kinds of nice things, such as a place to keep notes and the table of contents, which checked off each time you completed

a section. If you did have to stop working before finishing the course, when you signed back on, you could go immediately to where you left off. At the end, there was a course completion certificate, which is always good – a little encouragement to keep going with learning online.”

Although VLC courses are designed for staff and volunteers, Hogan found some of the courses, especially Succeeding As an Online Learner and Writing Without Fear suitable for adult learners in her ABE and GED prep distance-learning program.

She also believes that VLC will prove helpful for staff development for new teachers and literacy volunteers.

“I would have all my instructors take the writing course themselves and utilize those activities, then have students take it when they felt comfortable with taking a course online.” she said.

“And how cool that Verizon Literacy Campus is free.”

Celebrating 10 Years of Enhancing Adult Literacy Through Technology

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Ohio Literacy Resource Center (OLRC) it's fascinating to look back on the changes in technology since OLRC's inception. Ten years ago, the Internet was in its infancy – there were no local program Websites, teachers using the Web to locate instructional materials, or online discussion groups linking a tutor in Washington to a tutor in Florida. The OLRC started with a single e-mail account on a then-revolutionary mainframe system and a Gopher search. This year, from January to October alone, our Websites have accounted for over 1.3 million page views from 354,000 visitors.

Adult education often lags behind other educational domains when it comes to technology. Issues such as funding, available time for teachers, student persistence in programs, and a lack of age-appropriate technology-based materials all contribute to the slower integration of technology into adult education classrooms.

It's natural to assume that "integrating technology" means using computer-based educational software. However, the term "technology" includes not only educational software, but also Internet-based sites and applications, video and audio applications, and distance learning. These media can be successfully integrated into classrooms, providing teachers and students with a range of teaching and learning modes that can be customized to meet the needs of each.

During its ten years working with programs and developing resources, the OLRC has worked with a number of partners, created materials for ABLE teachers, and participated in pilot projects to evaluate the benefits of resources for use in the adult literacy classrooms. Project IDEAL, Madison Heights/ Lifelines and Eureka! Database are three programs which use very different technologies to provide teachers with resources to enhance and augment their teaching.

Distance Learning: Project IDEAL

*Kimberly McCoy, OLRC Distance Learning Coordinator
(kmccoy@literacy.kent.edu)*

Adult students often find it difficult to attend traditional classes due to work schedules, childcare responsibilities, or childcare difficulties. Distance learning has the potential to meet more students' needs. Project IDEAL is a program funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Adult and Vocational Education (OVAE) and managed by the University of Michigan. Fourteen other states are also participating in the pilot study. With "learning outside the traditional classroom" being the delivery method, each state has chosen at least one existing curriculum to deliver via distance learning. Ohio chose to use GED Connection as the instructional content for the pilot study. GED Connection, developed jointly by PBS, Kentucky Educational Television/KET, and the National Center on Adult

Literacy/ NCAL, includes 39 half-hour video programs, 3 full-color workbooks, Web-based learning activities, a teacher's guide, and an online management system.

Fourteen Ohio ABLE (Adult Basic and Literacy Education) programs submitted grant proposals for inclusion in the pilot program and seven programs representing a variety of communities were selected. Pilots received \$19,500 in additional funding from the Ohio Department of Education ABLE Office for teacher salaries and benefits, supplies, meeting and training expenses, and a limited offset to director/coordinator salary. The grant supplement allowed programs some flexibility in recruiting and retaining students for a distance learning model without having to be concerned with decreasing enrollments in regular, non-distance classes. A goal was set to recruit 100 new distance learning students across all seven programs.

Staff from the pilot programs attended a three-day training to learn GED Connection, its online management system, and data reporting required by the national Project IDEAL office. Pilot staff also participated in a distance learning course for continuing professional development. Sites began recruiting distance learners in January of 2003 and continued until June, 2003 when the grant year formally ended.

As potential distance learners inquired about the program, they were required to attend a face-to-face orientation at an Ohio ABLE program (although not necessarily the same program providing the distance learning component). Students accepted into the program had to meet certain requirements for participation: NRS (National Reporting System) assessment level of Low or High Adult Secondary Education, computer skills, and Internet access.

Pilot sites used a variety of methods to provide distance learning instruction; a "partial distance program," in which distance learning was augmented with limited face-to-face interaction between teacher and student; regular classroom supplements to distance education; and "pure distance" education with teachers and students interacting only by phone or online.

Although still in the pilot phase, Ohio's Project IDEAL programs have provided significant technical data and anecdotal information about their projects and students. At the close of the grant period in June, 2003, 215 students had 12 or more seat hours, excluding orientation time, and 197 students had met their stated goals. Demographic data shows that the majority of students were in the 25-to-44-year old age range, white, female, and employed.

"The majority of students that participated would not have wanted to or been able to attend traditional classes. Distance learning offered a real option for these students."

Most teachers felt that, due to a number of reasons, the majority of students that participated would not have wanted to or been able to attend traditional classes. Distance learning offered a real option for these students. Ohio's Project IDEAL continues this fiscal year with programs increasing their recruitment goals and gathering additional data for the study. Visit Ohio's Project IDEAL at literacy.kent.edu/ideal.

Video Supplements for Instruction: Madison Heights and LifeLines

Connie Sapin, OLRC Project Director
(csapin@literacy.kent.edu)

The Madison Heights and LifeLines series are projects of Intelcom, designed for use in adult literacy programs to promote change in family settings. In 2002, nine states contributed to the design and development of the two series, which include over twenty videotapes and supporting materials. The video series consist of dramatic videos (Madison Heights) and documentaries (LifeLines); teacher resource books and handout masters are available to supplement the video/workbook products.

In the fall of 2002, Ohio released a request for proposals to programs which had Ohio ABLE-approved and funded Family Literacy components. Six programs became pilot sites. The goals of the pilot and curriculum were to provide experiences that: help adults improve their literacy and problem solving skills; help adults enhance their self-esteem and improve their ability to interact with others; help adults in their roles as parents and caregivers; provide ideas for age-appropriate interactive activities; and provide experience to help adults with their own needs and those of their families.

Programs were awarded \$8,000 grants to offset teacher time for instructional support, materials, travel expenses, marketing, or other project costs. Program staff participated in a two-day training in January, 2003 which provided a walk-through of the curriculum, videos, and "worktexts." An administrative overview, for program staff, covered implementation issues: student assessment, reporting, and accountability.

Programs began recruiting students after the initial training and worked with with them through the close of the grant and pilot phase in June, 2003. Because of the integrated design of the materials – videos, worktexts, handouts – teachers could customize instruction and activities based on students' needs. Videos could be watched at the program site, in a library, or in a student's home; paper-based materials could be used in the same way.

Two teachers who participated in the program, Barb Nourse (Scioto County) and Cindy Smith (Kettering), developed an Implementation Guide for the project. This Guide, along with the videotapes and materials were distributed to all Ohio programs with approved Family Literacy components at the end of the pilot.

The Madison Heights/LifeLines materials and content were very well-received by students. Most liked the flexibility that the integrated design provided. The videos deal with emotionally intense subjects that often elicited strong responses from viewers. Teachers reported that the subject matter and students' responses

produced in-depth and very meaningful discussion and a sense of community within the classroom.

The use of integrated curriculum provides a viable and economically feasible option for programs that want to supplement existing instruction with technology-based materials.

Online Database Supplement for Instruction: Eureka!

Dianna Baycich, Eureka! Project Coordinator
(dbaycich@literacy.kent.edu)
Connie Sapin, Tradebooks Project Coordinator
(csapin@literacy.kent.edu)

In 1995, the OLRC began the Recommended Tradebooks for Adult Literacy Programs project, evaluating authentic literature for use in adult literacy classrooms. We convened the Reading Group, a set of educators who read, evaluated, and provided audience and instructional information for inclusion in a print digest. Several years into the project, a hierarchy of keywords was begun in an attempt to classify and categorize the 300+ books that had been added to the collection. The discussion of "keywords" led to a decision to convert the print catalog into

an online, searchable database.

In 1999, during a brainstorming session, the OLRC decided that the while it was converting the Tradebooks project to an online version, the collection and keyword search results could be

enhanced by adding Websites, software, and lesson plans to the extensive set of books available for the database. This collection could be a one-stop, searchable Website that would provide a rich set of materials for adult education teachers. And, Eureka! was born.

The first step in designing Eureka! was the creation of the hierarchical search mechanism: the keyword search that has become the focal point of the system. Existing keywords were standardized, grouped, and evaluated. Keywords were arranged into logical groups, eventually resulting in 22 categories and nearly 1,000 keywords.

This Web-based resource allows users to search by keyword, top-level category, audience, and GED descriptor to find educator-reviewed resources: books, Websites, software, and lesson plans appropriate for adult and family literacy programs. Each type of resource has a specific page detailing publication information, Web addresses, and file links to lesson plans. Summaries, teaching suggestions, and relevant keywords for the resource item are also included. One of the most powerful features of Eureka! is the ability to run searches from the keywords on resource detail pages.

The Eureka! database search is now OLRC's most popular Web-based resource with nearly 50,000 searches conducted over a 10 month period in 2003. Eureka! can be accessed at <http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka>. ■

“Adult students often find it difficult to attend traditional classes due to work schedules, childcare responsibilities, or childcare difficulties. Distance learning, therefore could meet more students’ needs.”

Websites for Low-literate and Other Underserved Adults

David J. Rosen
Newsome Associates
Jamaica Plain, MA

A few years ago an adult learner asked: "If the Web is like a huge library, where is the adult new reader section?" A good question. Now we have several answers, and a good evaluation tool for adult literacy practitioners to use as they build a collection of Web-based reading resources for their students.

A New Website Evaluation Tool

In March, 2000, The Children's Partnership published a landmark study, *Online Content for Low-Income and Underserved Americans, The Digital Divide's New Frontier* (free pdf download at <http://www.childrenspartnership.org/>).

The study looked at content on the Web for those on the other side of the digital divide: low-income and/or low-literacy adults and families, adults with limited education, with limited English, those who are racial or ethnic minorities and/or those who live in rural communities. The study identified the few Websites that were then available for low-literacy adults.

In October, 2003, The Children's Partnership published *The Search for High-Quality Online Content for Low-Income and Underserved Communities: Evaluating and Producing What's Needed* (free pdf download at http://www.contentbank.org/addition_research.asp).

This study is both an issue brief and an action plan. It focuses on evaluating and producing "low-barrier" Web-based content for adults and families who want to use the Web but have been daunted by its high reading level, confusing design, lack of information reliability, lack of sites in their first language, and other issues. The study points to a growing consensus on a set of evaluation criteria for underserved populations. In Chapter Four, and in the research appendices, it describes the development of an evaluation instrument and includes a free downloadable version, "Guidelines for Content Creation and Evaluation." This evaluation instrument can help the staff of community-based organizations and adult literacy tutors and teachers evaluate Websites for their clients or students. The instrument was based on an analysis of over 100 examples of content evaluation guidelines from education, online privacy, usability, consumer rights, accessibility, health, limited literacy, and cultural content areas. The publication's goal is to help people who

want to select and/or create "low-barrier" Web content – for – "the 50 million Americans who because of their limited-literacy and English skills, cultural backgrounds, or disabilities, are poorly served by online content today."

"This evaluation instrument can help the staff of community-based organizations and adult literacy tutors and teachers evaluate Websites for their clients and students."

The Guidelines include basic criteria for all Websites such as clearly identified sponsorship, as well as topics of particular interest to underserved communities. The Guidelines also include criteria for low-barrier Websites: literacy level and language(s) of text, accessibility to individuals with disabilities, cultural focus of content, geographic specificity of content, and cost of access and use. And, they include requirements for high quality Websites, e.g., privacy, reliable information, good presentation, interactivity and technical quality. The Guidelines are straightforward, easy-to-use, include clear and specific questions, and have a simple scoring system.

This tool could be used in many ways by teachers or tutors – and adult learners with teachers or tutors. Here are four suggestions:

- 1) To increase "media literacy skills." A tutor or teacher and student(s) could use these guidelines to evaluate two or three Web sites with the goal of becoming more sophisticated about what to look for in good, reliable, easy-to-use Websites.
- 2) A group of teachers at a program, or from several programs could learn to use the guidelines together in a workshop and could evaluate several Websites, compile the evaluations, and develop their own "adult new reader Web portal."
- 3) Teachers or tutors who are interested in developing their own Websites for students or other community members, could use the guidelines to ensure their Web content is user-friendly for low-literate adults.
- 4) Teachers – or others – could use the guidelines to help local government officials understand the criteria that would make their Websites "low-barrier" to all community members.

Low-barrier Web-based Resources

For tutors and teachers who do not have time to evaluate Websites themselves, there are several useful low-barrier Website portals for adult new readers, adult basic education and adult secondary education students, and others who may have difficulty reading English. A Website portal is like an annotated collection of reviewed Websites which meet certain criteria. Teachers and tutors can also find useful resources at these sites.

Firstfind.info

<http://www.firstfind.info>

This is a collection of Websites, all with content “in plain English,” chosen by New York City and Westchester County public librarians using Web content criteria similar to The Children’s Partnership guidelines. It is intended for adult public library users who may have difficulty reading English. FirstFind provides basic information about a wide range of high interest topics for adults, including: local (New York City) information computers and technology, education, family, government, health, history, housing, immigration, jobs/ job training, legal issues, magazines online, money matters, and transportation/ travel.

Contentbank.org

<http://www.contentbank.org>

Contentbank’s “Online Resources Section” includes user-recommended Websites in the following topic areas: housing, jobs, education, legal services, health, cultural perspectives, and community technology.

While the Websites are not necessarily written at a low literacy level, they provide a range of resources for adults, youth, children, communities and may be useful to ABE and GED teachers.

Learning Resources

<http://literacynet.org/cnnsf/>

Learning Resources offers web-delivered instruction using current and past CNN San Francisco bureau news stories. Western/Pacific LINCS (part of the National Institute for Literacy’s LINCS Project), LiteracyWorks, and CNN’s San Francisco bureau partnered to develop an online literacy site that benefits all learners and instructors. Learning Resources intended audience is adults and tutors/teachers but learners of all ages are encouraged to use this material to promote better literacy.

Modules include the full text of each story and interactive activities to test comprehension. The learner can choose to read the text, listen to the text, and view a short video clip of the story. Modules are designed so that a learner can use them independently. An instructor can incorporate any story into class activities, tutoring, and lesson plans.

A multimedia format helps with clues so a reader can get meaning from the text. Stories can be read in a full or abridged version and in outline form. An important feature for literacy students is that they can listen to a story read aloud or watch it as a video. Afterwards, exercises test vocabulary and reading comprehension, and allow the student “to write her own ending.” The learning experience involves many different components to assist a new reader.

California Distance Learning Project

<http://www.cdlponline.org/>

The goal of the California Distance Learning Project (CDLP) is to help expand learner access to adult basic education services. Web pages include links for listening to written text. Links include: News Stories; Family, Community and Work; ESL Connection Online; Workplace ESL Online; How To Vote; How To Be Heard, Safe Streets; Employment Application; How To Get a Job; California E-Mail Project.

The Key, A Newspaper For New Readers

<http://www.keynews.org/>

This online newspaper for adult new readers includes world, U.S. and state news; articles on education, science, jobs, money, family, sports and leisure; as well as lesson plans for teachers. Key News contains an extensive archive of stories that can easily be printed for students.

City Family Magazine

<http://www.cityfamily.org/v2/cicityFamily.asp>

Initially, *City Family* was a magazine for immigrant and working families and was disseminated to health centers and other places in New York City. Now on the Web, and although still with a New York City focus, many of the articles will also be of interest to adult learners from other parts of the country. Topics include: news, health, U.S. publicly-funded social service and education programs, home feature articles, money, education, work, fun and advice. ■

David J. Rosen provides workshops for educational groups who want to use the “Content Creation and Evaluation Guidelines” to review Websites and write Website evaluations which can be compiled into “Webliographies” or low-barrier portals (drosen@comcast.com – 617-522-7020).

ONLINE CONTENT FOR
LOW-INCOME AND UNDERSERVED AMERICANS
The Digital Divide’s New Frontier

http://www.childrenspartnership.org/pub/low_income/index.html

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
THE DIGITAL DIVIDE’S
NEW FRONTIER**

Computers and the Internet are revolutionizing the ways people learn, communicate, and earn a living. Yet study after study has shown that America faces a significant and troubling “digital divide” between those who have access to online information and opportunities and those who do not. While this digital divide has received a lot of attention from the press, policymakers, and the Internet industry, an important aspect has been neglected: content. This new dimension of the digital divide is beginning to take shape, however— and is having a profound impact on young people and those who guide and teach them.

“A website portal is like an annotated collection of reviewed Websites which meet certain criteria. Teachers and tutors can also find useful resources at these sites.”

From the Editor's Desk

Web-Based Resources for Supporting Adult Education at a Distance

Along with *English for All*, here are some other Web resources recommended and annotated by John Fleischman, Executive Director, Outreach & Technical Assistance Network, Sacramento County Office of Education:

Activities for ESL Students

<http://a4esl.org>

Over 1,000 activities including grammar and vocabulary quizzes, crossword puzzles, and quiz building tools.

AwesomeStories.com

<http://www.awesomestories.com/index2.htm>

AwesomeStories.com is comprised of stories behind famous events, legends, people, heroes and movies that help learners examine primary source materials.

The BetterReader Online

<http://www.betterreader.com>

The product is made up of interactive activities that allow adults to increase comprehension, vocabulary, and reading efficiency.

English as a Second Language

<http://www.rong-chang.com>

One of the best starting points for ESL learners who want to learn English through the Web.

Englishpage.com

<http://www.englishpage.com>

Free online English lessons and ESL & EFL resources.

E-square

<http://www.alri.org/esquare>

This is an "electronic square" or village designed for adult learners with low basic literacy skills. There are a number of storefronts (health center, jobs center, library, family center, computer center, early childhood center, community arts center, home buying and rentals center) with low-literacy content inside; much of it written by adult new readers and writers.

The Learning Edge

<http://www.thewclc.ca/edge>

The Learning Edge is a project of the Wellington County Learning Centre in Arthur, Ontario, Canada, in partnership with AlphaPlus/AlphaRoute. The site offers adult life skills content with excellent audio support.

LiteracyLink

<http://www.pbs.org/literacy>

Workplace Essential Skills is a training resource that combines video, print, and Web learning. The series is designed for adults who don't have a job as well as those who wish to move from entry-level work to higher paying positions and careers.

Randall's Cyber Listening Lab

<http://www.esl-lab.com>

Lots of great interactive lessons using RealPlayer.

Read TV News

<http://www.readtvnews.org>

Read TV News uses topical content as a way to provide basic skills instruction in a manner that is meaningful and motivational for adult learners.

The Study Place

<http://www.thestudyplace.org>

A resource from the Cyberstep Project that offers a very simple process for developing Web-based multimedia learning materials.

TV411

<http://www.tv411.org>

TV411 is a series of award winning videos that focus on basic skills for adult learners. The TV411 Web site offers interactive exercises that are correlated to the video programs. ■

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