

Nevada LD expert presents at international conference

Dee Dee Bossart, program implementation officer for Northern Nevada Literacy Council and master trainer for the Bridges to Practice approach to learning disabilities (LD), presented at the Learning Disabilities Association annual international conference in March.

She first sat on a panel of experts to discuss issues regarding adults with learning disabilities. "Even though I've had 20 years of experience in the field, I was apprehensive about sitting with that group," said Dee Dee. "Moderator Nancy Payne, Attorney Pat Latham, Nurse Connie Parr, and educators Rich Collins and Rob Crawford were experts in more than their professions — each either has a learning disability or someone in their family does."

Dee Dee also co-presented "Impacting the Quality of Life through Positive Behavioral Support (PBS)" with Don Jackson, Ph.D., director of psychological services for Sierra Regional Center and project director at Positive Behavioral Support-Nevada. The two-hour presentation focused on the impact the positive approach to behavioral change has had on persons with disabilities, helping them achieve and maintain the highest level of independence possible. Dee Dee is also a member of the PBS statewide team.

"The presentation was easier to do," said Dee Dee, "because I could anticipate some of the questions, and Dr. Jackson and I could blend our ideas and activities."

Dee Dee has been attending and presenting at conferences for several years. An admitted "ham," Dee Dee has a degree in dance movement therapy and extensive stage experience. "I started at the age of five and I've been singing, dancing, acting, and directing ever since. It's gratifying to draw on my theatrical background to educate people about LD," she said.

She'll likely have even more opportunities. That panel discussion she was so worried about? After it ended, Nancy Payne, who is highly regarded internationally in the LD field, suggested Dee Dee continue to be out front (and on stage!).



Forget the whales — save adult education funding

Editor: Sharyn Yanoshak
Phone: 702/253-6280
Fax: 702/651-4538
E-mail: saylv@cox.net

Community College of Southern Nevada
3200 E. Cheyenne Ave. – K1B
North Las Vegas, NV 89030

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As President Bush and federal legislators work out budgeting and appropriations issues, federal funding for adult education is "on the line" with proposals for serious funding cuts. You can help, by making your support known in your communities and to your senators and representatives. Some actions you can take:

- √ Contact local newspapers and media outlets and tell your story. For example, the *Nevada Appeal* (www.nevadaappeal.com) printed an article by Teri Zutter, ABE program director at Western Nevada Community College on March 2.
- √ Contact Senators Reid and Ensign (www.senate.gov) and your representative (www.house.gov)
- √ Have your students write letters, too — they can be the most persuasive!

Apply brain-based research in the adult classroom

One of Nevada's favorite workshop presenters, Dr. Joan Cook of Montana State University, provided the following summary of nine principles drawn from brain-based research and their implications for teaching and learning. Dr. Cook can be reached at joan-cook@montana.edu, 406-994-5950.

For the past 20 years, educators have witnessed a dramatic shift in beliefs about the fundamental goals and strategies of education, as well as a deeper yearning to understand how people learn. These educational shifts are driving new research on how the brain works and how learning can best take place.

Geoffrey and Renate Caine (1991) are widely recognized for their original work on brain-based research and its implications for educators. The Caines developed nine principles of learning upon which many others have elaborated (Clark, 1997; Park, 2002; Reardon, 1999; Sousa, 2001; Sylwester, 1995)

Principle	Implications for educators
1. The brain is a parallel processor that can do many things at one time.	Use a variety of teaching methods to encompass the variations of learners' brains: role-playing, simulations, lecture, and hands-on projects. Use pictures, charts, colorful posters, and multi-sensory immersion.
2. The learning brain uses input from the entire body. Things which affect one's physiology will also affect one's learning.	Incorporate multi-sensory experiences in which learners can become immersed. Use live experiences, film, reading, sound, movement, pictures, and song.
3. The brain naturally tries to find patterns and categories in which to store new information. The greater the number of connections, the greater the number of associations the brain elicits and the more firmly the information is neurologically woven in. (Reardon, 1999, p. 14)	Relate new learning to past experiences and prior knowledge. Help learners make connections to what they already know about the topic. Immerse them in rich, thematic environments. Use visual, auditory, and kinesthetic involvement. Reinforce connections by creating opportunities for learners to teach what they know about the topic.
4. Emotions are critical to the method in which the brain stores information and to the ways in which we recall our experiences.	Create an environment that is challenging, engaging, respectful, and enjoyable. Use activities that release tension, increase rapport, and provide for peer discussion and a chance to express emotions. Provide positive reinforcement by acknowledging and celebrating success.
5. The brain processes parts (small pieces) and wholes (larger relationships) simultaneously.	Provide overviews of the lesson. Follow a sequence of steps for learning that builds understanding and skills over time. Show the big picture as well as the details. Concept/mind mapping provides a visual picture of relationships.
6. The brain absorbs that to which it gives direct attention; it is also aware of what is going on in the periphery.	For adults, the brain remains attentive for 20-25 minutes, then a break or diffusion activity (e.g., peer discussion, reflection time, writing, etc.) should be given. Post charts and diagrams, color-code related information, and use background music if learners desire. Model enthusiasm and interest in the subject.
7. Facts and skills embedded in contextual memory are remembered more quickly. Contextual information is stored according to relationships, associations, and circumstances.	Teach memory skills such as mnemonics, pegs, link, and rhythm. Tell stories with intensity—use role-playing, dramatics, and body motions. Include humor and metaphors. Use real-life activities such as field trips, visual imagery projects, and demonstrations integrated with content area skills (reading, math, art, science, etc.) to help the brain absorb more than would normally be learned. Review in a variety of ways to strengthen the current neural connections and build additional pathways. (Reardon, 1999, p. 16)
8. Learning is inhibited by threat and enhanced by challenge. The brain becomes less flexible and more primitive when faced with threat.	The brain processes emotions before processing cognitive information. Create an atmosphere of relaxed alertness that continuously provides an element of challenge. Materials should be selected with care to match that of the learners' ability level — beyond rather than below the level of abilities.
9. Each brain is unique. Emotions and senses are integrated in different ways in every brain.	Every adult has had different experiences which affect learning. Teaching should provide multiple avenues in which the student can interact visually, emotionally, and tactilely. Providing choices that are variable enough to attract individual interests ... may facilitate optimal brain functioning. (Caine & Caine, 1991, p. 87)

Key upcoming conferences and trainings



Commission on Adult Basic Education

National conference with five strands, more than forty topic areas.

Information: www.coabe05.org

Registration: ProLiteracy America,

Steve Prantalos, 714/536-7354

coabe@literacyprogram.org

May 4-7

Anaheim, CA

sprantalos@socal.rr.com

315/422-9121, ext. 378

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.

—Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Mountain Plains Adult Education Association

Eight Mountain Plains states “uncover the past, discover the future.”

April 14-16

Jackson Hole, WY.

www.mpaea.org mclark@wwcc.wy.edu, 307/877-6958



Free, full-day, practical, hands-on training on how to launch a successful, research-based family literacy program in your community. Participants will receive manuals, video, and home activity packets. Who should attend: Staff from programs or CBO (community-based organization) projects currently offering ELL or ESL programs to adults with preschool children. Must register: 800/445-9673 or 775/684-3340.

April 20: Mineral County Library, Hawthorne

May 6: Henderson District Public Libraries, Paseo Verde branch

May 13: Humboldt County Library, Winnemucca

Parents, Children, and Reading: What Works?

Source: Darling, S., & Westberg, L. (2004). Parent involvement in children's acquisition of reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 57, 774-776.

Parents in family literacy programs are often urged to read to and with their young children. Certainly children's school teachers frequently make this recommendation as well. But is the suggestion to read aloud or listen to a child read enough? With financial support from NIFL (the National Institute for Literacy), researchers at the National Center for Family Literacy explored this question. They conducted a meta-analysis (a study of studies) that focused on parent-child reading (or reading-related) activities. Their search for research in this area led to 20 studies. Findings show:

- Using “specific exercises” produced greater results than having parents simply listen to their children read (whether or not parents were taught how to listen).
- Teaching parents how to listen to their children read was twice as effective as simply telling them to listen.
- Instructional interventions that were relatively short (4 months or less) worked best.
- Parent involvement had a positive effect on K-3 children.

Results of this study can be useful in family literacy programs. First, program personnel may want to assess current practices. What sort of parent-child reading instruction is currently provided? If necessary, a program for helping parents help children can be developed. Such a program should extend beyond simple exhortations to read and listen to children. It should also address issues related to how children learn to read so that parents can be informed partners in their children's education.

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April workshops for adult educators in Nevada

ABE leadership funds continue to provide in-depth training on a variety of timely subjects in support of the goals of the Nevada Five-year State Plan for Adult Basic Education. These free workshops are available at no cost on a space-available space. Contact the host to reserve your spot!

<u>Title/date/place</u>	<u>Host (contact)</u>	<u>Presenter and objectives</u>
Research To Practice - Reading Strategies That Work 4/8/05; Las Vegas	Connie Barker C.A.L.L. 702/507-3534 barkerm@lvccld.org	Wendy Campbell. Define Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) and explore the five reading components identified by the National Reading Panel. Explain why teaching these reading components is important to everyone in our ABE programs. Provide several practical strategies teachers can easily use to incorporate the five reading components into their teaching practice.
What's New in Adult Teaching? 4/8/05; Elko	Meachell LaSalle Great Basin College 775/753-2109 meachell@gbcnv.edu	Don Prickel. Examine current myths and realities associated with teaching adults. Use learning style analyses to design improved learner-centered instruction. Apply at least two learner-centered strategies to the teaching of adult learners.
Who is 'Learning Disabled'? You, Me or They: Teaching Strategies for the Adult Classroom 4/29/05; Las Vegas	Lyn Pizor Churchwright Multicultural Ctr. 702/434-6858 lyn@churchwright.org	Don Prickel. Construct a current perspective on the component variables of a learning disabled adult, given current research. Develop a set of informal classroom techniques for assessing learning disabilities in adults. Apply at least two effective cognitive strategies for improving the learning of challenged adults.
Who is 'Learning Disabled'? 4/30/05; Sparks	Rex Newell Northern NV Literacy Council 775/356-1007 instructorcoord@nnlc.org	See 4/29/05.