

Guiding Principles

By Mary Katherine Moen, State Director of Adult Education, mkmoen@doe.nv.gov, 775/687-9167

Innovation—We encourage creative ideas and support the integration of research and best practices. —*Nevada Adult Basic Education Directors, 2004*

Years ago I worked in a community college in another state. The president of the college began a process of organizational development, a multi-faceted approach to problem-solving and improvement so the college could more quickly and efficiently meet the needs of its students and the community. About six months into the process, the president called a college-wide staff meeting. After we all were assembled, he said, “You are not making enough mistakes!”

He explained to the astonished group that innovation requires trying new things, doing old things differently. Trying new things, he said, would result in some positive outcomes and some not so positive. But if we weren’t making mistakes, we weren’t being innovative.

While I am not advocating that we all start “goofing up,” I do believe wholeheartedly that, as Henry Ford said, “Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.” And so we value creativity and new endeavors in Nevada’s ABE/ESL community. Many work well. For example:

- ◆ Nevada has the only outcome-based Certificate of Performance in the country. The Certificate recognizes proven competence and performance in the classroom or tutoring environment. It is based on demonstrated proficiency in achieving outcomes in support of the Nevada State Plan and/or program grant objectives. To date, 130 teachers and tutors have received Certificates of Performance.
- ◆ The program administrator at Great Basin College co-developed and co-teaches a rural “Bridges” class, leading the way to increased postsecondary education outcomes for the state.
- ◆ An administrator at Truckee Meadows Community College, working with other states on developing content standards, modified the group’s product for Nevada.
- ◆ A collaborative research project is being conducted by University of Nevada, Reno’s Center for Program Evaluation and Partnership Development and the Northern Nevada Literacy Council. The Council’s ESL Pronunciation (phonics) curriculum is the focus of the study, whose purpose is to establish the curriculum is research-based.

Since 1997, special leadership funds for innovation have been available to teachers, tutors, and administrators. Examples of funded projects include a tuition credit award program, literature circles, teaching literacy through the performing arts (to incarcerated students!), a job readiness curriculum for ESL students, a science curriculum for GED students, and a reading research project. Many of these products have been incorporated into the ABE/ESL system.

Even projects that did not work as well as hoped are valuable. They were learning experiences that often provided a springboard, sparking other ideas that did work.

Innovation holds a place of esteem in our system. We continue to honor it.



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Online resources address upcoming workshop topics

- √ *Learner Persistence in Adult Education*, a Research Brief published by the California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project, addresses current thinking around the meaning of persistence, then discusses the latest research and its implications for practice. You may access the four-page document at www.calpro-online.org (click on “publications” on the left).
- √ EL/Civics (suggested by Cheryl Keenan, Director, Division of Adult Education and Literacy): The Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) Web site provides helpful resources, such as:
 - *Activities for Integrating Civics in Adult English Language Learning* at www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/civicsact.html, and
 - *Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners* at www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/collections/civics.html.
- √ *How Should Adult ESL Reading Instruction Differ from ABE Reading Instruction?* is a fascinating new brief, also from CAELA. Less than four pages and very clearly written, the brief summarizes the research base on adult English speakers learning to read and the suggestions for instructions from these studies. Then, using findings from a synthesis of research on adult English language learners learning to read, it describes how these learners differ from native English speakers, and how these differences should affect instruction.

For example, Kruidenier’s research (2002) suggests teaching vocabulary in semantic sets to ABE students. However Folse (2004) found that grouping words in this way can actually impede the learning of the vocabulary for English Language Learners (ELL), because the learner is likely to confuse the similar words (such as days of the week, colors, etc.) if they are learned together. For ELL, Folse suggests grouping new vocabulary around looser themes (such as planning a trip); Nation (2002, 2005) suggests teaching high-frequency vocabulary first. For example, teach “Tuesday,” which is used more frequently, before “Thursday” — this would also avoid confusions that surface between these two similar words.

The brief summarizes similar differences, issues, and suggestions for alphabets and word analysis, fluency, and reading comprehension. To access, go to www.cal.org/caela/, click on “ESL Resources,” then on “Briefs.”

Wendy Campbell will be presenting a one-day workshop, “Teaching Effective Reading to the ESL Student” for Nevada adult education practitioners on February 18 (Las Vegas) and March 18 (Sparks). Check the online calendar (www.literacynet.org/nevada, click on “Calendar” along the left) for contact information.

Listservs for Nevada’s adult educators

Listservs provide a quick, easy, and non-invasive format for sharing ideas, information, resources, triumphs, problems, and solutions. These listservs are “closed” — access is restricted to subscribed members only, reducing the likelihood of unwanted email from outside the list. To subscribe to any of these lists, send an email to saylv@cox.net specifying the name of the listserv and your connection to adult basic education.

NVGED For instructors, tutors, program directors and others who work with English-speaking adults functioning at the high school level and working toward earning an Adult High School Diploma or GED Certificate. GED Examiners will find this forum useful as well.

NVESOL For instructors, tutors, program directors, coordinators, and others who provide one-on-one, small group, or class instruction in ESL or EL/Civics to adults. Although ABE and GED instructors are not excluded, this list is primarily for those who teach English to Speakers of Other Languages.

NVADULTED For instructors, tutors, program directors, coordinators, and others who provide one-on-one, small group, or class instruction in adult basic education (i.e., reading, writing, and math) for adult native speakers of English who are functioning at a level below high school completion. Although ESL instructors are not excluded, this is primarily for providers of basic education to native English speakers.

Free upcoming workshops for Nevada's adult educators

Throughout this academic year, ABE leadership funds will again provide in-depth training on a variety of timely subjects in support of the goals of the Nevada State Plan for Adult Basic Education.

These full-day workshops are geared to specific needs of programs funded through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. Each funded program has chosen two workshops for on-site presentation and will act as host for the event. These free trainings are open to ALL adult educators in Nevada — no matter where they work — on a space-available basis. Contact the appropriate host to reserve your spot for these upcoming workshops.

<u>Title, date, place, and contact</u>	<u>Workshop presenter, description, and objectives</u>
<p>How to Incorporate EL/Civics into Instruction</p> <p>11/4/05; Las Vegas</p> <p>Carla Adkins C.A.L.L. 702/507-3531 adkinsc@lvccld.org</p>	<p>Colleen Sullivan. This workshop is designed for all levels of instructors and administrators who would like to implement EL/Civics into their current ESL Program. It will give an overview of the WIA Title II Grant requirements associated with EL/Civics and lay the foundation for program implementation. Participants will identify meaningful and student-centered civic objectives, practice incorporating them into existing curriculum, and create new curriculum to meet the needs of all English Language Learners. Assessment types, rubrics and rating scales, and other factors that influence instruction and successful implementation will also be discussed.</p> <p>Objectives: Implement the key elements in the WIA Title II Civic Participation Program. Apply civic objectives that correlate with student needs assessments. Create curriculum that reflects the chosen objective and additional assessment.</p>
<p>Phonics Understanding for Beginners</p> <p>11/19/05; Las Vegas</p> <p>Nita Russell-Latham Catholic Charities 775/693-6761 jlatham@catholiccharities.com</p>	<p>Ann DeOnis. This workshop will help ESL and ABS teachers and tutors understand the basic principles of English phonics. Literate adults often take for granted the alphabetic principle upon which English is based. However, once the relationship between how letters and sounds behave is understood, decoding text or reading is achievable. English is not an illogical language, but is governed by patterns and generalizations that make learning to read possible for individuals of all ages. Once the code is understood, reading can take off! Participants will leave this workshop equipped with hands-on activities and approaches they can put to use the next day.</p> <p>Objectives: Inspect the basic principles of the English language. Uncover methods, approaches, and activities that work with adult learners. Analyze how skilled readers use phonics in conjunction with other strategies and skills — context clues, background knowledge, word structure, etc. — to make sense of print.</p>
<p>Meaningful Activities for the ESL Classroom Designed To Get Students Up, Moving Around, and Interacting</p> <p>11/19/05; Sparks</p> <p>Rex Newell Northern NV Literacy Council 775/356-1007 instructorcoord@nnlc.org</p>	<p>Maxine Frauman-Prickel. This experiential workshop is geared toward beginning to intermediate ESL teachers and tutors. It will cover a variety of strategies to help students develop a communicative competence in their interactions to practice in the classroom and apply in the workplace and community. The workshop is designed to help teachers create a learning community in their classrooms to support language acquisition.</p> <p>Objectives: Experience interactive classroom strategies to prepare students for effective communication inside and outside the classroom. Develop a bank of teaching strategies that require little or no time in teacher preparation. Address cultural perceptual blocks or biases that may impact communication inside and outside the classroom.</p>
<p>Here Today and Gone Tomorrow: Strategies for Motivating and Retaining Adult Learners</p> <p>12/10/05; Las Vegas</p> <p>Fay Savedra Gamboa/Cynthia Pierrott — CCSN 702/651-4722 or 702/651-4531 fay_savedra@ccsn.edu or cynthia_pierrott@ccsn.edu</p>	<p>Lennox McClendon/Kathi Polis. Are you frustrated because several of your adult learners enroll in the program, but don't stay very long? What would it take to keep them motivated and able to participate on a regular basis? Are they "dropping out" or perhaps just "stopping out?" This session will examine the latest research from NCSALL's Learner Persistence Study and translate that research into practical strategies and tools for promoting learner retention. Participants will design a student persistence plan to meet their program's needs.</p> <p>Objectives: Examine the latest research on student persistence to determine factors that promote retention. Explore a variety of instructional and programmatic strategies to address those factors. Outline a student persistence plan to pilot in your local program.</p>

Adults with low literacy skills or for whom English is a second language represent \$380 million in consumer spending power annually, yet the U.S. consumer distribution system requires shoppers to use comparative shopping skills, coupons, discounts, and other complex literacy tasks in order to shop cost-effectively.

—*Decision Making and Coping by Functionally Illiterate Consumers and Some Implications for Marketing Management*, Madhubalan Viswanathan, José Antonio Rosa, James Edwin Harris, 2005.

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This professional development project is a leadership activity funded by a grant from the Nevada State Department of Education, Workforce Investment Act, Title II (Adult Education and Family Literacy). There is no discrimination or denial of participation on the basis of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Educators from six programs prove performance

Eight instructors and tutors from five Nevada programs submitted evidence of student outcomes and were awarded their initial ABE Certificates of Performance during the past few months. These educators met the student retention and performance criteria outlined in Nevada's unique outcome-based recognition program.

- ★ Peter J. Acosta, JoAnn Hussey Lindsay (Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada)
- ★ Cheryl Gaye Scheffel, Anita C. Winslow (Great Basin College)
- ★ Joan Barnes, Lorenzo R. Pace (Northern Nevada Literacy Council)
- ★ Aiko Nagao (Truckee Meadows Community College)
- ★ Ewa McLean (Western Nevada Community College)

Special congratulations to the following six educators, who renewed their Certificates. Renewal requires completion of at least 30 hours of quality professional development geared to teaching adults and evidence of exemplary student retention and educational gain during the past three years.

- ★ Thomas L. Luscher (Community College of Southern Nevada)
- ★ Louise M. Tousignant, Emily Huerta, Susan Bettles (Great Basin College)
- ★ Valene S. Lyons-Brady, Paula J. Kizis (Truckee Meadows Community College)

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