In this issue:

- Numeracy
- Speaking
- Applied Literacy
- Classroom Management
- Exploring Resources
- Student Profile
Editor’s Corner

Welcome to the Fall issue of Notebook from ProLiteracy. With many literacy programs starting classes after a summer break, we hope the latest issue will give you some new ideas to try in the classroom.

We all use math in our daily lives, even if we work in jobs that are not math-oriented. How can we convey this to our pre-high school equivalency students who may be math-phobic? Our article “Using Math at Work” gives students a chance to speak with people in their community who work in a variety of jobs, with the goal of discovering practical examples of how math is used at work. The interviews will help make students aware of the importance of math. The article includes some real-life examples of math on the job.

U.S. geography is another area that’s relevant for all of us, even if our jobs don’t center around geography or travel. Our article “Exploring U.S. Geography: States That Border Mexico and Canada” introduces students to states that border the two countries. This gets them looking at the U.S. on a map and thinking about the 50 states. There are plenty of ways to expand the lesson for further geography practice.

In a beginning-level ESOL class, it’s tempting to do one of two extremes—either launch speaking activities without enough preparation, or spend a lot of time talking so students don’t have to attempt often-challenging communicative tasks. In “Building Up to Communicative ESOL Tasks,” we take you through the steps of preparing students for a speaking task, so they feel confident in their abilities and have enough time to talk.

Our Classroom Management article this issue introduces you to Dropbox, and similar file management programs, so you can see how such programs can help to manage classroom materials.

This issue’s Exploring Resources is jam-packed with links for professional development and health literacy practice. Please read an important note on page 14 regarding our use of the term GED versus high-school equivalency in this issue and future ones.

Finally, our Student Profile introduces you to a Wisconsin-based GED® student who overcame confidence-related challenges to attend adult classes. She went on to receive Honorable Mention as a Wisconsin Literacy 2014 Outstanding Adult Learner of the Year.

Enjoy the issue, and please stay in touch with your story ideas.

The Editor
Purpose
To give pre-high school equivalency (HSE) students an idea of how people with various jobs use math at work.

Rationale
Fear of or discomfort using math is common among adults, especially if they don’t realize how much math is a part of our daily lives. They may view math as something only a mathematician or scientist may do. By making students aware of how people in all kinds of workplaces use math, they can see why it’s important to learn. The following can be an introductory activity to use at the beginning of a new semester with lessons related to math.

The Basic Activity
1. **Ask students to think about the previous day. Did they use math during the day?** How and when did they use it? If they’re having trouble thinking of examples, have them consider if they used math:
   - while shopping (adding up the cost of multiple items or calculating tax)
   - when dining out (calculating a tip, dividing a bill)
   - for taking medicine (figuring out dosages beyond what the label says)
   - with kids (helping with math homework, showing how to save a portion of their allowance)
   - at work….and more.

More Information

**Careers That Use Math Every Day**
http://work.chron.com/careers-use-math-day-16295.html

If you have a student with an interest in a math-related career, this site talks about some career options that frequently use math. This same site also provides brief information on career options that use math in unexpected ways, such as cosmetology.

**ABE/GED Mathematics Activities and Student Worksheets**

This 99-page file from the New Hampshire Bureau of Adult Education covers a wealth of math topics ready to use with students, including whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percentages, and algebra.

**Algebra Math Games**

This site has algebra games geared toward a variety of grade levels, including high school math.

**Numeracy in the Adult ESL Classroom**

Although this brief from the Center for Applied Linguistics is older, it still provides solid advice on numeracy, with a focus on ESOL students.
They probably use math more than they realize.

2. **Next, ask them to think about math at their jobs.** If they are working, when do they use math?

3. **Let students know they will be interviewing others for this activity.** Give students a copy of the grid on page 5 or ask them to draw a 5 x 3 grid on a piece of paper. The vertical column should have five spaces, and the horizontal should have three.

4. **Students will add questions to the top.** The first box (top left corner) will be “What’s your name?” The second question will be “How do you use math in your job?” The class can work together to come up with a third question to ask people they will interview. Some other questions to consider:
   - *Is the math you do at work hard or easy?*
   - *What kind of math are you doing at work?* (The answer could be addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division.)
   - *How often do you use math at work?*

5. **Ask students to interview at least four people about how they use math at work.** If you think the students in the class have a diverse enough work background to interview each other, they can do so. Otherwise, encourage them to complete the grid outside of class by interviewing family members or friends. Another idea: If your class is held in a library, students could interview people who work there or the patrons.

6. **In the next class session, review answers together as a class.** What did students find surprising from their interviews? Were there examples of people using math that they hadn’t expected? How does this change the way they think about using math every day? Now that they’ve done this exercise, are there other times they think they will need math skills in the future?

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**Real-Life Work Math Practice**

Subway sandwich restaurants now outnumber all McDonald’s and Starbucks combined in the U.S., according to a 2013 report from QSR Magazine.

With its large number of locations, there’s a good chance that students have eaten in a Subway—or worked at one. The examples below appear on an actual Subway job application, and the application requests that applicants not use calculators. While the math needs of your students may be different, this gives them yet another example of math used on the job—and how the need for math skills even sometimes arises before getting the job.

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1. **When making a full batch of tuna, you will mix one pouch of tuna with 26 ounces (737 grams) of mayonnaise. How much tuna and mayonnaise would you need when making a double batch?**

2. **You need to count all the loaves of bread in the front area. There are 22 loaves of white bread, 17 loaves of wheat bread, and 19 gourmet breads. What is the total number of loaves?**

3. **(Subway asks applicants to state the answer for this question in bills and coins.) If the customer’s order came to $6.22 and he gave you $20.25, what is his change?**
Using Math at Work

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(Come up with 3rd question.)
Purpose
To give beginning-level ESOL students enough scaffolding to feel comfortable participating in a speaking task.

Rationale
Speaking in English class can be a scary prospect for some students, especially if they are at a beginning-level. They may not feel confident enough in their language abilities or may focus on potential pronunciation and grammar mistakes they are afraid to make. For these reasons, it’s crucial that ESOL teachers provide students with the right mix of pre-speaking practice for a communicative task. Some teachers, in their eagerness to get students to talk, don’t provide enough guided practice and have students dive right into speaking. Students in this situation may not feel confident enough in their ability to master the activity. On the other extreme, a well-meaning teacher may spend much of the pre-practice time talking, not giving students enough time to practice speaking. This activity outlines some ways to prepare beginning-level students for a communicative task.

The dialogue shown here comes from the book “From Home to School” (Ann Gianola, 2003, New Readers Press). The practice would work well with a focus on health or on understanding the American school system.

The Basic Activity
1. Ask students if they have ever called their workplace or their child’s school to report being sick. If they do not have an example to share, give a brief example from your own experience.

2. Tell them they will practice a dialogue called “My Son Is Sick.” (See page 8 for the conversation.) Make sure to pre-teach any new vocabulary, which could include absence, ill, fever, sore throat, third, and feels better. If your class is already studying health, they may have already learned some of these terms.

3. Give each student a copy of the dialogue on page 8. Have students review the dialogue on their own. Point out to students that the conversation is between a parent and school assistant.

4. Read the dialogue out loud. Ask students if there are other words that are new for them. Go over any other new vocabulary or pronunciation questions.

5. Next, read the dialogue aloud as a class. This part of the preparation is to give students practice with the dialogue while everyone speaks. Ask students if they have any pronunciation questions. Do this once more if necessary.
6. **Divide the class in half.** Ask one half of the room to read the role of the parent, and the other half to read the role of the school assistant. Then, they can switch roles. Ask again if there are any questions about the dialogue.

7. **Have students work in pairs to read the dialogue.** Encourage them to practice more than once, with each student taking turns to speak the roles of the parent and the office assistant.

8. **When finished, ask for volunteers to read the dialogue out loud to the class.**

9. **Follow this same format for other dialogues and communicative tasks that you practice in class.**

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**From “Improving Adult English Language Learners’ Speaking Skills,” MARY ANN CUNNINGHAM FLOREZ, Center for Adult English Language Acquisition, June 1999**

Teachers should be careful not to overload a speaking lesson with other new material such as numerous vocabulary or grammatical structures. This can distract learners from the primary speaking goals of the lesson.

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**Other Conversation Scenarios**

Here are some other conversation scenarios you can practice with beginning-level ESOL students following the format in our article:

- Calling in sick to work
- Making a doctor’s appointment
- Ordering a pizza
- Making an appointment to see a work client
- Calling the library about a book or other resource
- Calling a local government office or store to ask about hours or location
- Asking directions
- Clarifying work instructions
- Asking for a schedule
My Son Is Sick

PARENT:

I'm calling to report my son's absence.

Yes, he has a fever and a sore throat.

His name is Willie Shea. He is in the third grade.

SCHOOL ASSISTANT:

Is he ill?

What is your son's name and grade?

Thanks for calling. I hope Willie feels better soon.
Exploring U.S. Geography: States That Border Mexico and Canada

Purpose
To provide a U.S. geography lesson where students learn which U.S. states border Canada and Mexico.

Rationale
In our daily lives, we hear about news from states across the U.S. We likely have in our minds an idea of where those states are located, what the weather might be like, and how far those states are from us. Yet what about some of our adult students—especially those from other countries—who may not have that same frame of reference? Part of their context for understanding the news may be lost. Additionally, some knowledge of U.S. geography is essential for students planning to take the U.S. citizenship exam. This lesson directly relates to citizenship exam question 92, “Name one state that borders Canada” and question 93, “Name one state that borders Mexico.”

This lesson teaches students what states border Canada and Mexico. The lesson will work best within the context of other lessons related to U.S. geography, civics, or history. It is adapted from “Lesson Plan: U.S. Geography,” from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). See a link to “Lesson Plan: U.S. Geography” in our sidebar to the right.

The Basic Activity

1. **Before class, make copies of the map shown on page 11 of this issue.**
   Also, make sure to bring at least 13 small sticky notes for each pair that students will form. If you don’t have sticky notes, students can also use colored pencils or highlighters. If you have a North American map hanging in your classroom, display it during this activity.

2. **In class, have students tell you what state they are in right now and find it on the map.** (Although that is not the focus of this activity, it helps to orient them for the remaining lesson.) Tell students they will work with a partner to find the states that border Canada and Mexico. Confirm that students understand the word border. Pair up students to complete the following activity.

More Information

**U.S. Geography**
This website from USCIS (also shown in the article) provides an even more basic orientation to U.S. geography to help students find answers to citizenship exam questions related to geography. There’s also an activity that gets students standing up to place 24 of the state names in alphabetical order. The link has some scenic pictures of U.S. landmarks, such as the Grand Canyon.

**Printable Maps**
http://nationalatlas.gov/printable.html
Print a variety of U.S. maps from this government-sponsored website. You can look for the most basic of U.S. maps or interesting theme-driven maps, such as climate, time zones, Indian reservations, satellite views, and even presidential election results. You can print the maps as PDF files.
3. **Ask students to find Mexico on the map.** If you have any students from Mexico, perhaps they can briefly say where they are from in Mexico. Next, give each pair several small sticky notes (or colored pencils or highlighters). Ask pairs to identify the four states that border Mexico. They should place sticky notes on (or color) California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Make sure students know to use the key on the map that shows what the state abbreviations indicate. If you have a large map displayed in the classroom, ask one or more students to come to the front of the class to place sticky notes on the map.

4. **Ask students what they know, if anything, about these states.** You can point out that these states are part of the Southwest and typically have hotter, drier weather. Feel free to share any other relevant information you think would help students.

5. **Next, have students find Canada on the map.** Ask if any of them have been to or have lived in Canada. Ask what they know about Canada. They might mention that it’s cold or that there is lots of nature to see.

6. **Have students place sticky notes on (or color) the states that border Canada.** They should include Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Michigan, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. You can also point out that Pennsylvania borders Canada via Lake Erie but there is no land border with the nation. Again, have students come to the bigger class map to label these states.

7. **Ask students what they know about the states that border Canada.** Tell students we typically associate these northern states with colder weather. Explain that these states are part of the Northwest, Midwest, and Northeast regions of the U.S. If time, you can show which states fall under which region.

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**Expansion Activities**

- Have students find the state they currently live in on the map and label or color the border states around them. Talk about which border states they have visited and what landmarks they contain. If there are bodies of water bordering your state, point them out.
- Ask higher-level students to pick one of the states that border Canada or Mexico and do a short report about it.
- Put the maps away and play a game, asking students to name or write down the states that border Canada and Mexico. The pair that names them first wins a small prize. Partners can also quiz each other.
- In an ESOL class, take a portion of class time to closely review the pronunciation of your state, border states, or any other states of interest.
Using Dropbox to Organize Your Teaching Files

Purpose
To provide background information on Dropbox, a content management service, and some practical uses for instructors.

Rationale
Adult educators are often running in many different directions. They may teach at multiple locations or even hold down other jobs not related to teaching. Educators may feel the need for a central place where they can store their teaching files without having to lug around a laptop, flash drive, or emailing themselves what they need (a good idea until files or videos become too large for email). We present in this article a popular site called Dropbox (https://www.dropbox.com) to keep your files in one web-based system where they can be accessed from anywhere.

Dropbox Information
Dropbox provides several advantages that you don’t have by simply saving files and taking them with you. You can sync your Dropbox files among several devices and then access those files via your computer, tablet, or smartphone app. Any files you save are backed up; all you need to view your files is Internet access. If you’re going to be traveling and need access to a file offline, Dropbox will also make it available even without Internet access.

Let’s say you start to create a handout for students at home but need to head off to school. By saving that file to Dropbox, you can access it again once you’re at school, pick up right where you left off, and use it as needed.

You can also use Dropbox to send large files to other people, such as music, videos, or PowerPoint slides. This feature is particularly handy when you want to email someone a large file that your email server can’t handle. Just keep in mind that some Dropbox files may take awhile to download depending on the speed of the Internet service where you are at a given time.

Although not all adult students are technologically fluent, the ones who are more tech-geared may want to create Dropbox accounts for themselves to email homework or other class-related files to you.

You’ll need to create a Dropbox account to get started, and it’s free. Dropbox has a maximum of two gigabytes of storage.

More Information
Here are some other sites that are similar to Dropbox or that help users to organize material.

Hightail
https://www.hightail.com/
Similar to Dropbox, use Hightail to organize your files and send larger files to others. Hightail was once called YouSendIt.

Google Drive
https://drive.google.com
Similar to Dropbox, Google Drive lets you save and sync files.

Moodle
http://moodle.com
Moodle is used to design and deliver courses, but you could also use it to store lessons.

Pinterest
http://pinterest.com
This already popular site is a place to save and organize lists, projects, and more. You can also set up a Pinterest site for students to access, or try it out for saving curriculum lessons.

Evernote
https://evernote.com
Use Evernote to organize information from the web and sync it between your phone, tablet, and computer.
How to Create a Dropbox Account

It's easy to create a Dropbox account. You'll just need to provide a first and last name, an email address, and a password. Then you agree to Dropbox’s terms and conditions.

Dropbox will ask if you want its Basic service (free), Pro ($9.99/month), or Business ($15/month per user). Pro service provides up to 100 gigabytes of storage.

More Information

Here are more resources for learning more about Dropbox, with information geared specifically toward teachers.

Top Tips for Using Dropbox at School
This article comes from the website Bright Hub Education.

Dropbox in the Classroom: 4 Great Uses
One idea covered is how students can turn in homework via Dropbox.

A Handy Dropbox Cheat Sheet for Teachers
http://www.educatorstechnology.com/2014/01/a-handy-dropbox-cheat-sheet-for-teachers.html
Discover keyboard shortcuts and tips to use Dropbox more efficiently.

6 Unexpected Ways You Can Use Dropbox
http://www.edudemic.com/dropbox-for-teachers/
An article about Dropbox from the website Edudemic.
Exploring Resources

**STEM Resources for Adult Learners**

https://lincs.ed.gov/programs/oerstem

The OER STEM Project—short for Open Educational Resources to Increase Teaching and Learning of STEM Subjects in Adult Education—has the goal of strengthening science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) instructional content in adult education. Included on the site are free, open educational resources for STEM. (For instance, one lesson on the site uses brownie mix to teach fractions.) There also are planned online professional development courses to help teachers use math and science instructional resources in the adult education classroom.

**Save the Date for ProLiteracy’s Conference on Adult Literacy 2015**

http://www.proliteracy.org/uscal

Make plans now to attend ProLiteracy’s 2015 Conference on Adult Literacy, to be held October 14-17, 2015, in Charleston, South Carolina! Come join us in this lovely seaside city full of historic charm and some of the best Southern cuisine for our unparalleled biennial conference that will focus on the changing landscape of HSE tests, workforce training and career pathways, citizenship and immigration, technology and digital literacy, and more. Early-bird registration begins soon. Email conference@proliteracy.org for more information.

**Digital Learning Day**

http://www.digitallearningday.org/

Digital Learning Day, which will be held on February 4, 2015, shines a spotlight on teaching digital literacy and using technology for instruction. The website has a variety of resources to enhance digital instruction. At the website, click on “Tools” to find lesson plans and classroom resources by subject. You can also sign up on the site for the Digital Learning Day newsletter.

**From Coverage to Care: A Roadmap to Better Care and a Healthier You**


https://www.healthcare.gov/what-key-dates-do-i-need-to-know/#part=1

As open enrollment for the Affordable Care Act’s Health Insurance Marketplace begins on November 15, students and instructors alike may find the resources at the first link above helpful. The 48-page “roadmap” explains how people can take better care of their health, monitor health care costs, learn insurance-related terms, and find providers. The guide was created by the Department of Health and Human Services. The second link gives important dates related to the marketplace.
Bilingual Breast Cancer Education Toolkit
http://komentoolkits.org/toolkit/
Help students learn about breast cancer with the new Susan G. Komen® Breast Cancer Education Toolkit for Hispanic/Latino Communities. The bilingual resources help educators “integrate culturally and linguistically responsive breast cancer information into their educational programs,” according to the website. The toolkit is available for free on the site, although users must register to access the resources.

ESL Literacy Network
http://esl-literacy.com
Get resources to become a better ESL teacher or curriculum developer at the ESL Literacy Network. Among the many resources, you’ll find online discussion groups, access to the site’s YouTube channel (showing ideas such as singing in the ESL classroom), a financial literacy toolkit, and much more. The site was created by Bow Valley College’s Center for Excellence in Immigration and Intercultural Advancement, located in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Natural Disaster Preparedness
http://ready.gov
http://www.ready.gov/kit
Hurricane season may already be in full swing, but it’s never too late to assist students in preparing for one or for other natural disasters like wildfires, tornadoes, and floods. The second link above reviews items to include in a natural disaster preparedness kit and could be the focus of a class lesson. There are also sections on the sites to help children learn about natural disasters and for businesses to get better prepared. The site is operated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. A Spanish version of the site is available at http://listo.gov.

Preparing for Your Doctor’s Visit
Prepare students for upcoming doctors’ visits with this 15-page guide from the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas. The guide includes a glossary of common medical terms, a list of questions that students can ask their doctors, a place to list medications taken, a symptoms journal, a medical history review, and much more. The guide would be an ideal part of a health focus in an adult education class.

Media Library of Teaching Skills
http://mlots.org
The Media Library of Teaching Skills (MLoTS) offers free adult education professional development videos. Instructors or administrators can use the 4- to 15-minute videos for face-to-face, blended, or distance learning courses or workshops. The videos focus on ESOL, pre-GED® exam preparation, numeracy, writing, reading, family literacy, and adult secondary education. The site was recently redesigned to make it easier to use, said David J. Rosen, Ed.D., president of MLoTS.

Citizenship: Passing the Test—Ready for the Interview
Citizenship: Passing the Test—Ready for the Interview has been revised to align with the revised N-400 form. The book guides students through the process of filling out the new N-400 form. New vocabulary terms have been added to the glossary, and new practice interview dialogues reflect the changes in how and what questions will be asked. The book’s new audio CD gives students practice listening to sample interviews and hearing how questions will be asked. Find ordering information at the New Readers Press website, at the link above.

Article Discusses Adult Education and Technology Use
This article on the website EdSurge discusses the increasing importance surrounding adult education and technology use. It also mentions a new learning app available from the company Skylab Learning. The article mentions opportunities to better market learning apps and technology to adult education learners and programs.
Like many adult students, Sabrina Hanson had a unique path to follow on her adult education journey. She finished 12 years of education as a home-schooled student, but she never made high school graduation official. At age 25 in 2009, she knew she needed to pass the GED® exam and that she needed extra help in math and essay writing. Still, there was an obstacle in her way.

“Sabrina suffered from severe anxiety and panic attacks,” says Leanne Waterworth, program director for Northern Waters Literacy in Wisconsin. “She was shy and nervous to be away from her parents or too far from home.” Instead of attending college and enjoying life in her 20s, her fear paralyzed her, and she stayed home and with her parents much of the time.

It was Hanson’s mother who made the first contact to Northern Waters to enroll her daughter in classes, and then Sabrina inquired about the educational help she needed. Northern Waters matched her with Ainslee Campbell, a tutor with a gentle manner. Although Hanson’s mom came along for some of the initial tutoring sessions, Hanson’s anxiety began to ease. “Ainslee made me realize that what seems possible can be realized, and those paths of darkness are lit just enough so we can follow them and find the wonderful surprises waiting at the very end,” Hanson once wrote when reflecting on her educational experience.

Yet six months after her tutoring began, Hanson’s mother was diagnosed with stage 4 melanoma. Hanson stopped her lessons to take care of her mother. When her mother passed away, Hanson’s anxiety paralyzed her once more. That’s when Hanson’s dad took on a greater role in helping his daughter. “He encouraged her, and with time, she began facing her fears,” says Waterworth. Slowly, Hanson began to go out, make new friends, and attend tutoring sessions again.

Hanson went on to pass the GED exam, with the goal of finding a better job and gaining a sense of independence. “Sabrina’s motivation snowballed, and she went a step further by receiving a high school equivalency diploma in April 2013,” Waterworth says.

Hanson’s difficult but inspiring quest to learn prompted Waterworth to nominate her as Wisconsin Literacy’s 2014 Outstanding Adult Learner of the Year, for which she received an Honorable Mention.

“The Northern Waters Program made me believe that I could actually set a goal, go for it, and achieve it,” says Hanson, who is looking to pursue an accounting career. “Sabrina is a changed person, and we’re really proud of her,” Waterworth says.