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Editor’s Corner

This issue of Notebook is full of fresh ideas and inspiration.

We start off with an election-year-appropriate article to help ESOL and basic literacy students evaluate campaign messages. This article includes an excerpt from News for You, the weekly newspaper from New Readers Press.

Next we have a lesson idea to help ESOL and basic literacy students learn how to read signs. Once you encourage students to pay attention to signs, they will notice the large amount of reading practice they can obtain from them.

If you’re not already familiar with Skype, our article “Tutoring with Skype” may inspire you to try it with students. Skype is a free Internet-based telephone, chat, and video program. Popular for international communication, adult education programs are just now discovering the benefits of Skype for online tutoring. Like any new technology, it takes time for students and instructors to get accustomed to using Skype. Our article details how programs are starting to successfully do this.

With many students looking for jobs or seeking new jobs, we have an article that helps students develop an “elevator pitch”—in other words, a short description of what they can do successfully in their line of work. The “elevator pitch” is handy when networking or speaking to potential employers.

You don’t want to miss this issue’s Exploring Resources. We share how to access free workshop materials from the 2011 U.S. Conference on Adult Literacy. We also provide links to citizenship preparation resources from ProLiteracy and the Smithsonian Institution.

Finally, our Student Profile features a Texas man who has made lifelong learning and teaching a post-retirement passion.

A final note: If you are reading an electronic version of Notebook, it is because your local literacy or adult education program is an organization member of ProLiteracy. One of the benefits of an organization membership is the right to share electronic copies of Notebook. If you are an individual member of ProLiteracy, you will receive a print copy of Notebook. You may also receive the electronic version from your program. To learn about membership with ProLiteracy, please see the box on the left.

The Editor

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Analyzing Campaign Messages

Purpose
To encourage intermediate and advanced ESOL students and ABE students to examine campaign messages heard during an election year.

Rationale
As the 2012 presidential election inches closer, students will hear a variety of ads from national, state, and local candidates. The reading featured here, which was originally published in the January 4, 2012, issue of News for You, focuses on how to examine the accuracy of campaign messages. We also provide some related classroom activities.

The Basic Activity
1. **In advance, review the article on p. 5 to decide on any words to pre-teach.** Words you may want to consider pre-teaching (highlighted in bold in the article) include *debates, oppose, evasive,* and *rehearsed.* Ask students what ads they have seen on TV or elsewhere for political candidates. What do they think of those ads? Do they believe the ads are truthful?

2. **Guide students through the article on p. 5.**

3. **Ask students the following comprehension questions.**
   a. What does a debate do? (*Answer: A debate lets voters compare candidates’ views on the most important issues.*)
   b. What does the League of Women Voters do? (*Answer: The group educates citizens about government and political issues.*)
   c. According to the League of Women Voters, what are some things to look for when listening to the candidates? (*Answer: Some things to listen for are direct answers, specific views supported with facts and figures, realistic proposals, and natural-sounding responses.*)
   d. How can you tell who’s paying for a campaign ad? (*Answer: You can listen to the words in the ad to know if the candidate “approves this message” or if another group is speaking on behalf of the candidate.*)
   e. What should you notice about the text in the ad? (*Answer: You should notice what the text says and why it is there.*)

4. **Discuss the following questions with your students.**
   Encourage students to support their answers.
   - Do you think campaign ads on television can be effective? Do you plan on watching a debate? How can you tell if a candidate is presenting factual information or not?

More Information

**Election 2012 Voting Guide**
http://www.newreaderspress.com/voting-guide
This free Election 2012 Voting Guide comes from News for You. Students will learn about who votes and what we vote on, political parties, ways to learn about candidates and issues, registering to vote, and casting a vote.

**iCivics**
http://www.icivics.org/
This site has educational materials and games related to civics knowledge. Although the material is geared toward young adults, much of it would work well with adult ESOL and ABE students. The site was founded by Justice Sandra Day O’Connor in 2009 and is maintained by a regular staff as well as civic leaders across the United States.

**RegistertoVote.org**
http://registertovote.org/index.html
This provides state-specific information on how to register to vote. It also indicates how far in advance of an election you need to register to vote.
For additional practice, students can evaluate campaign ads they see online. You will need access to a computer and the Internet. Before class, find and review campaign videos for at least one candidate. You can find campaign ads on a candidate's website or by using a search engine and searching specifically for videos.

Copy the box below, or have students draw a similar box in their notebooks. Have students watch ads for the candidate and fill in each column. For example, who funded the ad? What kinds of images are shown? What sounds are used? Is there any text?

Tell students you will play the campaign video two to three times. The first time they can just watch the video. The second time they can start to fill out information on their paper. It’s okay if they cannot answer each column. They should discuss their results with a partner or in small groups. Ask students which ad they think is most effective and why.

The box below allows students to write information about two different campaign ads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
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<td>People</td>
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<td>Images</td>
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<td>Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My reaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In November, U.S. voters will cast their ballots for president. Will President Barack Obama win his second term in the White House? Or, will the Republican nominee win?

It all depends on what voters hear from the candidates. Between now and November, they will have many chances to listen to the candidates.

The Republican candidates have already held a number of debates. They will likely hold several more. Each candidate hopes to win the party’s nomination at its summer convention.

A debate lets voters compare candidates’ views on the most important issues. But how do you watch a debate? And how can you tell who wins?

The League of Women Voters offers a guide to watching the debates. Its “Debate Watching 101” guide is on the League’s website at www.lwv.org. The group educates citizens about government and political issues. But it does not support or oppose any candidates.

The League has tips to help you prepare for, watch, and evaluate the debates:
- Are the questions clear and fair?
- Do the candidates answer questions directly? Or, do they give evasive answers?
- Are they specific about their views? Do they support them with facts and figures?
- Do they talk about their own positions? Or, do they just attack others on the stage?
- Are their ideas realistic?
- Do they respond naturally to questions? Or, do their answers seem rehearsed?
- Have they changed their positions over time? If so, do they explain why?

You will also hear from candidates through their campaign ads. The ads are used to reach voters in print, on TV, and online. There are ways to analyze those messages, too. As you see them, ask yourself these questions:

Who is paying for the ad?

Does the candidate speak? Or, does the ad use others, such as the opponent or actors playing “real” people?

What text is used?

An ad may include text to make a point. If text is used, what does it say? Why is it there?

What facts are included?

Most campaigns make claims. They can be about the candidate or the opponent. But the claims may or may not be true. What information is presented as fact? How can you check it?
Teaching Signs

More Information

USA Traffic Signs
http://www.usa-traffic-signs.com
Although this website is geared toward those buying traffic signs, it can serve as a potential resource if you are looking for a particular sign to show students. You can browse signs by various categories, including Construction, Highway, and School.

Traffic & Road Sign Test
http://www.usa-traffic-signs.com/Test_s/50.htm
Are your students ready to test their road sign knowledge? This free five-part, 30-question online test covers various road signs often tested during Department of Motor Vehicle exams. The test is designed by the same company that has the USA Traffic Signs website (see above).

Pictures of Street Signs in the USA
http://www.streetsignpictures.com/
Use this site to browse slides of common street signs, ranging from warning signs to road signs and stop signs. The slide images were taken by a person who is interested in signs.

Google Images
https://www.google.com/images
Use Google's image search with your chosen sign-related keywords and browse through the images that are shown. For example, if you search “school signs,” you'll find a variety of signs that indicate pedestrian crossing, no smoking indications, and speed limits.

Purpose
To introduce beginning ESOL and ABE literacy students to reading by using signs.

Rationale
Signs found in neighborhoods, at schools, and while driving can provide a wealth of reading practice. Knowing how to read signs provides everyday reading practice and also helps to boost safety, as many signs relate to rules and public safety. This lesson assumes that students have sufficient literacy skills to know what signs are and that they are able to read the most basic signs, such as a stop sign.

The Basic Activity

1. Ask students what signs are and why they are important to understand. Draw an example, such as a stop sign. Point to signs seen in the classroom.

2. Discuss what signs they see at work or in their community. Have students work in pairs to discuss signs they see. When something is not understood, encourage students to draw signs for each other. Discuss as a class the common signs seen by students.

3. Take five to ten minutes to have pairs walk through the school (or library or other setting where the class takes place) and look for signs. Ask them to make a note of what the signs say. Come back together as a class to talk about the signs they saw and what about the signs, if anything, was unclear. If you are working in a one-to-one tutoring situation, you can accompany the student to help him or her look for signs.

4. At this point in the lesson, you will need a computer (or computers, depending on the number of students) and Internet access. Go to the website called Reading English Signs (http://www.manythings.org/signs/), which is part of the website Interesting Things for ESL Students. Reading English Signs has links to hundreds of photos of signs. The signs are organized into categories, such as Everyday Signs, Travel, Driving, and Shopping, and then a general category that includes many different sign pictures. The first page of Everyday Signs (http://www.manythings.org/signs/everyday.htm) is a good place to start—it covers signs that relate to fire safety, smoking, recycling, and a few other topics.

If you do not have access to a computer during class, go to the web page for Everyday Signs in advance, and print a copy for each student.
5. **Have students look at each sign picture.** For shorter signs, have students read aloud what they see. For longer signs, you can summarize what they say. Click on each picture to see it larger. Discuss the meaning of each sign. Note that a number of the signs shown deal with different aspects of fire safety, such as a fire extinguisher, a fire escape, and fire danger level in the mountains.

Ask students if they see any of these signs in their community.

If students are familiar with safety and warnings (for example, they may have studied job safety or health), you can ask which signs are related to safety and warnings.

6. **Give students a few minutes to practice reading the signs again on their own or with a partner.**

7. **During the following class, ask which signs they remember. Look at the signs again online.** Ask what each sign means to see what they can recall from the last class.

8. **Use this website to practice signs related to other topics you might study in class,** such as transportation (use the Driving or Travel signs) or community (use the Shopping category). You can also use the Alphabetical Listing of All Signs to find specific signs you’d like students to practice. Because this site yields many sign pictures, be prepared to browse in advance of class to find what you want to use.

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**Expansion Activities**

The following expansion activities are good for homework for beginning ESOL or ABE literacy students or for more in-depth practice for higher-level students who are studying signs.

1. **Ask students to do a “sign walk”—they should make note of at least six signs in their neighborhood and come back to class prepared to tell students what the signs say.** This is also a good time for students to discuss signs that they saw but did not understand. If the students have cameras, encourage them to take pictures of the signs to share with the class.

2. **Have students work individually or in pairs to take pictures of signs found at the school or library where class is held.** If you have access to a printer, ask them to take pictures of each sign—you can assist them in printing the pictures that were taken. Post the signs on a special classroom bulletin board dedicated to signs.
Tutoring With Skype

Purpose
To use Skype as a medium for tutoring adult education students.

Rationale
Skype (www.skype.com) is a computer-based service that can be used for audio or video calls and chatting. During peak times, there can be more than 30 million Skype users online at the same time, according to the Skype website. Skype can be downloaded and used for free. For a small charge, Skype users can also call telephones (versus only calling others who have downloaded Skype) and send texts. Skype is increasingly used to communicate with loved ones abroad. It also plays a growing role for virtual meetings in the business world.

Although the use of Skype to tutor adult education students is not yet common, it is a growing area of interest for many instructors, tutors, and program managers.

This article provides suggestions on how to effectively use Skype with adult education students based on the experience at Cape Fear Literacy Council, Wilmington, N.C., and OneAmerica's English Innovations, Seattle, WA. The article assumes that the tutor and student are both familiar with computers and accessing the Internet. Although the article does not detail how to download Skype, it does provide suggestions to make downloading easier for students.

Background
With many ESOL students not able to attend classes due to issues with childcare, work schedules, and transportation, the Cape Fear Literacy Council is using Skype-based tutoring for at least 10 students through June 2012. This goal for Skype use is part of an EL/Civics grant the program receives. Tutors working via Skype use a common grammar textbook with students.

At the time this article was published, there were 12 active students using Skype with the program. ESOL program director Barbara Biba has found that students are initially more eager to use Skype than tutors are. Students interested in Skype classes have often already used Skype to communicate with loved ones in their home countries. The program emphasizes that using Skype can help students overcome scheduling, childcare, or transportation barriers. It also helps students or tutors who don’t want to use extra time or gas money going to and from lessons.

During intake, students are asked if they have a computer, the Internet, an

More Information

Downloading Skype
This is the link to download Skype to your computer or mobile phone.

Skype Features
Skype connects classes with other classes that may be doing similar projects online or with classes that want to find pen pals. You can browse various projects by clicking on “explore all projects.” Although many of the projects may be for younger learners, they may still provide ideas for adult educators using Skype with students.
email address, a camera on their computer, and if they are familiar with Skype. Tutors are also asked if they would consider tutoring via Skype. Interested tutors and students receive additional training from Biba. These questions for both the tutors and students help identify ideal candidates for Skype-based tutoring.

Most participants report being happy with their virtual tutoring arrangement, Biba says. There is even a waiting list to match students with Skype-based tutors. Most tutors meet online with their students once a week, although some meet twice a week. Most Skype tutoring sessions are in the evening. The majority of the students using Skype in Biba’s program are at an intermediate ESOL level or above. One unexpected benefit for some students is that their children see their parent studying and using English in the house; the children sometimes even participate in the lessons.

At OneAmerica’s English Innovations, a grant from The Gates Foundation has enabled the program to let a group of 82 intermediate ESOL students borrow laptops, an air card, and headphones to use outside of class, says Technology Coach Chris Hammersley. Students are using Skype for weekly virtual meetings with tutors; to video chat online with friends, family, and classmates; and to extend their practice of role-play situations that were assigned in class.

Effectively Using Skype

The Basic Activity

1. In a one-to-one tutoring situation, have the tutor and student set up an initial in-person meeting. This helps both parties feel more comfortable with each other. If possible, have one of them bring a laptop to that first meeting so they can review any problems with downloading the Skype program (see below).

2. Before Skype use, have a checklist to make sure both tutors and students have done the following:
   - Downloaded Skype.
   - Accepted each other on Skype.
   - Exchanged email addresses and phone numbers. (This comes in handy if there is a problem with the audio; also, at Cape Fear Literacy Council, email is the method by which the written assignments are submitted.)
   - Reviewed the student’s learning goals.
   - Provided the program director with the tutor’s and student’s usernames.
   - Received the text or other instructional materials that will be used.
   - Received camera if required.

3. Provide students with a hard-copy handout in color with instructions on how to download Skype. Students have been more successful in downloading Skype when the downloading instructions were printed in the exact same colors as seen on the computer screen. Correct downloading is especially key as Biba says it’s the biggest barrier to using Skype.

   Another idea is providing students with a laminated “cheat sheet” to help them with Skype or email-related technical questions, Hammersley suggests. For example, the cheat sheet reminds English Innovations
students to always include the @ symbol in email addresses. He has found that the cheat sheets are particularly handy for students who do not have much previous computer experience.

4. **Use Skype’s Instant Messenger feature to demonstrate words or for short writing assignments.** For example, Biba teaches citizenship lessons via Skype. When teaching the word *representative*, she’ll use Skype’s Instant Messenger to show the word. She will even type in the word with spaces to indicate syllables (for example: rep re sen ta tive). Instant Messenger can also be used for listening and dictation exercises. Another idea is writing target vocabulary on a piece of paper and holding it up to the camera for the student to see. For longer writing assignments such as journal exercises, students can use email.

5. **Don’t expect a drastic difference from face-to-face classes.** Something that has surprised Biba and tutors is how similar the virtual classroom is to “regular” classes. “You forget that the screen is there,” Biba says. Tutors still go through text-based exercises with students and show relevant information via the camera.

6. **If you are helping students set up an email account to use with Skype, use email providers that are uncluttered.** Hammersley found that Yahoo and Hotmail tend to have a number of ads and visuals that confuse some students. They sometimes unintentionally click off of the page where they are meant to be. Hammersley now uses Gmail (www.gmail.com) to help students set up new email accounts.

7. **If you are teaching a class, consider using Skype for reinforcement of what’s done in class or for students’ other questions.** At OneAmerica’s English Innovations, students use scheduled Skype time with tutors to ask questions about English or for practicing certain tasks important to the individual students. This has included activities such as how to write a resume or how to buy an airplane ticket online, Hammersley says.

8. **Debrief.** In the class where students use Skype at English Innovations, there is time scheduled each week to answer questions about Skype and talk about their experiences. The feedback is overwhelmingly positive, even from students who had not used computers before, Hammersley says. Students even lightheartedly compete over how many other students they will Skype with over a given weekend. Many students are happy to have a new way to communicate with friends and family in their home countries. “They didn’t realize this was available,” he says. Still others are using the Skype experience to broaden their technology skills. One student who previously could not even turn on a computer has now purchased a desktop, Hammersley says.

9. **Expect interest in Skype to fluctuate depending on the time of year.** Biba anticipates more students will want to use Skype in the summer, when children are out of school and parents cannot attend classes or one-to-one sessions as easily.
"The Elevator Pitch": Helping Students Sell Their Skills

Purpose
To help ABE and intermediate and advanced ESOL students write and practice an “elevator pitch.”

Rationale
“What do you do?” Most of us are asked this question as we meet new people. However, for business networking and job seeking, it’s important to be able to give a succinct and powerful answer. The ability to do this takes practice and may not come naturally to someone who is not accustomed to talking about their skills or accomplishments, someone who speaks English as a second language, or someone who has not received training in employment skills.

This article details how instructors can work with ABE and higher-level ESOL students to create an elevator pitch, which allows someone to describe what they do in a short and powerful manner. Elevator pitches are helpful for job seekers, those promoting their own business or a new invention, or those who work in jobs that involve promotion, such as sales. The lesson assumes that the students you are working with may fall into one of those categories or have a general interest in business networking.

The Basic Activity

1. **Explain to students what an elevator pitch is.** It is usually described as a 30-second opportunity to tell someone what you do well and what you are seeking (for example, a certain kind of job or a contact in a certain field). In some situations, the person you speak with is a potential business contact. Other times, they are someone you are just meeting that has asked, “What do you do?”

The name “elevator pitch” comes from the idea of meeting a key contact in an elevator—you usually don’t have much time in an elevator to explain who you are and why you want to talk to that person. Elevator pitches are common in sales jobs and are sometimes practiced in other professions. Tell students you will help them write and practice their own elevator pitches.

More Information

- **The Perfect (Elevator) Pitch**
  http://www.businessweek.com/careers/content/jun2007/ca20070618_134959.htm
  An article from *Business Week* about crafting an elevator pitch.

- **Elevator Pitch: 8 Ways to Take Yours to a Higher Level**
  http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505125_162-57356099/elevator-pitch-8-ways-to-take-yours-to-a-higher-level/

- **How to Do an Elevator Pitch**
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAFqeDFjg2w
  This two-minute YouTube clip gives relevant details on how to do an elevator pitch. The narrator has a British accent, and some of the information discusses elevator pitches for inventors speaking with investors. However, the information can apply to general business pitches as well.

- **Core Message Statement/Elevator Pitch**
  http://www.mcw.edu/VirtualCareerCenter/Job-SearchPlan/CoreMessageStatementElevatorPitch.htm
  Although this site from the Medical College of Wisconsin focuses mostly on students in the medical professions, it provides a helpful exercise that can apply to all kinds of business pitches.
2. **Give students a copy of the handout on this page.** Read through the sample pitches with students and explain the three parts: the first line where they provide their name and tell what they do, the second line where they provide more details about their job and specific strengths or skills, and the third line that specifies what they are seeking (it could be a job, a referral, or just the opportunity to meet others in the same line of work).

3. **Ask students to fill out the first line on the handout.**

4. **As students work on the second line, you may need to coach students about what information to share.** Some job-related details that may be appropriate here include:
   - years of experience
   - where you work (either the name of the company and/or the location)
   - any specialties you have (for example, an electrician may specify if she or he does commercial or residential work)
   - skills or positive descriptive adjectives
   - special projects you have managed or are managing (but keep it short)

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**TWO SAMPLE ELEVATOR PITCHES**

*My name is Waly Zemp and I'm a painter.*

I have eight years of experience painting in Rockville and Potomac.

I'm looking for an apartment manager who needs a reliable, quality painter.

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*My name is Sandra Jones and I'm a medical assistant.*

I have worked for pediatricians to help greet patients and process insurance claims.

I'm looking for a medical assistant job in this area.

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**YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH**

*My name is __________________________ and I'm a __________________________.*

I __________________________.

I'm looking for __________________________.
5. For the third line, encourage students to think about their ultimate goal in using an elevator pitch. Are they looking for a job? Are they trying to meet with others to discuss a new product or business venture? The second and third lines of the elevator pitch are good places for students to tout special skills or adjectives that adequately describe themselves or their businesses. Remind students that it is OK to boast a little.

This is also a good time to tell students seeking a job or referral that the people they meet might ask for something in return. This give and take is common in networking.

6. Have students work with you or in pairs to practice their elevator speech. Encourage them to edit based on their normal conversational tone. They don’t want to sound as if they are reading text to a person. One way you can help them edit this part is by listening to them practice their elevator pitch to see if sounds natural or too stiff. If there are mirrors in the classroom, have students watch themselves in the mirror to check for positive body language and eye contact.

7. Ask students to practice their elevator pitch for the class. If applicable to their situations, also suggest that they attend a local networking meeting to practice their elevator pitch.

Networking Organizations

The following links are for organizations that can provide students with networking opportunities. At these kinds of meetings, students who are looking for jobs, who have their own businesses, or who work for businesses where networking is common will likely be able to practice their elevator pitch. Note that some of these organizations have fees to join, although many will allow you to attend a meeting or two for free.

Business Networking International (BNI)
http://www.bni.com

The largest business networking group in the world, BNI is a referral organization that allows only one member in a particular job category in an individual chapter. You can find more information and specific chapters in your area on the website.

Meetup
http://www.meetup.com

Although Meetup provides links to all kinds of social and business groups meeting in a particular area—they range from salsa dancers to vegans to dog lovers—Meetup also features a number of networking-focused groups. Search on the website by typing in your geographic area and the term business networking.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce
http://www.uschamber.com/chambers/directory

This site provides a geographical-based directory to chambers of commerce across the country. Chambers of commerce often sponsor local networking events. You can also encourage students to search for national, state, and local associations related to their line of work. Associations often hold networking events and annual meetings.
If you're working with GED® students or those getting ready for Pre-GED or GED classes, check out the online GED Teacher Resource Center. It contains free, downloadable classroom activities in all five test areas, study planner correlations to the GED Official Practice Tests, and links to key information about both the current and the 2014 GED tests. An exciting new component is the free GED Test Prep handbook with lesson plans for students ready to take or retake the tests. Follow the GED Teacher Resource Center on Facebook and Twitter, too!

Delve into a treasure trove of material from the 2011 United States Conference on Adult Literacy (USCAL), which was held in Houston last November. Sponsored by ProLiteracy and 26 national partners, USCAL and its 700 attendees focused on how to build collaborations among adult literacy, workforce training, social service, and education programs and providers to expand and improve services. At the website above, you can browse various workshop topics, ranging from how to use videos in your class to incorporating health literacy to workforce training. For many of these presentations, you can then access handouts or PowerPoint slides from your chosen presentations.

The New Readers Press (NRP) website has free training for people who are using Laubach Way to Reading, Laubach Way to English, or Focus on Phonics. The training is called “Learning to Use Laubach Way to Reading, Laubach Way to English, and Focus on Phonics.” Find instructions on how to sign up for the training by going to the website above and clicking on “Free Online Training Course for Teachers.”

The same website has support materials for tutor trainers to help them conduct training sessions to use these curricula. On the website, click on “Free Downloadable Workshop Materials.”
Preparing for the Oath
http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/
Use this interactive website from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History to help students prepare for the U.S. citizenship test. Designed by the museum and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the website features interactive lesson modules and practice questions along with a number of graphics and videos. There are also teacher’s guides on how to use each of the website’s lesson modules. The website’s free resources are most appropriate for low intermediate ESOL students and higher.

Help Students with Citizenship Preparation, Part 2
http://www.proliteracyednet.org/citizenship
Find great resources to help students prepare for the U.S. citizenship test. On the Collections page on EdNet, you can access free online courses, lessons, podcasts, videos, student interactives, and more. Topics range from the benefits of becoming a U.S. citizen to preparing for the test’s various components, to teaching conversation strategies in the citizenship classroom.

Encourage Speaking in the Classroom (and Out)
http://www.eastsideliteracy.org/tutorsupport/ESL/ESLTalkTime.htm
The Tutor Support website for Hopelink Adult Education in Washington State provides some solid ideas for conversation activities with ESOL students. Find ready-made materials to use with students regarding asking for help, learning about different regions of the United States, jobs and work, identity theft and scams, restaurants and eating out, and more. The links on the Talk Time site usually lead to PDF handouts that not only stimulate conversation practice but also reinforce reading skills.

Just Write! Guide
Guide ABE students to better writing with the new Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy (TEAL) Just Write! Guide. The publication comes from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education; and the American Institutes for Research. The guide reflects two years of work identifying research-based instructional practices for writing. The free 120-page guide includes suggestions such as increasing the amount of writing done by students, setting writing goals, teaching summarizing, and using technology effectively.

Save the Date for USCAL 2013
Make plans now to attend the 2013 United States Conference on Adult Literacy (USCAL), to be held October 31–November 2 in Washington, D.C. Building on the 2011 USCAL, the 2013 meeting will cover workforce training and career pathways, citizenship education, health literacy, financial literacy, technology and digital literacy, and public policy and advocacy concerns. Early-bird registration begins in spring 2013.
Victor Morales has made a second career out of teaching and inspiring fellow students. After coming to the United States from Mexico at age 40 and then retiring from a 25-year career selling auto parts in Laredo, Texas, Morales moved to the Houston area and decided to take English classes in January 2009. As he progressed from ABE Beginning Literacy to ASE Low in reading skills with the Adult Reading Center in Pearland, Texas, Morales developed a strong desire to give back to the community, says Adult Reading Center COO Carol Keeney. After volunteering to help at a local Immigration & Citizenship Forum in 2010, Morales decided to volunteer to teach citizenship classes for the program, Keeney says.

Students in the existing citizenship class with lower English-language skills were struggling to keep up with the information, Morales says. “Most students said they didn’t understand. I said I could start to help,” he says.

Morales went through the program’s training for volunteers and shadowed the citizenship teacher until he felt comfortable conducting his own classes. Now that he has his own class, he presses students to continue studying until he believes they are fully ready to take the test. Sometimes a student will stay in the class for eight months or even a year, Morales says. He also teaches the meaning and pronunciation of every English word needed to understand the questions asked during the naturalization interview, Keeney says.

When students don’t have time to attend class, Morales goes to them. Students have met him at his house or at the library. He even met one student at the dry cleaning business where the man worked. They studied in between customers. “Victor goes the extra mile,” Keeney says.

The program was also able to highlight Morales’ dedication when applying for a competitive federal citizenship grant they later received, Keeney says.

Morales’ dedication has paid off. Of the 22 students he has sent on to take the citizenship test, all have passed it. “I enjoy doing this very much,” says Morales, who notes that his time volunteering at the center four days a week (along with his one-to-one tutoring) doesn’t feel like work at all. He even continues to attend classes for himself. “He embodies what we’d like to see in all of our students,” Keeney says.

Morales’ program isn’t the only place that has recognized his dedication to learning and teaching. Morales received the Ruth J. Colvin and Frank C. Laubach Award for Adult Learner Excellence at last year’s United States Conference on Adult Literacy in Houston.