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Editor’s Corner

In some parts of the United States, winter conjures up images of dedicated instructors and students trudging their way to class in the cold and snow, perhaps fueled by coffee or hot chocolate. In other areas of the country, winter is sunny and the one time of the year where temperatures are at a pleasant level—but again, dedicated instructors and students alike are marching off to classes.

No matter what your winter is like, we think you’ll find something of interest in this issue of Notebook.

With the federal government’s Affordable Care Act (ACA) underway, the spotlight is on health literacy. Our lead article excerpts an activity from a new ESOL-focused health literacy website designed by ESOL teacher/social worker Kate Singleton. Accompanying that article is a shorter piece with resources to help you and your students navigate the ACA and its requirements.

We continually hear about readers’ interest in connecting technology to the classroom, and we think our article on Remind 101 will help answer this demand. Remind 101 is a text-based message service that you can use to remind students about tests, and assignments, or even to give them additional practice with what they are learning. You can use Remind 101 and still maintain the privacy of your cell phone number.

Pronunciation is a perennial challenge even for the highest level ESOL students, so our fun exercise on page 9 will give you ideas on how students can improve this valuable skill.

Next up is our story on creating graphs. The new GED® exam has a greater focus on visual literacy, so we think this story will assist both students preparing for the new exam as well as those who want to boost their understanding of the graphs and charts we see so often nowadays in news articles and slide presentations.

As always, our Exploring Resources column is full of interesting resources to use for your professional development or with students.

Finally, in our Student Profile, we feature Amelia Sandoval, who rose above many challenges to undertake her GED prep studies and succeed in life. In fact, Sandoval won the Ruth C. Colvin and Frank C. Laubach Award for Adult Learner Excellence at the 2013 USCAL conference in Washington, D.C.

The Editor
Purpose
To give ESOL and literacy students forms they can complete in class or at home for use during visits with health professionals.

Rationale
When visiting the doctor, it seems that half the time is spent filling out forms. The challenge of providing medical history is all the more daunting to ESOL and literacy students, who must struggle with language or comprehension challenges. However, that task can be made somewhat easier if they have handy forms with their medical information to use during medical appointments.

The forms shown on pages 5 and 6 come from the newly released Virginia Adult ESOL Health Literacy Toolkit, available at http://www.valrc.org/toolkit/index.html. The toolkit was designed by Kate Singleton, who is both a social worker and adult educator. In this article’s sidebars, you can learn more about the toolkit.

One of the forms shown in this issue focuses on a simple way that students can report their medical history. The second form focuses on keeping track of medication use, which is crucial information for preventing medication errors. This activity would ideally be used during a focus on health in your lessons. Some of the instructions below are from the toolkit. Both forms, “6.4 My Medical History” and “6.5 My Medication List” can be found by clicking on Links for Learners at www.valrc.org/toolkit/learners.html.

The Basic Activity
1. Tell students they will spend some time writing down their health information. Discuss with the class why this is important.
2. Preteach any vocabulary on the forms with which your students may be unfamiliar.
3. Provide copies of both forms, “My Medical History” and “My Medication List.” Keep in mind that many students may not have experience writing down this information before. Starting with the “My Medical History” form, provide some examples under each subject area of information students may want to include. You may want to have a completed sample form ready to show to the class.

More Information
The Virginia Adult ESOL Health Literacy Toolkit (available at http://www.valrc.org/toolkit/index.html) has a number of resources for educators and students, including

- reproducible lesson plans
- easy-to-read resources for ESOL students on using U.S. health care
- explanations of health literacy terms, concepts, and issues
- resources and tips to access affordable care
4. **Give students time to complete the form.** Assist them as necessary.

5. **If you think your students would be comfortable with it, ask if anyone would like to share any information from their forms.** Emphasize that they do not have to share information that they feel is private.

6. **If students are having trouble with the form or find it difficult to complete, encourage them to take it home and complete it for the next class.**

7. **Tell students to keep the form and bring it with them to any medical appointments.** Offer students additional copies of the form in case their health information is more lengthy.

8. **If students are computer proficient, ask if they would like to receive an email link to the form.**

9. **Follow a similar format with the “My Medication List” form on page 6.** However, take the time to review the two examples that appear at the top of that form.

   Medication information can be complicated, and students may not have answers for all columns. Using the Word version of the form available on the toolkit website (go to http://www.valrc.org/toolkit/learners.html and click on the “.docx format” for items 6.4 and 6.5), you can eliminate some of the columns that appear on the “My Medication List” form to tailor it for beginning learners. You can also increase the size of the boxes.

10. **If students have a higher proficiency level, discuss the value of listing both prescription and over-the-counter medications.**

---

**More Information**

Here are more links from the toolkit that may be of interest.

**Health Literacy Basics**
Includes a brief discussion of what health literacy is and why it is important.

**Links for Learners**
http://www.valrc.org/toolkit/learners.html
Includes links to seven areas to assist students in understanding health information. Two of the links are featured in this article.

**Using Online Resources in ESOL Health Literacy Instruction**
http://www.valrc.org/toolkit/docs/5-1UsingOnline.pdf
Features some websites that can be used to help ESOL students with health literacy concerns.

**Healthy Literacy Significance for Special Populations**
http://www.valrc.org/toolkit/intro.html
Scroll down to Health Literacy Significance for Special Populations, and you’ll find links to health concerns specific to populations found among ESOL learners: migrant workers, the incarcerated, the elderly, family literacy, the sandwich generation, refugees, learners who are deaf or hard of hearing, and learners who are blind or have low vision.
6.4 My Medical History

Name: _______________________    Date of Birth: ______________

Health problems I have:
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Allergies I have:  
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Medicines I take:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dose</th>
<th>Times I take it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surgeries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of surgery</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Health problems in my family: ______________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: ___________________________________</th>
<th>Date of Birth: ________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of medicine:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date I started taking it:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Color and shape:</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is it for?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dose:</strong></td>
<td><strong>How often do I take it?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What time(s) do I take it?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Do not take it with:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advil**
red round pill 200 mg
When I need it for pain Every 6 hours

**Amoxicillin**
1/1/13
pill round pink 250 mg
For 2 weeks Mealtime

**Example:**
1/1/13
pill round pink 250 mg
For 2 weeks Mealtime

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is President Obama’s new law to ensure health care coverage for U.S. citizens. Even though the ACA (also known as Obamacare) had a December deadline to begin health care coverage in January of this year, there’s still time until March 31st to obtain a health insurance plan through it. Additionally, the plan is slated to have an open enrollment period each year. Here are some resources to use with students to help them learn about and take advantage of their coverage options.

HealthCare.gov
https://www.healthcare.gov/
The Health Insurance Marketplace is the federal source for finding and comparing health coverage options for all budgets and needs as well as enrolling.

The YooToons Get Ready for Obamacare
http://kff.org/health-reform/
This seven-minute video from the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation provides a light, easy-to-follow, news-style explanation of the ACA’s impact. This video is best geared toward native English speakers, although higher-level ESOL students may be able to follow the video’s captions.

Affordable Care Act Brochures and Educational Presentations
http://www.hhs.gov/iea/acaresources/index.html
A variety of links on the site above, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, explain to consumers how the ACA affects them. The site includes PowerPoint presentations, printable files, and videos. There is also a video in Spanish.

The New Health Care Law and You
http://www.iom.edu/4questionsGuide
Published on the Institute of Medicine website, this is a 22-page guide to help consumers understand the ACA.

Helping Consumers Understand and Use Health Insurance in 2014
http://iom.edu/~/media/Files/Perspectives-Files/2013/Discussion-Papers/BPH-Helping-Consumers-Understand.pdf
The Institute of Medicine (IOM) Roundtable on Health Literacy has prepared a discussion paper that presents basic information to help consumers of all types to understand their health insurance options.

Choose More Understandable and Actionable Materials
http://www.ahrq.gov/pemat/
The online tool above from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality allows users to assess the effectiveness of their patient educational materials, such as brochures, medical instructions, and audiovisual aids. The tool provides a systematic method to evaluate and compare the understandability and actionability of patient education materials.
Using Remind 101 in the Classroom

**Purpose**
To explore with students the use of new technology with help from the website and app Remind 101.

**Rationale**
With students’ lives moving in many directions, it can be hard to efficiently notify everyone about important reminders. And yet, most of us who have texting capability will look instantly—and perhaps multiple times—at new text messages. A new, free website and app called Remind 101 (http://www.remind101.com) can help you remind learners about class-related news, events, or areas of study via text messages. You can do so without revealing your phone number. Remind 101 is used in all kinds of educational settings; in the K–12 setting, teachers are using it to communicate with both students and parents.

**How to Use Remind 101**
Sign up for the service on the website or via the Remind 101 app for iPhone, iPad, or Android by providing your name and a password. You can create up to 10 classes, and each class will have a unique code and phone number. Once you provide that code and phone number to students, they can go to Remind 101, provide the class code and phone number, and they will receive the messages you send. They can choose to receive messages via email, text, or both.

You can set up messages in advance. For example, one instructor sets up deadlines and messages for her entire class prior to the class starting. The Remind 101 system sends messages to her students at the appointed time.

Before students sign up, remind them that this is a one-way text tool—meaning that your students will not be able to reply to your message.

**Ideas to Use Remind 101 in Adult Ed**
Programs and teachers can use Remind 101 to:
- send messages about orientations, cancelled classes, or special events;
- remind students about due dates, tests, and homework;
- send a “word of the day” message (great for ESOL students);
- let students know when instructors or programs have office hours; and
- answer questions about assignments.

See the left sidebar for frequently asked technical questions about Remind 101.
Minimal Pairs to Boost Pronunciation

**Purpose**
To help students hear the difference between two sounds (listening) and then to correctly pronounce each of the sounds (speaking).

**Rationale**
Simple differences in word-level pronunciation can get in the way of English comprehension and pronunciation. Minimal pairs are a simple and fun way for students to practice sound differences. Minimal pairs are two words that differ only in one sound (e.g., *hat*/*bat*, *rake*/*rate*, *bit*/*beat*). The sound difference can appear anywhere in the words (beginning, middle, end).

This activity focuses on the sounds /l/ and /r/, but see our sidebar resources for a list of other sounds that you could use. Adapt this exercise using the sounds that your students find difficult.

This activity is reprinted with permission and slightly adapted from *Teaching Adults: An ESL Resource Book* (2012; New Readers Press).

**The Basic Activity**

**Before Class**

1. **Prepare a list of words to demonstrate the minimal pair that you will focus on.** Here is an example of a minimal pair list for /l/ and /r/, which are the focus of this article:

   /l/   /r/
   lip   rip
   lock   rock
   lap   rap
   late   rate

**More Information**

Here are resources to help students master pronunciation difficulties:

**Pronunciation Worksheets**
http://www.englishclub.com/esl-worksheets/pronunciation/index.htm

Scroll down to “Minimal Pairs” to find links to ready-to-use worksheets focusing on minimal pairs such as /b/ and /p/, /g/ and /j/, /f/ and /v/, and more.

**Phonetics: The Sounds of Spoken Language**
http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/#

This site from the University of Iowa features the phonetic sounds of American English, German, and Spanish. The site contains some linguistic terms that might be difficult for students, so it is best suited for higher-level or even college-prep focused ESOL students.
More Information

Here are more resources to help students master pronunciation difficulties.

Pronunciation: Minimal Pairs
The link features a lesson on how to teach minimal pairs and several examples of other minimal pairs to practice.

Minimal Pairs for Spanish, French Speakers
http://www.tinyteflteacher.co.uk/teacher/pronunciation/minimal-pairs-spanish.html
http://www.tinyteflteacher.co.uk/teacher/pronunciation/minimal-pairs-french.html
The website The Tiny EFL teacher gives examples of sounds in English that can be challenging for Spanish and French learners (see the separate links above). The links use some phonetic symbols that you will need to explain to students. To find sound challenges specific to other languages, search online under the search terms “minimal pairs for students.”

2. Create flashcards that students can use during the class activity. You can photocopy the sample flashcards that appear below. Or, in class, ask students to create one flashcard each for the sounds they will practice.

![Flashcards](image_url)

During Class

3. Ask students to listen to the difference between the two sounds as you say the first one and then the other (first the /l/ sound and then the /r/ sound).

4. Ask students to listen to the difference again. This time, as you pronounce the /l/ sound, raise the l flashcard. As you pronounce the /r/ sound, raise the r flashcard.

5. Read the first pair of words on the list (lip/rip). After you read each word, ask the student to point to one of the flashcards to indicate which sound the word begins with. If this is hard for students, demonstrate by saying each word again and raising the appropriate flashcard.

6. Repeat the process with the first few pairs on the list.

7. When students understand what to do, begin alternating between reading the /l/ word first or the /r/ word first.

8. Go back through the list, and have students repeat the words in pairs after you.

9. Put the words into sentences so students can practice saying the two sounds in sentences.
Creating Graphs to Improve Visual and Numerical Literacy

Purpose
To show students how they can create a graph (e.g., bar, pie, line) electronically.

Rationale
Visual literacy is an increasingly important skill for adult learners. For example, the new computer-based GED® exam debuting this year will include questions that require students to plot points on a graph or grid electronically. The exam will also include a greater emphasis on graphs across various content areas, including social studies, science, and math.

The activity here shows how students can create a graph with the help of an electronic resource. This resource is available on the National Center for Educational Statistics’ website at http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/createagraph/. Although it appears in the Kids’ Zone section, it can easily be adjusted for adult classroom needs. As students work through the various tabs in the activity, there are definitions on the left to help explain the terms used.

This activity would work well with lessons related to visual literacy or a subject-based lesson where students have to demonstrate data on a topic. The activity below assumes students have some familiarity with what graphs are and the different types of graphs used.

More Information
Here are more resources that students can use to learn about graphs.

Make Your Own Graphs
http://www.mathsisfun.com/data/graphs-index.html
The Math Is Fun website features create-your-own graph options geared specifically toward math, including equation grapher, function grapher, and more.

Create a Chart
http://tinyurl.com/98kxhmt
This site explains how to create a chart using Microsoft Office.

What’s in a Graph?
This lesson from the American Association for the Advancement of Science shows how to introduce graphs to students.
Graphs and charts are great because they communicate information visually. For this reason, graphs are often used in newspapers, magazines and businesses around the world.

NCES constantly uses graphs and charts in our publications and on the web. Sometimes, complicated information is difficult to understand and needs an illustration. Graphs or charts can help impress people by getting your point across quickly and visually.

Here you will find five different graphs and charts for you to consider. Not sure about which graph to use? Confused between bar graphs and pie charts? Read our:

Create A Graph Tutorial
The Basic Activity

1. **Plan with students their purpose for creating a graph.** Help them decide which type of graph might best work for the data they want to show—bar, line, area, pie, or XY are the options on the site. See a sample graph we have created below.

2. **Have enough computers available for everyone in the class.** Introduce students to the website. Encourage them to read the explanation under the “Help” tab on the left side. There is also a “Create a Graph” tutorial on that side. If you think your students need more support, show them graphs under the “Examples” tab.

3. **Have students choose their graph design under the “Graph Design” tab.** This covers shading and style.

4. **Then ask students to work on their data using the “Data” tab.** They will need to provide a title for their graph, a source, and insert item labels and values.

   Under “Data labels,” students can specify colors and font styles and sizes. If you think your students will get too weighed down by the details in this section, there are default selections that they can use.

5. **Under “Preview,” students can check the graph for accuracy.** If they type in something that the system does not understand, they will get an error message. For example, if they enter in “50%” under Value instead of just “50,” an error message will appear and explain what is wrong. Work with them to make corrections.

6. **In the final step, students can print, download, or email their graph.** They can also decide to erase the graph, start a new one, or copy to a new graph.

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**Topics of Interest to Notebook Readers**

- **Technology**: 30%
- **Reading**: 20%
- **Math**: 18%
- **Health literacy**: 17%
- **Professional development**: 15%

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*This is a hypothetical graph.*
New Data on Adult Literacy Released

http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/

ProLiteracy is urging the nation’s leaders to invest more resources in adult literacy and basic education in light of new data from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Some of PIAAC’s findings include:

- Low literacy (reading) skills continue to be a major problem in the United States. One in six adults has low literacy skills.

- In addition to low reading skills, nearly one-third of U.S. adults have significant deficiencies in numeracy—putting the U.S. below most of the other countries in the international study.

- Levels of our oldest workers are not better than our youngest workers, indicating little progress over the last two decades.

- Social and economic background continue to have a strong influence on basic skills in the United States—to a much greater extent than in many other countries in the study.

- In the United States, the odds of reporting “fair” or “poor” health are four times greater for those with low literacy skills than for highly skilled adults. This is double the average ratio observed across participating countries.

New GED, Workplace Success Resources


Recently released resources from New Readers Press will help students be successful with the new GED® exam and boost their workplace skills. “Writing for the GED Test” (see first link above) is a series of writing books to prep for the grammar, mechanics, reading comprehension, and extended responses and short answers that students will need to provide with the new exam.

“Job Success” (second link above) is an overview of soft skills to prepare for work, such as understanding paychecks and workplace policies, resolving conflicts, and more. The English level of “Job Success” is similar to that of News for You: levels 4–6.
Martin Luther King, Jr. Speech and Information
http://www.theliteracytribune.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=312&Itemid=57
Help students learn more about Martin Luther King, Jr. and U.S. civics with the article above, published in The Literacy Tribune. In honor of the speech’s 50-year anniversary in 2013, the article includes an excerpt from the original speech as well as biographical information about King. The article also contains audio of his speech.

Valentine’s Day Activities
http://floridaliteracy.wordpress.com/2013/02/05/celebrate-valentines-day-with-your-learner/
ESOL students can have fun prepping for Valentine’s Day with special activities found on the Florida Literacy Coalition’s blog. The site above includes other links to Valentine’s Day cloze activities, a crossword puzzle, printable cards to write a letter to a loved one, and a YouTube video that shows people saying “I love you” in 100 languages.

Using Original Historical Documents in the Classroom
http://docsteach.org/
Give students a glimpse into American history with the National Archives’ Docs Teach website. The site has original documents, maps, images, and charts organized by time period. Examples of documents on the site include the U.S. Constitution and the Emancipation Proclamation. There are also ready-to-use classroom activities based on the documents. This site is potentially a great resource for GED teachers, as the new GED emphasizes the use of primary source documents.

Learning English at a Museum
This link from the Institute of Museum and Library Services profiles how a college-prep-level English program at CUNY-Queensborough Community College in New York used artwork from local museums to help students improve their English and engage in critical thinking. The literacy program, called Cultures & Literacies Through Arts in the 21st Century, was funded by a 2011 National Leadership Grant. The concept may provide ideas for other programs around the nation.

Prepping to Use the New GED Test Calculator
The 2014 GED exam will use a new calculator, the Texas Instruments TI-30XS. On the site above, Texas Instruments has 15 activities related to number theory, algebra, probability, and statistics to give students practice with the calculator.

Last Reader Standing: The Story of a Man Who Learned to Read at 54
http://www.amazon.com/Last-Reader-Standing-Story-Learned-ebook/dp/B00EKTONUU
When Last Reader Standing author Archie Willard lost his job at a meat packing company after 31 years, he had to confront not knowing how to read. Last Reader Standing is Willard’s journey to learn to read at age 54. Willard has become a literacy advocate and has joined Barbara Bush on stage for her Literacy Foundation fundraisers. ProLiteracy is mentioned in the book.

Breaking Ground: Yesterday’s Dropouts
http://breakingground.wamu.org/anunfinished-education/
Breaking Ground: Yesterday’s Dropouts is a radio documentary focusing on those on the low end of the literacy spectrum. The documentary has segments focusing on literacy challenges people frequently face, the history of the GED test, a Washington state program that helps high school dropouts transition into college-level courses, and the high societal cost of low literacy. The segment series was produced by Washington, D.C.-based radio station WAMU.
San Diego resident Amelia Sandoval has not had an easy path in life. When she started adult education classes about two years ago, her literacy skills were so low that she could not take the TABE test. She was frustrated by her low skills, which made it hard for her to complete accurate testing.

Previously, Sandoval had been incarcerated. She was not able to take literacy classes in prison, but upon her release, she knew she wanted to go to school. She has faced post-traumatic stress disorder and other health issues, including diabetes, a heart attack in 2012, and a brief hospitalization in 2013.

After her heart attack, Sandoval, 33, thought, ‘I don’t want to die without my GED® certificate.’ As Sandoval took classes with San Diego Continuing Education, she eventually was able to pass three of the five GED exams. Although her 2013 hospital stay hindered her attempts to take the two remaining tests, she planned to finish by the end of 2013.

Now that her literacy skills have blossomed, so have Sandoval’s plans for her life. She uses phone apps and electronic planning tools to assist with school and to get to appointments on time. She is heavily involved as a volunteer with an annual comic book convention held in San Diego and was able last year to take notes and assist VIPs.

Sandoval has a passion for animals and plans to attend a nearby community college’s veterinary tech program. She spends time each week helping to rescue animals around San Diego.

San Diego Continuing Education resource teacher Marie Doerner says that Sandoval continues to reframe her life so she can continue to attend school, despite her challenges. “She’s touched the hearts of everybody here,” says Doerner.

Sandoval’s accomplishments have led her to appear in a promotional video for the San Diego Council on Literacy. She also has had her writing published in WE LEARN’s journal, Women’s Perspectives, and received a scholarship to present her writing at a WE LEARN conference in Rhode Island. She was scheduled to appear on a panel discussion before the mayor of Chula Vista.

Doerner nominated Sandoval for the 2013 Ruth C. Colvin and Frank C. Laubach Award for Adult Learner Excellence. Sandoval won the award; the prize included covering her expenses and registration fee to attend the USCAL conference just held in Washington, D.C.

Sandoval encourages other learners in similar situations to persist. “It doesn’t matter how many times you fail. Everyone fails. Never give up,” she says.