Editor's Corner

Welcome to the fall issue of Notebook. With new classes often starting in the fall, we include in our current issue the article “3 Interactive Speaking Activities for Your Class.” It’s a grab bag of fun and easy conversation activities, many suitable for multilevel classrooms. You’re sure to find something you can use in your class setting to help students practice English and get to know each other better.

Politics are constantly on our radar nowadays, and this issue of Notebook shares two practical ways to get students involved without getting caught up in the rhetoric. Our first story, “5 Ways to Detect Fake News,” helps students distinguish fake sources from real sources. It’s a great news literacy topic.

Our second story in this series, “Writing a Letter to Your Lawmakers,” walks you through the process of writing a letter to legislators with your class. The story also talks about ProLiteracy’s Letters for Literacy campaign from earlier this year.

With new classes this fall, you may be looking for ways to better reach students through your teaching techniques. We commonly teach with a focus on our own learning style, without considering the styles that others prefer. “Help Students Find Their Learning Style” covers three basic learning styles and how you can present your material using each of those styles.

Exploring Resources has the usual variety of interesting web links, including updated information on the ProLiteracy Conference on Adult Literacy to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in September.

Finally, in this issue’s Tutor Profile, see how tutoring helped Florida-based tutor Beverly Hollows through a difficult time and how she continues to show her dedication to learners.

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

The Editor
3 Interactive Speaking Activities for Your Class

Purpose
To encourage new or established classes to practice speaking to each other, for general practice or to help students get to know one another.

Rationale
Students may feel a little awkward talking to each other at first in a new class. It can be fun to have speaking activities that get students out of their seats and help them get to know one another. The following activities also work well in established classes, particularly in an ESOL setting.

The Basic Activities

Interview Grid
An interview grid gives students practice with speaking, listening, and writing. It can be used with just about any topic you are studying in class, and it helps connect the material you cover to students’ lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your name?</th>
<th>Where are you from?</th>
<th>Where do you live?</th>
<th>How many children do you have?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Decide what the purpose of your grid will be.** Is it to help students get to know one another better? Is there a focus on a specific topic, such as health, work, or shopping?

2. **Draw a 4 by 4 grid on the board.** It should have 16 total squares (see sample above). Ask students to draw the grid in their notebooks. They should make them large enough to write answers in each square.

More Information

Conversation Questions for the ESL/EFL Classroom
http://iteslj.org/questions/
Want to get students talking more? The Internet TESL Journal has links to questions on a large variety of topics, from neighborhoods to parties to pets, manners, and more. You can pick and choose questions depending on your class focus and proficiency level.

7 Superb ESL Activities That Will Get Your ESL Students Chatting
http://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/speaking-activities-for-esl-students/
This blog article features several interactive speaking activities, including a debate and pair work. Although the article does include some promotional information about the product FluentU, the speaking activities are useful for classes.

ESL Methods and Approaches
http://www.cal.org/caela/tools/instructional/esl_methods.html
Although this brief from the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition is helpful on its own, it’s included here because there is a brief description of an activity called Hot Seat, which provides speaking practice and practice with specific grammar points or vocabulary. It also helps students get to know each other better.
3. **Explain to students that they will talk to each other about the topic you have selected.** You can even introduce the concept of interviewing at this point. Tell them that the first question they will write in the top left-hand corner is “What is your name?”

4. **Work with the class to come up with three more questions that they can ask each other about the topic.** For instance, if you have a new class of students and your goal is to help with general introductions, here are a few questions they could write at the top:
   - Where do you live?
   - Do you work?
   - How many children do you have?
   - What is your favorite food?
   - Where are you from?

As your class reaches a higher proficiency level, students can make the questions more complex.

5. **Make sure everyone understands the questions.** With a volunteer, model how to “interview” each other and model correct pronunciation. You can also write the volunteer’s answers on the board as you “interview” him or her so students see they only need to write short answers, not complete sentences. For instance, for the question about children, you could just write “3” instead of “He has three children.”

6. **Have students circulate around the room to interview at least three classmates about the topic.** Encourage students to get out of their seats and talk to people they don’t know.

7. **When everyone is finished, come together as a class to talk about the answers.** Look for trends and teaching points in students’ answers.

### Concentric Circles

This activity helps build fluency through repetition. Students become more confident as they repeat the same information multiple times and have the opportunity to add more language as they rotate around the circle.

The description for this activity is taken from the Minnesota Literacy Council and slightly modified. To see a demonstration of this activity, watch the Minnesota Literacy Council’s two related videos. Visit [http://mnliteracy.org/classroomvideos](http://mnliteracy.org/classroomvideos) and go to “Concentric Circles.”

1. Students should stand in two circles with the same number of students in each circle, with the inner circle facing out, and the outer circle facing in.
2. Tell the inner circle that they are the speakers. Tell the outer circle that they are the listeners.
3. Give students a topic, such as a favorite food, what they did over the weekend, or advice.
4. Students in the inner circle talk to their partners for 30 seconds about the topic.
5. Say, “Stop!” The speakers move one space clockwise.
6. Give students in both circles a chance to be the speakers. Students can report back what they heard.

Some ideas to adapt this exercise further:

• Coach learners who are listening to practice active listening techniques such as smiling, nodding, using rejoinders (“Uh-huh,” “Really?” and “Great!”).
• Each time the speakers move to a new partner, increase the amount of time by 30 more seconds. This will encourage them to add in more details and description. Conversely, to help students practice summarizing, start with a longer time (two to three minutes), and reduce the length of time that they have to speak by 30 seconds each time the speakers move to a new partner. This will require the speakers to become more succinct with each turn.

**Which Would You Rather Do?**

This activity helps students get to know each other better and provides speaking practice. It’s best for students who can understand the meaning of “Which would you rather do?” and “I’d rather ________.” The activity is taken from “Listening and Speaking Activities for Adult ESL Learners” (see link in sidebar on page 4).

1. Use the cards on page 6 of this issue. Copy and cut enough cards so there is at least one full set per every three learners. You can also make your own cards.
2. Show students how to take turns drawing a card, asking a question, and answering. Practice with a volunteer. Explain that the student who draws the card reads the card and asks the other partners which they would rather do and why. For example:

   **Student 1:** Would you rather go to a party or stay home alone?
   **Student 2:** I would rather stay home alone.
   **Student 1:** Why?
   **Student 2:** Because a party is too noisy and crowded. I am tired at night and a party is late.

3. Encourage students to go through the cards with their partners, so each student has at least a couple of turns answering questions.
4. Come together as a class to hear about answers that were given. Identify any trends or teaching topics.

**More Information**

**Conversation Starters**

The following questions come from the link found on the page 3 sidebar called “Conversation Questions for the ESL/EFL Classroom.” These are just a small sample of what you can find on the link. We’ve grouped the questions shown here by categories used on the page. Use these questions to help get your students chatting!

**Animals and Pets**

- If you don’t have a pet, why not?
- Would you ever consider getting a pet?
- Did you grow up with pets in your home?
- What are the pros and cons of keeping a pet?

**Home**

- If you could change anything about your present home, what would it be?
- Is your home in a convenient location?

**Weekend**

- What do you like to do during the weekend?
- What did you do last weekend?
- What does T.G.I.F. mean?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>activity 1</th>
<th>activity 2</th>
<th>activity 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>swim</td>
<td>watch TV</td>
<td>get up early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– OR – play tennis</td>
<td>– OR – read a magazine</td>
<td>– OR – sleep late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go to a party</td>
<td>own a dog</td>
<td>vacation at the beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– OR – stay home alone</td>
<td>– OR – own a cat</td>
<td>– OR – vacation in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use Facebook</td>
<td>go the grocery store</td>
<td>drive a small car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– OR – talk to real people</td>
<td>– OR – go to a home</td>
<td>– OR – drive a large car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improvement store</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work from home</td>
<td>go to the movies</td>
<td>visit the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– OR – work outside the</td>
<td>– OR – go to dinner</td>
<td>– OR – visit the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Ways to Detect Fake News

Purpose
To help adult students determine real versus fake sources in news stories.

Rationale
Thanks to the continuing political climate in Washington, D.C., “fake news” continues to be a hot topic. Although savvy readers and news consumers may be able to easily detect real versus fake news, this isn’t always the case for adult education students, especially those who are learning English as a second language. This activity introduces the concept of real versus fake news and helps learners know how to tell the difference. It is geared toward ESOL classes but may be used in other adult education settings. The activity would work well with any current events-focused classes or perhaps even classes that focus on community or EL/civics.

The Basic Activity
1. Before class starts, write some fake news headlines about your school or community on the board or in a central area of the class where everyone can see them. For example, “School to Let Dogs Register for Classes” or “It Rains Cats and Dogs in [your town here].” You can have fun with the headlines and make them a little silly or serious (but fake).
2. Tell students that a news headline is a title to a story about news. Have students read the news headlines. Ask them what they think about the headlines. Let students know that the news is fake, or not real. Ask students if they have heard the term “fake news” before.
3. Have a class or small-group discussion regarding the following questions:
   • Do you read or watch the news every day?
   • Where do you read or watch the news?
   • Why do you think the news is important?
   • Do you ever read a news story and think it’s not real? Why?
   • Why do you think someone would want to write a fake news story?
4. Let the class know they will learn about some ways to detect fake news. Hand out copies of the handout on page 8 of this issue. Go over each point with students. Have students answer the questions in items 1, 2, and 3 (answers are a, b, and a). Discuss the reading and go over any new words. Make sure to bring up the concept of fake news when your class reads and evaluates future news articles.

More Information

Ten Questions for Fake News Detection
http://tinyurl.com/h8ckwxe
The News Literacy Project shares questions to help detect fake news. This could make a good handout to use with your class, but review it first to make sure the English is not too difficult for your students.

Fake or Real? How To Self-Check The News And Get The Facts
http://tinyurl.com/hokjvow
This article from NPR focuses on the importance of detecting fake news.

Finding Reliable Sources in a World of ‘Fake News’
This helpful article from teacher Larry Ferlazzo focuses on teaching fake news literacy to ESOL students.
How to Tell Fake News From Real News

1. **Who’s writing it?** If you read news online, you’ll usually find real news from sites that end in .org, .edu, or .com. These are sites used for organizations, schools, and real news organizations.

   *Which one is probably from a real news site?*
   
   a. www.actionnews.com  
   b. www.actionnews.co

2. **Read the headline.** A real news headline will be a little more serious. A fake news headline might use exclamation marks (!) or make it seem as though the news is something you can’t find anywhere else.

   *Which news headline seems to be more real?*
   
   a. Secrets About the President You’ll Only Find Here!  
   b. Report Finds the President Once Had a Restaurant Business

3. **Read the “About Us” section of the website.** This can tell you if the writers of the story work for a real news organization. If the “About Us” section says a lot about someone’s opinions, there’s a greater chance that the news will be more about opinions versus reporting facts.

   *Which “About Us” section would be from a real news site?*
   
   a. USA Facts has written about U.S. politics for 30 years. We have won journalism awards for our truthful stories.  
   b. U.S. Knows wants everyone to know the secrets about American politics. We believe in a big change for the U.S. government!

4. **Do a reverse image search.** If you want to make sure that a picture with a story is real, you can do something called a reverse image search. Right click on the image and search for it online. “If the image is appearing on a lot of stories about many different topics, there’s a good chance it’s not actually an image of what it says it was on the first story,” according to a story about fake news from NPR.

5. **Search for the headline or topic online.** If you see that other major news organizations (such as The New York Times, NPR, or The Washington Post) have similar stories, there’s a greater chance that it’s a real story.

Sources: NPR, The News Literacy Project, and The New York Times (see links in sidebar)
Writing a Letter to Your Lawmakers

Purpose
To guide students through the process of writing a letter to their local senator or member of the House of Representatives.

Rationale
It’s more important than ever that students stay involved in the civics process and make their opinion heard. Earlier this year ProLiteracy sponsored a Letters for Literacy campaign to speak out against cuts to adult education spending in the proposed fiscal 2018 budget (see sidebar; by the time this issue is published, the budget may already be set). Students can choose an issue of importance to them and write a letter to voice their opinions to a local lawmaker. This activity is appropriate for any motivated adult class that may not be familiar with writing a letter to local lawmakers. Within the ESOL setting, it is best suited for intermediate or advanced classes.

This activity would fit in well with a class focused on EL/civics, although it could also be an interesting lesson for any class.

The Basic Activity
1. **Think about an issue that’s important to your class.** It could be at a national or local level. To help decide on a topic, consider what students have discussed as important to them. The topic you write about will flow more naturally if it is something important to students. At this point, you can decide if the class will collectively decide on a focus for letter writing or if you will choose a topic that you think is of interest to everyone for the letters.

2. **Ask students how to let a local lawmaker know their opinion on a specific issue.** Brainstorm ideas, but focus on writing a letter that can be emailed or sent via regular mail.

3. **Let students know that a good letter to a local lawmaker usually follows a specific style.** Be ready to show students a copy of the letter on page 11 of this issue. Point out the different parts of the letter, including their own address, the representative’s address, and the body paragraphs. Point out that the first paragraph talks about why they are contacting the representative. The second and third paragraphs provide more details. The letter ends with a signature. You can point out that this sample letter is to a representative from Congress, but you may also write to other lawmakers, including your state’s U.S. senators.

More Information

Letters for Literacy
Earlier this year, ProLiteracy sponsored a Letters for Literacy campaign, which encouraged students and tutors to write to their local representatives to support continued funding for adult literacy programs.

The campaign included information on proposed cuts to adult education, letter templates for both students and tutors/volunteers, a link to find the local representative’s name and contact information, and a link to facts about adult literacy. The campaign also encouraged programs to share their letters via social media using the phrase #LettersforLiteracy. Although the campaign was focused on the budget, the following links may still have useful information to teach about writing to a local lawmaker.

**Letters for Literacy General Link**
https://www.proliteracy.org/Letters-for-Literacy

Make sure to read the information at the bottom of this page about the seven impacts of low adult basic skills.

**Letter template links**
https://www.proliteracy.org/Get-Involved/Letters-for-Literacy/Letter-Templates

**Adult literacy facts**
http://tinyurl.com/yczoh6vj
4. **Discuss with students what to focus on in your their letters.** Ideally, you will have some idea of the topic before your class reaches this point.

5. **Show students how to find the name of a local congressperson.** For example, if you are writing a letter to your local representative in the House of Representatives, you can use the website http://www.house.gov/htbin/findrep and search that person’s name by your zip code. A full list of senators, and their contact information, is available at https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/. You can remind students that each state has two senators and that states have various representatives, but there is always one specific to your local area.

If the topic of your letter is even more local, you may want to research who the right person in local government is and their contact information.

You’ll want to decide ahead of time if you plan to send a letter to this person by mail or email.

6. **Work with students to create their letter.** Depending on your class level, you may want to help them create a generic letter where they sign their name or add one or two original sentences toward the end. Use the letter on page 11 as a model. Write the generic letter together as a class on the board or typed up and projected onto a screen. At this point students don’t have to do anything except help you create the letter text. However, some students may start to copy what you write.

6. **Work with students to type their letters.** Decide if you will email the letters or print and mail them. If you use email, prepare to guide students through the standardized email form that many lawmakers’ websites use.

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**More Information**

The following links provide more ideas and tips for writing letters to lawmakers:

**Writing to Your Legislators**
http://www.nea.org/home/19657.htm
This link from the National Education Association shares some helpful tips. The reading may be too difficult for some classes, but you as the instructor can keep the tips in mind when helping students create their letters.

**Sample Letter**
This shows a sample letter to send to a legislator. It’s shared by the North Los Angeles County Regional Center.

**Effective Communication With a Legislator**
https://www.flsenate.gov/About/EffectiveCommunication
The Florida Senate shares helpful suggestions for letter writing that can apply to anyone in any state.

**Refugee Children Write Letters to Local Lawmakers**
http://tinyurl.com/y8unyv7b
This February story from Salt Lake City, Utah, tells how some refugee children wrote letters to local lawmakers to speak out about immigration and family separation. The short story and two-minute related video could be effective to show to your class. The students in the story/video are in their teens.
Jane Perez
Adult Day School
6522 Learning Way
Rockville, California 94225

Sept. 20, 2017

The Honorable Jim Miller
U.S. House of Representatives
1620 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Miller:
As a student of an adult literacy program, I am writing to you today to ask for your support for adult literacy and students like myself across the country who want to gain basic skills and live improved, more fulfilling lives.

Research shows that 36 million adults, or 1 in 6, have low literacy skills. Lower-skilled adults are more likely to be unemployed or out of the labor force than they are to be employed. Children of parents with lower literacy levels start school at a disadvantage. This inequality can continue well into a child’s education, and into the later years of their lives.

I am in an adult education class right now, and it has helped me improve my life. I am finding a better job, and I could not do that without the right classes.

Thank you for your time and considering my request for your support.

Sincerely,

Jane Perez
Help Students Find Their Learning Style

Purpose
To walk adult students through an assessment to find their preferred learning style.

Rationale
If students are aware of their dominant learning style, they can use strategies based on that style to help them learn more efficiently. By knowing your students’ dominant styles, you can be more mindful of the importance of teaching to all styles.

This activity focuses on three learning styles often grouped together: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. However, our sidebar includes links to more comprehensive learning style inventories, such as those related to multiple intelligences.

This lesson is best suited for intermediate or advanced ESOL or pre-high-school equivalency classes. The lesson could potentially be used as an icebreaker during a new semester.

The Basic Activity
1. **Ask students: “What do you do when you need to study for a test?”**
   Brainstorm ideas with the class and write them on the board. Ask students which activities help them the most. For instance, some students may read over their notes, but they find it most helpful if someone reads them questions that they answer about the material.

2. **Write the phrase “Learning Styles” on the board.** Ask if anyone knows what this means. Explain that these are ways different people prefer to learn. See what questions or ideas students have about this. Ask: “Why might it be helpful to know your learning style?” Students should respond that it can help them to learn more quickly or in a way that helps them understand material easier.

3. **Write the following words on the board: Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic.** Ask if learners know what these terms mean. Explain a little bit about each term’s definition in relation to learning styles:
   - **Visual:** Works best by seeing things. This can include pictures, maps, and text.
   - **Auditory:** Works best by hearing things. This person generally remembers oral instructions well.
   - **Kinesthetic:** Works best by touching or being active with what the person is learning.
If you want to describe more about learning styles at this point, you can use one of the resources in the sidebar. Ask them if they think they know what style they are. Remind students that no style is better than another and that it is great to use all styles when learning.

4. **Have students take a quiz to find their style.** If you have access to the internet and multiple computers, students can take the online quiz available from EducationPlanner.org. The page is called “What's your learning style?” and it's found at: http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles-quiz.shtml. It's a 20-question quiz. Circulate to make sure students understand the questions and that they click the red button on the right to submit their answers. Tell them to stop when they reach the results page. Take the quiz in advance so you can anticipate any questions that may arise from it.

If you do not have internet access in class, you can print a similar questionnaire called the VAK Learning Styles Self-Assessment Questionnaire. It's available at http://www.businessballs.com/freepdfmaterials/vak_learning_styles_questionnaire.pdf. This questionnaire has 30 questions. Unlike the online quiz, students will not automatically see their results. For the VAK questionnaire, students will have to add up their A, B, and C answers to determine which category fits them best.

5. **Have students make note of their preferred learning style.** Once everyone is finished, ask all visual students to stand in one area of the classroom, all auditory students in another area of the classroom, and all kinesthetic students in one area of the classroom.

6. **Copy and pass out the handout below.** Talk about ways to help each group of learners with their learning style.

7. **Emphasize learning styles through the rest of your lessons.** Continue to remind students to think about their preferred learning styles. Think of ways you can teach to all learning styles.

### How to Learn Better With Your Learning Style

The following information is adapted from the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency’s website EducationPlanner.org and other websites focused on learning styles.

#### Auditory

Auditory learners learn best by listening and hearing. It’s easier for you to follow spoken instructions rather than written ones. One strategy to help you learn is by reading out loud; this allows you to hear something so you learn it better. Some other learning suggestions for auditory learners include the following:

- Create and use flashcards to learn new words; read the flashcards out loud.
- For help with spelling, record yourself saying the spelling. Then listen to the recording.
- Ask a friend to read test questions to you out loud and then say your answer.

#### Visual

Visual learners learn best by reading or looking at pictures. The best way for visual learners to remember things is by sight. You can picture what you are learning in your head. Some learning suggestions for visual learners are the following:

- Try to visualize things you hear.
- Write down important words, ideas, or instructions.
- Draw pictures to help understand new ideas.
- Use different colors to organize study materials or information.

#### Kinesthetic/Tactile

If you learn best by touching and doing, you are a kinesthetic/tactile learner. Movement helps you understand and remember things. Another description for this type of learner is “hands-on.” You may even like to take things apart and put them back together, and you might move around when you are bored. Some learning suggestions for kinesthetic learners are the following:

- Touch, build, move, or draw when you are learning.
- To help with spelling, trace words with your finger.
- Take short but frequent breaks when reading or studying.
- Use a computer when learning; this helps involve your sense of touch.

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More Information

**What Is My Learning Style?**
http://www.whatismylearningstyle.com/auditory-learner.html

This website provides detailed information about each type of learning style. This is for auditory learners, but you can click on other links to the left of the web page to find information on the other styles. The readings on each page could provide an extra classroom activity related to the topic of learning styles.

**Multiple Intelligences Assessment**
https://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-assessment

This short quiz covers multiple intelligences, such as Linguistic, Naturalistic, Intrapersonal, etc. It’s a slightly different topic than the three main learning styles, but it could be a way to dig deeper into the topic of self-assessment if your class would like to discover more.

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Source: EducationPlanner.org
Lots of Fun and Learning at the ProLiteracy Conference on Adult Literacy

https://www.proliteracy.org/conference

The ProLiteracy Conference on Adult Literacy takes place September 27-30 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, at the Radisson Blu Mall of America. Build your network, knowledge, and resources. Find new ideas and learn from some of the best practitioners and influencers. Energize and rejuvenate your focus and determination. Features include over 100 workshops on a range of topics, including dyslexia, technology and digital literacy, and blended learning. There’s also an ABE Volunteer Management Pre-Conference, hosted by Minnesota Literacy Council, the XPRIZE “Appy” Hour, and a celebration for Ruth Colvin.

New Readers Press® Debuts New Products

http://www.newreaderspress.com

New Readers Press is releasing a number of new books this fall. Road to Work is a three-book series for English language learners aligned to the College and Career Readiness Standards and the new English Language Proficiency Standards. Each of the 12 lessons in each book contain a 200-word work-themed story and skill-building activities. Three additional books in the WorkWise series will help adult learners acquire the reading, writing, and math skills needed in today’s workforce. And, the best-selling Writing for the GED® Test series is now available in Spanish. This adapted curriculum will prepare your Spanish-speaking students to take the GED Reasoning through Language Arts test in their native language. Content is fully aligned to the Spanish RLA test.

Classroom Videos Demonstrate Common ESOL Lessons

http://mnliteracy.org/classroomvideos

Learn how to perform a variety of speaking, listening, reading, writing, and numeracy activities in your ESOL classes with this series of videos from the Minnesota Literacy Council. Each of the 17 activities/videos featured on the site includes a long video demonstration, a shorter video demonstration, and a PDF that explains the activity. Some of the featured activities include walking dictation, mingle grid, dialogues, and vocabulary bingo.

Report Covers Better Use of Technology by Underserved Populations


With the explosive interest in technology nowadays, instructors and programs naturally want to bring technology, like computer use, to students who may not otherwise have access to it. This report, written by the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, covers best practices to use technology with the population common in adult education classes.
The Change Agent Shares Resources for ESOL and ABE Teaching
http://changeagent.nelrc.org

The Change Agent is a biannual publication from the New England Literacy Resource Center and is geared to both ESOL and ABE teachers and students. The magazine’s website includes audio articles, PDFs of back issues, a sortable table of contents that shows reading levels, links to teaching-related webinars, and a grid that shows which articles in The Change Agent help instructors teach specific College and Career Readiness skills. The Change Agent offers paper and online subscriptions; rates range from $12 to $20 annually for individual subscriptions. The slated topic for its fall issue is career pathways.

Teaching Writing to Adult English Language Learners

Many ESOL learners need to improve their academic or professional writing skills. This 2016 research paper from Joy Kreeft Peyton, of the Center for Applied Linguistics, and Kristen Schaetzel, of Georgetown University, focuses on what students need versus what they actually learn when it comes to higher-level writing and shares suggestions to improve writing instruction. Some of the suggestions also can work for beginning-level classes. The paper was published in the Journal of Literature and Art Studies.

“Expecting the Best:” A Wellness Curriculum
http://www.cls.utk.edu/expectthebest.html

For a focus on health literacy, check out these 14 lessons from the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee. They are designed to improve health literacy and enhance English skills. Topics for the lessons include nutrition, visiting the doctor, and going to the emergency room. The student lessons are available in a 170-page PDF format, and the site also has an instructor’s manual.

Phonics Practice: The Sounds of Speech
http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/

Give students practice with the sounds of English with a website and app of the same name. Designed by the University of Iowa, the site allows users to listen to specific sounds in English and even watch someone pronouncing the sounds. Some knowledge of phonetics is helpful so users can find the sounds they want to practice. The site/app has the same program available for learning Spanish, German, and words associated with anatomy.
It’s no secret that adult education teachers touch the lives of their students. But students can come into and enrich their teachers’ lives just as much—often when it’s needed most.

That was the experience of Beverly Hollows, of Englewood, Florida. She always had wanted to be a teacher. She had a variety of jobs in her home state of Massachusetts, including director of a non-profit retirement home, registrar, and assistant to the president of a company.

A few years ago, her adult son developed brain and lung cancer. Supporting him through his first round of surgery and chemotherapy took a lot of Hollows’ energy, and she decided to visit Florida. She fell in love with the Sunshine State, ultimately moving there. She still spent time in Massachusetts, where her son eventually died from cancer in 2014. “When he died, I said ‘Now what?’” Hollows says.

Back in Florida, Hollows was inspired to take her son’s spirit and do something positive, and she became a volunteer tutor. She began to work with an 8-year-old boy through a program called Summer School Program for Children in Poverty.

She enjoyed the experience so much that she began to volunteer with The Literacy Council of Sarasota, Florida, in late 2015. There, she completed the ProLiteracy-certified Tutor Training program, and was paired with a 56-year-old grandfather from Vietnam named Soc. They would meet twice a week to prepare for the U.S. citizenship test. Soc also studied English at home. “He got up daily at 5 a.m. before taking his grandchildren to school each day,” she says. Preparing for the citizenship test opened the eyes of both Hollows and her student. “I learned a lot about the Constitution!” she says.

Soc passed the U.S. citizenship test last year, much to Hollows’ delight. Because of some recent transportation issues on Soc’s end, the two are not meeting regularly. However, she sends letters to Soc with a self-addressed stamped envelope and prompts him to write about topics of interest. He writes letters back and then gets another topic from Hollows. They also talk on the phone regularly and plan to begin meeting again this fall. “He says he feels better talking to his teacher,” Hollows says.

Hollows, who will turn 80 this year, has been touched by the experience of tutoring. “There are people who flow through your life that wouldn’t otherwise,” she says.

“Beverly is a kind, giving, soul. She deeply cares about her work with her learner and goes above and beyond,” says Susan Bergstrom, program director at The Literacy Council of Sarasota.