

Innovative Strategies



**Workforce Education Research Center
Professional Development Center
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education**

Ideas that work!



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Innovative Strategies
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What's Inside

**A Message from the Workforce Education Research Center
Professional Development Center ----- 5**

Introduction to the Foundation Skills Framework----- 6

Curriculum Development

Technology (and Cancel) is Our Friend -----9
Teaching the Teacher----- 13
It's All in The Journey! ----- 17
Teaching a Praxis of Ethics for Ex-Offenders ----- 22
Balancing Expectations While Learning What to Teach----- 26
The Power of Play ----- 32
Questions, Challenges, and Opportunities ----- 34
Real Life English for Workplace Classes ----- 39
Happy New Year ----- 41
Focusing Student Learning Toward Work Readiness Skills ----- 44
Life After Prison----- 48
Maximizing Instruction Time----- 52
Climbing the Mountain with the Recent High School Drop-Out ----- 55
What an Employer Expects and How to Keep the Job ----- 58

Expanding Capacity

Scaffolding Grants: A Strategy for Reaching Sustainability----- 63
Online Auction as Authentic Learning----- 66
Incorporating Foundation Skills in the Workforce Education Classroom ----- 70
A Crosswalk Toward Improved Workplace Skills ----- 74
Using Project Learning to Build Workplace and Educational Skills ----- 79
Adapting a Nurses Assistant Program for ESL ----- 84

Collaborative Efforts

Pipeline to Bottom Line: A Business and ABLE Partnership ----- 91
Winning Workers with WorkKeys: A Title I—Title II Collaboration----- 96



A Message from the Workforce Education Research Center Professional Development Center

The Workforce Education Research Center (WERC) Professional Development Center (PDC) provides support on research and effective practices in work-based foundation skills through funding, training, and technical assistance to adult education provider agencies funded through the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. This support helps to promote the use of work-based contextualized instruction in the classroom, workplace, and in one-on-one sessions.

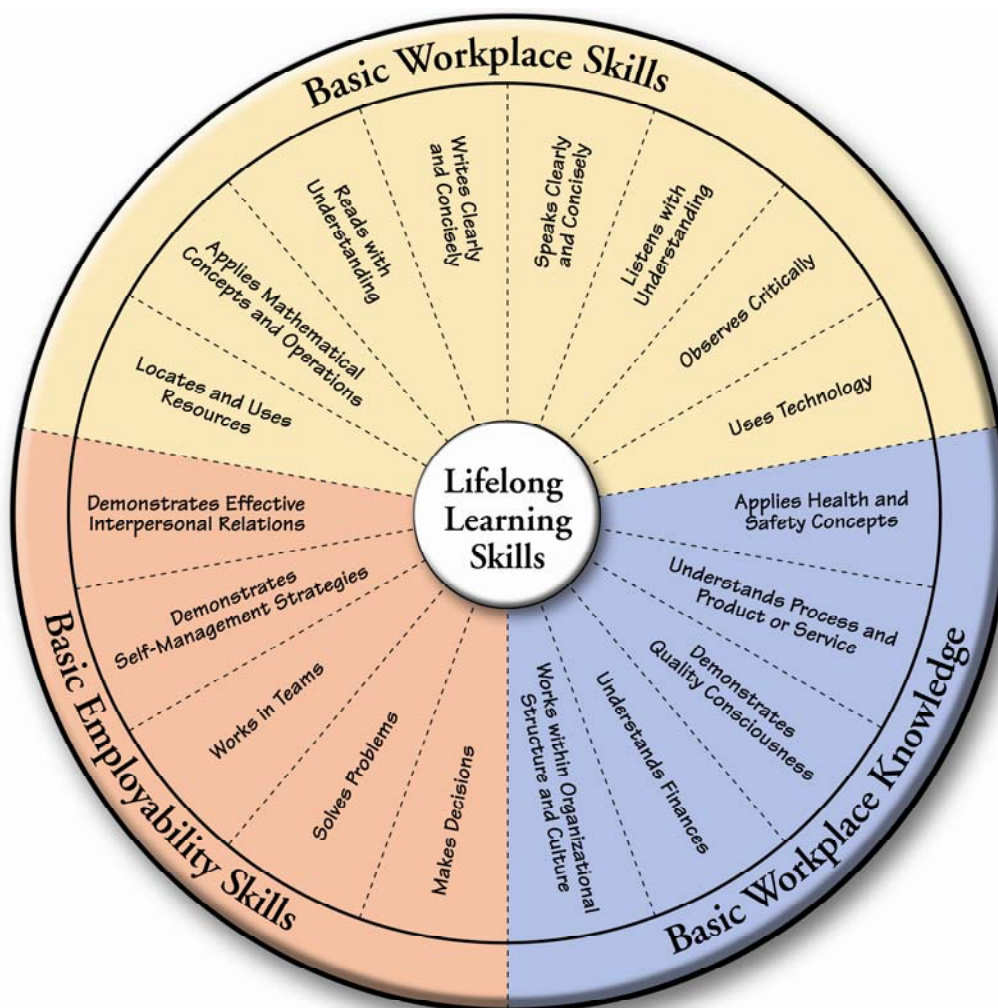
The articles included in this publication are stories from practitioners who are using the Foundation Skills Framework (see page 6) to guide their instruction. The authors wrote about *Innovative Strategies* that they used to incorporate these foundation skills. Included in their stories are the foundation skills that were addressed, key activities incorporated into instruction, resources used, students' reactions, and assessment tools used to determine learner gains.

We would like to thank all of the agencies and practitioners who provided articles for this publication.

Introduction to the Foundation Skills Framework

The success of any curriculum framework or instructional package depends on highly skilled and creative curriculum developers, instructors, facilitators, and trainers to provide an engaging and meaningful learning environment. The Foundation Skills Framework provides the skills and competencies to guide program and curriculum development, delivery, and evaluation. For example, agencies funded through the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) have used the framework for curriculum development in various ways:

- 1) To identify workplace skills and competencies to address in lesson plans and units in various subject areas or program components;
- 2) To develop a consistent format and common language for lesson planning;
- 3) To identify core competencies to address in a program-wide curriculum; and
- 4) To code available instructional resources to the foundation skills and identify gaps.





Curriculum Development



Technology (and Cancel) is Our Friend



By Bill McHenry

There is nothing as daunting as seeing the abject fear in an adult's eyes when you sit the novice down in front of a computer and say to them that they will be using that monster to create their home budgets or resume. But the reward is just as sweet when they hold that piece of printed paper in their hands near the end of a class and find that they have accomplished more than they set out to do for themselves. This is true with the students who have taken the Perry County Literacy Council's Basic Computer Skills course in the past, and it was certainly true of the men at the Perry County Prison (PCP) who may have touched a computer keyboard for the first time ever.

At the Beginning: GED® and Resume Writing

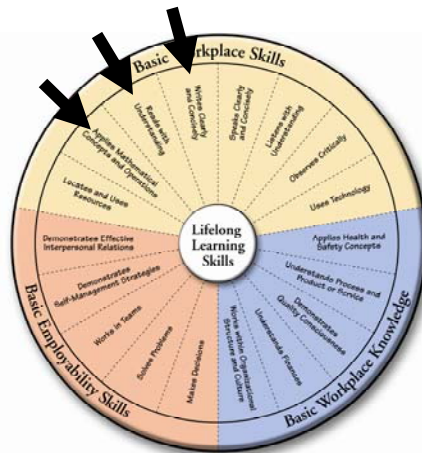
It may seem to be incongruous to think that the GED Essay can in any way relate to resume writing, but it can be done. I don't claim to have any special insight into this, and cobbled together the ideas from a number of sources, only later to find out that a similar plan was put forth by the WorkABLE staff in

their packet of suggested lesson plans. I found this comforting that the ideas I had thought through had others thinking the same things. Perhaps the foundation skill of Writes Clearly and Concisely would not be so difficult to address after all.

In my classes with the men at PCP, I began by having discussions exploring their past work histories, what jobs had they succeeded in, and what jobs were less than stellar for them. As might be expected in a corrections setting, we did have to address both legal and illegal forms of supporting one's family; however, that is the nature of sitting men down in a prison classroom to talk about their past lives. You will get some shocking discussions.

Once allowed to air those thoughts and asked to focus on legal occupations, the men were then asked to list these jobs on paper and attempt to break down the jobs into skills they employed on the job. This effort was to help the men recognize the skills they were using and at which they were successful.

As they worked on these tasks, it must be said that it was a process, not a single class session, and took part of the class time for a few weeks worth of classes. Time, space, constantly changing student population, varied student skills, and the general din of life in a prison are continuing challenges faced



by this group. Distraction is a difficult thing to overcome when someone is ALWAYS watching you.

Once the men had identified their primary skill set, I asked them to use their essay writing skills to brainstorm an outline for the question “What is the best job you can think of for yourself?” Using clustering and webbing, they identified a job, and then answered WHY that job was best for them by listing the things that made the job appeal to them. When this was finished, I had them compare this cluster of writing topics to their primary skill set as identified previously. Most were pleasantly surprised to see that they actually did think they would be happy in a job that did use their primary skill set. Interesting discussions among the men ensued around those who did not select employment which matched their skills.

Most were pleasantly surprised to see that they actually did think they would be happy in a job that did use their primary skill set.

Next, the men wrote their essays. They varied in their skill and completeness, but in general, they were easily completed. The men were allowed to dream about what might be on the outside. They don’t get to do this very often in a supportive environment. Their next task would be both more fun but harder to accomplish. Next they would be asked to write about their “Job from Hell.” Following the same process of identifying why the job was not ideal for them, and writing their essays, the men were able to define employment in which they would not succeed. An ancillary discussion occurred at this point which pointed out how poor employment choices may have contributed to their current incarceration.

As this project continues to progress, the next step will be to take their essays and skill sets, along with laptop computers, to prepare their resumes. We are still working on this step.

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Trials and Tribulations

Nothing runs smoothly in a prison unless the administration plans it that way. Unfortunately, educational programs in small county facilities like Perry County tend to be of lower priority than other functions. This contributes to space and size of class issues, referral issues, and the ever present dropout rate. No one really knows when he will leave a prison until the day someone comes to get them, or release papers are actually signed. Compound this with an influx of federal prisoners being housed in the county prison and the chances for confusion and students being away from the prison for extended periods increases geometrically!

Because I have no way of knowing if someone will be in the facility long enough for traditional post-testing or formal evaluation tools, I have relied on informal documentation via the output of their work in a portfolio to help determine if the men “get it.”

Community Courses

The second part of our project is focused on adult learners from the community and basic computer skills. Most of these people come to the class for one of two reasons 1) to keep up with their kids or grandkids, or 2) because their employment is demanding more from them regarding technology. This second reason breaks down into demands from the current employer and those who feel they need improved skills in order to find a better

job. I chose to adapt a long-standing curriculum to better include math concepts and problem solving.

The first thing most of these learners need to understand is that there are usually ways out of what they are doing if they become confused or don't know what will happen if they click that NEXT or SAVE or OK button. I teach a mantra... Cancel is my friend! They know from the outset that if they aren't sure of what is about to happen, if they click that mouse button, they can always click CANCEL, go back, and look at the whole process again.

In this group, we use Microsoft Word® and Excel® to write cover letters and letters of introduction, and to develop budgets, inventories, and to speculate on how they use math everyday in their work or home life. Students learned not to trust the spell checker (Too Bee Oar Knot Two Bea), to always review and edit their work, and to save and back up their work regularly. This group focused on the foundation skill of Uses Technology—demonstrates basic computer skills, problem solving, and math concepts.

Using Microsoft Excel®, the group created simple spreadsheets documenting the catch of Bubba Gump's Shrimp Company for a quarter, then added a second quarter to their workbooks. They learned to use data labels and to create charts from the spreadsheets. This also taught them the quick access to formulas by using the SIGMA button, or sum. Once they grasped the concept that the cell containing a formula did not actually contain a number, but the format for how to do math in Excel®, we progressed to budgets and using negative numbers to indicate expenses. After completing their home budgets for a full six months, we opened the class up to discussions of how to use Excel® in ways to calculate things important to the students –

one church secretary needed to know how to design a sheet to easily calculate numbers in attendance and offering each week; one enterprising student used this exercise to determine if he could make money opening his own bakery. Yet another employee of the State Department of Health worked on designing a spreadsheet to help her keep track of due dates for nursing home inspections, quality ratings, averages of scores, and other data base functions.

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The computer class suffers from an initial dropout rate, traditionally those who assume the class is something more (or less) than it turns out to be. By the 2nd or 3rd week (teaching 2 hours a night, 2 nights a week for 12 weeks), I usually have the core group who will stick with the class. Some may drop later due to changes in work schedules and the like, but this is usually a small number. The other major issue is coordinating a large class (20 students initially) in an evening class based out of the local high school. Sometimes building issues creep up, and this year happens to bring a major renovation and rebuilding project at Newport High School. This has impacted the classroom I teach in, the events at the end of the school year being held nearer to the class I run and when school ended, the opening of the building after hours. Very few issues with post-testing and portfolio generation occur with this class.

In the End, There is Always a Beginning

The men at the prison have found themselves more attuned to their likes and dislikes when it comes to thinking about employment and

possible work release. They talk more about developing resumes and are looking forward to the completion of this project.

We must still install wireless internet equipment at the prison as I would like to post their resumes at PA CareerLink. We are waiting for the County's Information Technology (IT) company to assist with this to assure security of the prison's network.

The computer class is ongoing, but one student has already gotten a new job, while two others are using their newly found Microsoft Excel® skills in their work now. My State Health Department Nurse has actually given out our program name to her co-workers for future trainings because she was able to fix a mistake made by a co-worker before they could put in for an IT fix. This class has drawn students from outside Perry County for a number of years now, and the changes made to adapt it to this project should only increase this popularity.

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Teaching the Teacher

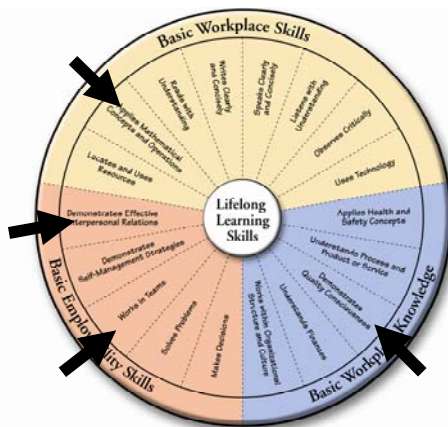


By Sharon Leon and Chris Snyder

“we can’t do this” and “this is so much extra work.” Before we left that day, we had decided that our project would consist of some type of business for the students to run, but the rest of the idea wasn’t clear. Back at class, we took a look at what our students were struggling with and how we could incorporate that into our project. The most common area of difficulty seemed to be math skills. Most of our students were working on obtaining their GED, and some were trying to improve their math skills to prepare for a job and to be able to pass a basic math test that some employers in the area gave as part of the application process. Another aspect of our project was incorporating family literacy into the process, because our adult education classes are just one component of our family literacy program.

Being an adult education instructor is always challenging, at times frustrating, but in the end quite rewarding. The biggest obstacle to overcome for both the students and instructor is finding fun, creative ways to learn the things you need to know to get a GED, improve your basic skills, or obtain a job. When our agency first attended the fall WERC Boot Camp, we were a bit apprehensive about starting a new project, especially when other programs presented their incredible, very creative projects. Our thoughts were,

The Common Thread



For the past five years, our program has participated in the monthly Scholastic Book Club orders. Participants or staff who so choose, may purchase books from the club, and in turn, our program earns bonus points to later use for redemption to purchase classroom materials or books for our library or families. Because we had a significant amount of bonus

points accumulated, we decided to use the points to purchase various books for all ages that the students would choose. This process

alone would allow the students to use their math skills to count and track bonus points, log the prices of the books purchased, and order the materials online. When the books arrived, the students would need to inventory the books, decide on resale prices, and prepare the books to be sold. We felt that a project of this type would also encourage the students, all parents, to get excited about reading! Although our focus was mainly on Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations, the other skills they could improve upon with this type of project also included Demonstrates Effective Interpersonal Relations, Works in Teams, and Demonstrates Quality Consciousness — all job skills that would certainly benefit our students as well.

Finally, we also needed to decide what to do with the profits from the book sale. We concluded that the best idea would be to distribute the profits equally among the families that participated in the project and allow them to spend that money in the Scholastic Book Club to buy books for their families. An added bonus to this idea was that the money put back into the club would earn more bonus points for next year.

Two initial things that we noticed during this process were that the students were learning useful computer skills and they were eager to assist one another in the process.

As the project got underway, the students seemed very excited to take part in the process of choosing books and ordering the books online. Two initial things that we noticed during this process were that the students were learning useful computer skills, and they were eager to assist one another in the process. Initially, we used all of the bonus points in our club bank that had accumulated from previous orders, which meant we had

approximately 80 books to start with. When the books arrived, the students took inventory and as a group, decided on fair and enticing prices to help the book sale succeed. At this point, it was clear to see that the students began to really feel like this was their project, and success wavered on the work that they put into the project. They came up with a one-page flyer to distribute among staff of the PA CareerLink and for the general public, and they created a banner to hang for the book sale event. All of the small details, allowed for the adult education instructors to see various talents from the students and to get a better picture of their strengths (many of which were unrealized by the students) and weaknesses. Some students were a wiz with the computer, some had wonderful artistic talents, and others had incredible learner focused skills.

As teachers, we were also seeing the students learning and strengthening their GED, ABE, and job skills through reading, writing, editing materials, listening, and working well with one another. It was quite an encouragement for both students and staff members to see that this new project, although untested, was making an impact from the start and moving towards a successful outcome. However, as we approached the first sale date we could also see a common weakness of the group. Many of the students had little or no job experience, and the fear of working with customers was realized when virtually no one would volunteer to sit at the tables and sell the books. Only one student was currently employed, luckily as a customer service representative, and was happy to take the lead and help the other students overcome their fear. Although not required, we did encourage all students to take a turn at the table to gain some practical experience at customer service, as well as practice with handling money and making change. The fear they faced was quickly gone when the sale began. To us as teachers, it seemed like a

small hurdle, but to the students themselves it was a major accomplishment that carried on throughout the project. Students had fun suggesting books to learners and even having the opportunity to talk about the program they were working with, which was also another great positive of the project we didn't predict—word of mouth advertising!

Some things the students learned from the first week of the book sale included becoming better at predicting sales trends for the next book order, meaning they really kept track of what types of books were selling and which books didn't seem to fit the customer base they were serving. They then focused on ordering books based upon this information. This was something that was not teacher directed, but solely from the student's observations during the sale and was discussed when reordering books for the next sale. By this point, it was clear that the students were taking real ownership of their "small business" that they were running. Also, the students gained so much confidence in the initial sale, especially when staff made efforts to compliment them on their wonderful customer service skills. After the project, many students were open about their fears of working with the public and handling money.

Some interesting things we noticed during the six weeks of the project were that our attendance in class was excellent. The students wanted to do this project, and it clearly showed by their dedication to seeing it through.

Aside from the material gains that sales had netted, students saw the progress they had individually made and began discussing this among themselves. We went on to use this forum for other class discussions about customer relations and how to deal with customers. Another class about handling

money, types of payment methods, and even customer theft was created from this project and the discussion of the students. All of these things were wonderful outcomes that never entered our minds as the purpose for starting this project. It began as a work in progress and began to take on a life of its own, and it was an encouragement to all involved to see it succeed.

The students' reaction to this project always seemed to be of interest and delight. When we had first introduced the project, every person in class wanted to be a part of it, mostly because they would be working for an incentive they wanted for their children—free books. At the end of the sale, every family was given thirty dollars to choose anything in the Scholastic catalogs they wanted for their family.

An interesting thing we noticed during the six weeks of the project was that our attendance in class was excellent. The students wanted to do this project, and it clearly showed by their dedication to seeing it through. Also, like most programs, we have open enrollment, and as some new students entered the class, they got involved where they could, but most have been wondering when we will do this again, so they can take part in the project. We can also say that student learning has definitely been recognized in the student's test scores. Some of our students from this project have since obtained their GED, and all others have shown a significant increase in their post-test scores. In another example, the student who had been employed expressed that she was able to gain confidence in her leadership skills that she was then able to take to her job as she gained more supervisory responsibilities there. Another student who had previously had a negative work experience in the past was able to overcome her fears and prejudices and gain a new insight into the workforce and plans to attempt to enter it again soon.

The students expressed their impressions of the work project through class discussion and by writing sample letters. At the end of the project, each student wrote letters to the instructors as an employee might write an exit letter to their employer. In them, they thanked us for the opportunity to work on the job and detailed their experiences and the skills they learned from the project. Most expressed that they most notably received personal confidence and knowledge of a small business from beginning to end. Many responded that they couldn't wait to begin a similar project, and all said that they felt eager and much better equipped to obtain employment for themselves in the immediate future. From knowledge of specific job functions, computer skills and sales predictions to record keeping, customer relations and organizational skills, the project ran the gamut in showing students what to expect in the workplace.

Most importantly, as educators, we previously did not see in our adult education class the desire of the students to help one another and look to each other for support in obtaining their goals. This project turned things around and fused them into a cohesive group. When you're sitting in class every day, working on your own goals, it's easy to forget the people around you and it's easy for the teachers to get in a rut. Sometimes even the teacher needs a boost, a jolt to get things moving again. With this project, we were able to bring the class together to see one another's strengths and emphasize those strengths. Not only did the students gain insight to one another but also the teachers learned a lot about their students and found a unique way to make learning different and fun!

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It's All in The Journey!



By Debra Trulock, Mary Dalmas, Stacey Hinkley, and Maria Rachko

The abundance of unskilled employment from yesterday has been replaced with the increased demands of highly skilled service and industry jobs of today. Since employers are looking for the most skilled employees, we asked ourselves the following questions: “How will our learners set themselves apart from the other applicants? How can we as teachers educate our learners so they will develop the required skills needed for the job? and What skills will our learners bring to high priority occupations?”

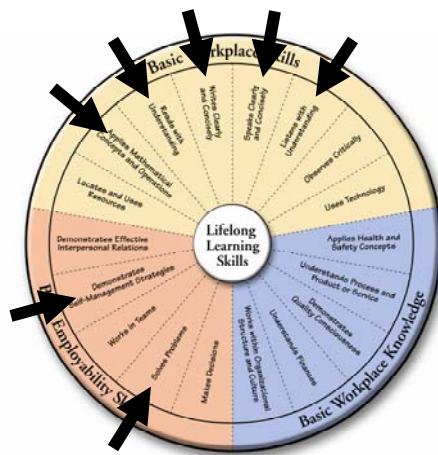
In the past year, the Adult Learners’ Training and Assistance Family Literacy Program staff of Luzerne County Community College

decided to focus on providing instruction that prepares our learners in meeting the demands of the local workplace. Do we have enough information about what local businesses are looking for in order to adequately prepare our learners for obtaining or retaining employment? Do we have adequate work-related materials available for creating a curriculum that supports preparing learners for employment? These questions led to the development of our 2006-2007 SEQUAL plan, which will be implemented in the 2007-2008 Program Year. Working through the steps of the action plan has led us to answering some of our questions and asking others. In this article we explain our journey, challenges, and visions.

On the Road

Through analysis of the Indicators of Program Quality, the SEQUAL Program Improvement Team began to focus on aligning a work-related curriculum with the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) Reading Life and Work Assessment and the Foundation Skills Framework to show a strong correlation between the work-based curriculum and educational assessments.

With this analysis we were able to focus on specific work-based foundation skills that overlapped many high priority occupations: Reads with Understanding, Writes Clearly and



Concisely, and Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations. We then began to research the high priority occupations of Luzerne and Wyoming counties and the employment skills needed for these positions. We researched local manufacturing and distribution companies to obtain information concerning the products that are manufactured and distributed, the hiring process, and the requirements or assessment needed for employment.

Obstacles, Problems, and Challenges, Oh My!

After researching high priority occupations and industry clusters, we soon discovered these areas were not where some of our learners were currently employed or actively seeking employment. We overcame this challenge by narrowing our focus on local logistics companies. Since some of our learners gain employment at various logistics companies, we began creating a list of industrial parks in the Luzerne and Wyoming county areas and researching the logistics companies within each park. We then decided to call each company to get the valuable information we needed right from the companies themselves to better serve our learners.

Once we began calling, our excitement and enthusiasm faded. Some of the companies we contacted left us on hold, transferred us from person to person, didn't return our phone calls, or offered little information. We hit a road block, so we regrouped and began brainstorming again. We decided to call temporary employment agencies that hire our learners to work at some of these companies. This idea proved to be beneficial, for we gained occupation specific, pre-screening assessment information. We found out what types of assessments were used to pre-screen for various occupations. But, we still felt like we needed more information.

That's when a staff member realized we have a great untapped resource right at our fingertips. A family member of hers has been employed with a paper products distribution center for over a decade, and we believed that he would be able to give us needed information. Through this contact, a wealth of information concerning their hiring process and pre-screening assessments was provided to move us to the next step in creating our curriculum. This information was then aligned with the foundation skills on which we would build a work-based curriculum.

As a result of obtaining this information through a specific contact person at the company, we realized the importance of building relationships with company employers. In order to begin building a relationship with another employer, one of the staff members visited a local bottling distribution company and a retail distribution center. These visits resulted in gaining additional information on the hiring process and pre-screening assessments used at each company.

Employers' Needs

The result of our contacts and visits showed that the companies and temporary employment agencies look for similar qualifications in applicants and require similar educational abilities. These companies want employees who are dependable, have good interpersonal and listening skills, and have strong basic reading, computer, writing and math skills. In addition, we gained workplace knowledge relevant to the job positions and nature of work which would be important to retaining employment.

For example, the bottling distribution company requires online applications, which include inputting personal information and answering yes and no questions on values and personality. The paper products distribution

company requires an application form, a telephone interview with one of the human resource personnel, and a reference verification form. In addition, the paper products company assesses an employee's ability to group, sort, and use number patterns. The retail distribution company requires good listening and writing skills.

In regard to workplace knowledge, we found out that the retail distribution company requires an employee to lift fifty pounds and stand throughout the shift. Also, pay rates are dependent upon the shift worked.

The first part of the lesson was on employee dependability using a real-life situation. Learners were asked to identify qualities related to employee dependability based on a case scenario and discussion questions.

Putting it Together

The information we gained about employers' needs was overwhelming at first, but still, it was time to put the research into lesson plans to present to the learners as part of a new and improved, educationally sound, work-based curriculum. To be certain our instructional plans were educationally sound, we correlated our lessons with the foundation skills and CASAS competencies (see chart "Three Logistics Employers and Skills Required" on page 21). Also, we reviewed educational catalogs and purchased work related books and materials that focused on the foundation skills needed to obtain and retain employment. The lessons would focus on demonstrating employee dependability (Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies); communicating with co-workers (Speaks Clearly and Concisely, Listens with Understanding); using mathematical operations in problem solving (Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations, Solves Problems); reading comprehension

(Reads with Understanding); correctly filling out work documents (Writes Clearly and Concisely); and understanding workplace vocabulary (Speaks Clearly and Concisely). All of these lessons would be based on the information gained from our employer contacts.

The bottling distribution company's values displayed on a company poster of responsible work behaviors provided a source of realia to develop a lesson on employee dependability. Another piece of information used to develop a lesson came from the retail distribution company. The shifts in the warehouse varied in length depending on when trucks needed to be loaded. This information led to designing a lesson on logging daily work hours. Also, another lesson on comparing the wages for each shift seemed like an appropriate way to practice math skills. The paper products distribution center requires skills in number perception. Therefore, lessons were developed to practice grouping, sorting, and using patterns in the workplace. In addition, lesson plans were developed around following directions and understanding workplace terminology which are skills needed to fill out applications for all three employers. Lessons on writing skills were also developed based on the learners' educational and employment experiences.

Our Presentation to the Students

Our first lesson presented to our learners was called "Working in the Warehouse." The first part of the lesson was on employee dependability using a real-life situation. Learners were asked to identify qualities related to employee dependability based on a case scenario and discussion questions. Students were challenged to solve a situation in which their arrival time at work might be affected. The second part was math in the workplace and used a variety of math skills including addition and subtraction of whole

numbers, measuring, fractions, and estimating time. Learners solved math problems related to loading a truck, stacking units, and estimating loading time. The third part was based on the bottling distribution company's responsible work behaviors poster. The learners discussed each work behavior and responded to specific preprinted questions.

Our measurement tool for the lesson's success was a staff-created formative evaluation in which learners were asked to respond to seven open-ended questions as follows:

- Is obtaining or retaining employment one of your goals?
- Did you find the "Working in the Warehouse" lesson helpful?
- What was most helpful about the lesson?
- What was least helpful about the lesson?
- What are two things you learned from this lesson?
- What other lessons would be beneficial to you regarding employment?
- What are your overall thoughts about this lesson?

The students' responses varied on the formative evaluation. One student wrote that more math skills would be helpful while two others wanted help in writing resumes. There was a suggestion to add more interactive activities. Still, one student called our initial lesson plan "refreshing."

Our Vision

Comments like these encourage us to use our creativity in planning lessons that are competency-based, meet employers' needs, and are relevant to our students' employment goals. Lessons are continuing to be created, implemented, and revised in order to help prepare our learners to face the demands of an ever changing workforce. As the 2006-2007 program year came to an end, we realized that the work we have begun is only the beginning of our journey.

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Three Logistics Employers and Skills Required

Employer	Some Skills Required	Correlating Foundation Skills	Correlating CASAS	Correlating Lessons
Company 1	1. Ability to apply online 2. “Rules of the Road” (Respect) 3. Understanding open-ended shifts	1. Uses Technology 2. Demonstrates Effective Interpersonal Relations 3. Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations	1. 4.5.5 Basic computer skills 2. 4.8.1 Demonstrate ability to work cooperatively 3. 6.1.4 Divide (to calculate average)	1. Using an online application/ set up suitable e-mail address 2. Respect role-play 3. Keeping track of daily hours
Company 2	1. Giving employment history 2. Lift 50 pounds 3. Understanding variable shifts 4. Listening skills	1. Writes Clearly and Concisely 2. N/A 3. Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations 4. Listens with Understanding	1. 4.1.8 Follow procedures for getting a job 2. N/A 3. 6.1.3 Multiply whole numbers 4. 4.4.6 Interpret work specifications and quality standards	1. Recording past educational and employment experiences. 2. N/A 3. Comparing shifts 4. Listening to build words
Company 3	1. Dependability (from reference) 2. Matching, sorting and grouping item numbers 3. Understanding time within a shift 4. Reading directions	1. Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies 2. Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations 3. Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations 4. Reads With Understanding	1. 4.4.7 Transfer skills learned in one job situation to another 2. 4.7.4 Identify information needed to perform tasks or keep records 3. 6.6.6. Calculate with units of time 4. 4.4.4. Interpret job responsibilities and performance reviews	1. Dependability lesson 2. Grouping, sorting, and using patterns in the workplace 3. Grouping and using patterns 4. Workplace vocabulary

Teaching a Praxis of Ethics for Ex-Offenders



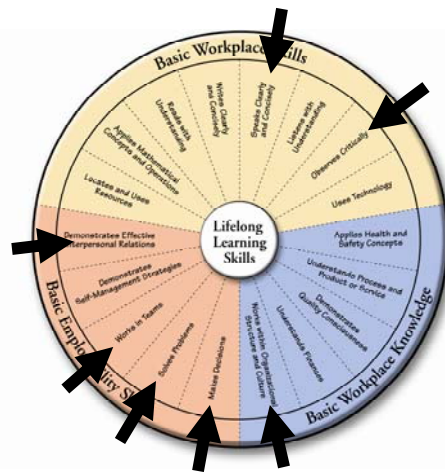
Renewal, Inc.

By Linda Janus

The first and last victim of an offender's criminal act is his or her civic and corporate credibility. Residents at Renewal, Inc., in Pittsburgh, are taught how to practice the rhetorical equivalent of empathy through the public speaking strategy of "reluctant testimony" (Rieke & Sillars, 2000). This strategy acknowledges and invites others into a constructive conversation as a praxis toward regaining credibility. The students consider seven ethical ecologies offered by Silbiger (1999), as well as the dilemma and negative consequence of acting from moral relativism. Students frame ethical action to Bonhoeffer's (1995) description of power as requiring enablement, empowerment, and compunction. Then, based on a contextual topic involving the stakeholders-to-power, a resident's presentation of self is formulated and rehearsed toward civic and corporate ethics through a four sentence invitation to

conversation based on talking points of harms, benefits, rights, and responsibilities in context to each other.

This discussion reviews the recent successfully completed WorkABLE activity at Renewal in which unemployed residents who scored below 11th grade in reading or math on a TABE pre-test participated in 50 hours of instruction to show scale score gains of at least 41 points. Fourteen students were identified to the criteria and attended ABE classes as well as the life skills classes in which this workplace ethics topic is taught. In addition to the ABE scale score gains tracked for the activity, the group averaged gains of 62.7 percent for their effort in the Workplace Ethics class. During the survey period, an additional 360 residents outside of the framework also participated in the ethics class, and it is expected that those students experienced similar gains.



beginning, emerging, developing, and competent skill levels. The key activities were to first establish baseline conversations to describe the ethical ecologies, next define ethical power, and next identify critical stakeholders in contextual conversations. Individual participation in class culminated in written scripts and role playing activities to

the context/topic that gave evidence of levels of gains.

A challenge to this approach for teaching workplace ethics is that the residents are required to attend each of 17 separate classes only one time, and the classes are limited to one-hour time frames. Therefore, a primary goal was to reinforce this material across other class times and topics. The solution was to emphasize the stakeholder strategy for inviting dialogue by repeating the concept in two other class segments: Interview I (employer interviews) and Applications I (presenting a written application to an employer); both of these classes included role playing in mock interviews.

3) Works within Organizational Structure and Culture was expressed through the individualized and contextual statement of “reluctant testimony” to each stakeholder’s interest (Rieke & Sillars, 2000);

4) Demonstrates Effective Interpersonal Relations by acknowledging respect for others’ rights and responsibilities frames to Bonhoeffer’s (1995) definition of ethical power, that being: Power equals responsibility (enablement and empowerment) and compunction;

5) Demonstrates Effective Interpersonal Relations of resolving conflict as soliciting opportunities for closure and accountability to and from stakeholders;

6) Works in Teams by developing and

Context/ topic for discussion	Harms ("reluctant testimony")	Benefits (Curiosity – Invitation)	Rights (Take in or Keep out)	Responsibilities (P=R+C) (Acknowledgment)
Self to topic				
Stakeholder 1				
Stakeholder 2				
Stakeholder 3				
Stakeholder 4				
Stakeholder 5				

Nine particular foundation skills were encountered in the process of the class:

1) Speaks Clearly and Concisely, was structured to the concept of reluctant testimony through the stakeholder considerations of harms, benefits, rights, and responsibilities in context to a topic of conversation. The topic of conversation for this class was: “ready or not, here they come” (Philadelphia Consensus Group on Reentry);

2) Observes Critically to set purposes and strategies for observing called in the cast of stakeholders who could and should be included in a resident’s conversations seeking resumed power and credibility;

maintaining productive group relations through acknowledging stakeholder interests and the ethical ecologies;

7) Solves Problems by identifying possible solutions through proposing the stakeholder benefits statement to critical decision makers;

8) Makes Decisions by drawing conclusions or predictions about best options, practicing components of ethical power – responsibility that is enabled and empowered, and compunction;

9) Makes Decisions by evaluating consequences and evaluating paths based on reflection, (Weaver, 1984) (Ricoeur, 1986) examining the gains or losses from personal agency that flow from the people, information and things that we take into our worlds, or

keep out from our worlds; practicing compunction by anticipating possible consequences prior to action.

The measurement was a grid (see previous page) used to chart the four statements of reluctant testimony and includes multiple stakeholders/critical decision makers, including one's self as a critical stakeholder (so, having a reflective conversation before speaking with others).

The key insights to learning are that the students know they are learning, first through the cognitive dissonance of the introductory lecture that presented and defined the ethical ecologies of naïve, role, social, cultural, utilitarian, universal, and natural law ethics. Moral relativism was discussed as “brass rule” (vs. “golden rule” logic); the analogy to brass rule is that it is the “golden rule” (do unto others as you would have others do unto you) taken out of context. The argument against ‘brass rule’ is that, if your threshold for intellectual or physical pain is higher than mine, and you do unto me in a manner that you could survive, I would be harmed. So students have to understand the concept of empathy, and express it through reluctant testimony when they attempt to restore their credibility.

Students then encountered the elements of ethical power (power requires enablement - having the ‘tools’ and proper training to use them), empowerment (the acknowledgment and permission of stakeholders), and compunction (or something like “premeditated guilt” – reflection prior to acting); they finally addressed the material through written script specific to their circumstances and relevant stakeholders. In class, the context addressed is that from the Philadelphia Consensus Group on Reentry and Reintegration, “ready or not, here they come.”

As an instructor, I knew the students were learning because of the lively conversation and responses volunteered throughout the class; students used examples to relate to their experience. Other salient evidence was exhibited by their active note taking, even prior to the written exercise. The class focused on the concerns expressed by the Philadelphia Consensus Group on Reentry and Reintegration, that corrections systems may sometimes be ineffective in rehabilitating inmates, and that communities may also be ineffective in preparing to reintegrate ex-inmates back to their communities. For example, scripting a conversation with one's self as a primary stakeholder, students are asked to consider: What is the harm that I'm coming back to community, whether I'm ready or not, and whether they are ready or not? What are the benefits to me, ready or not? What are my rights, ready or not? What are my responsibilities, ready or not? The responsibilities question always refers back to the definition of power and compunction.

This same type of script was drafted for a hypothetical victim reconciliation, a parole officer, an employer, various family members, and community-at-large members. Students learned about audience evaluation in public speaking classes that predicts an audience composition of 20 percent hostile listeners, 20 percent supportive listeners and 60 percent undecided or uninvolved. By successfully appealing to the acknowledgement of a hostile audience, students can begin to expand their sphere of influence and credibility. Later classes for Interview I and Applications I repeated the opportunity to practice the reluctant testimony strategy.

Demonstration of retention of the strategy revealed itself anecdotally when I entered the facility's cafeteria one day for lunch, and three residents assigned to kitchen detail, who had previously completed the class, playfully

challenged me with the questions of “what harm do you face, eating at the cafeteria?” “what is the benefit of eating at the cafeteria?” “what is your right to eat at the cafeteria?” “what is your responsibility when you eat at the cafeteria?” These were rapid fire questions from different individuals, which demonstrated to me that each had remembered and spontaneously and adroitly incorporated the concepts to the context in an authentic conversation.

In conclusion, the students regularly remark that the workplace ethics class is one of the most important classes they take in our program. They appreciate the simplicity of the sentence structure that addresses harms, benefits, rights, and responsibilities; they have a new awareness of their ethical biases and prejudice based on the seven ecologies; they can practice empathy through the exercise of reluctant testimony; they understand a definition of ethical power that requires both constructive enablement and empowerment by self and critical stakeholders, governed by compunction; and they have demonstrated, both in practice and praxis, that they have become more competent communicators in critical conversations. The strategy helps students to recognize the challenges to credibility and is an effective first step to begin to regain their credibility to themselves and others.

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Balancing Expectations While Learning What to Teach

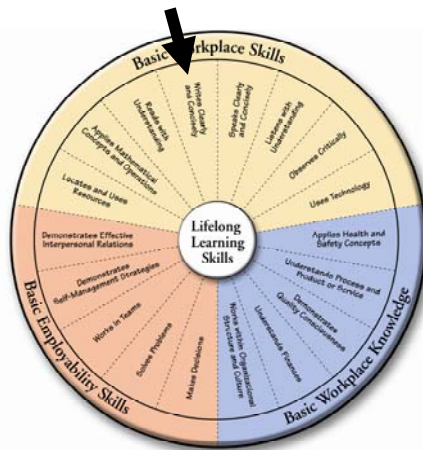


By Laura Bair

Stepping into a new company to provide a workplace training can be like stepping into a new world. There are unfamiliar faces, odd noises, fascinating technology, and a language that is unique to the place and to the work being done. Over the past few years, York County Literacy Council's (YCLC) workplace instructors and I have learned the lingo associated with making pretzels and potato chips, sewing costumes, "talking trash" at a waste facility, and operating small power tools—topics that have all gone on to make interesting small talk at parties! Although the process of offering these courses was always an intriguing experience, it came with its challenges. What were the company's expectations? What did the learners really need to know to succeed on-the-job? How were we to teach so much

in just a few short weeks? The expectations were sometimes daunting and as it turned out, by trying to teach it all we were trying to teach too much.

In the past year, however, our team has become a PA WIN affiliate. PA WIN, with its support and framework, has put a new spin on our workplace program making it more defined, especially by allowing us to scale down big expectations into a clear-cut curriculum. We did this by first learning the lingo, then narrowing down the big picture into manageable parts, and then focusing on the parts that would be the most valuable to both the learners and the company. The final (and arguably the easiest) part was then delivering customized and focused instruction! Although we took the steps to prepare a well designed and thought-out curriculum, there were, of course, unexpected challenges along the way.



YCLC's workplace team put this concept of curriculum design into practice when we were contacted by a representative of a national company headquartered in York that produces all sorts of containers, including plastic bottles. The company was in need of basic skills instruction for their English as a Second Language (ESL) employees who worked as line operators and oversaw the production of the bottles.

Learning the Lingo

Little did we know that bottle-making was an intricate and complex science. The bottle measurements had to be just so, there were machines that made the bottles, machines that gauged the bottles, computers that tracked the bottles....and each had its own specific vocabulary related to its parts and procedures. We had never expected that the process of forming plastic into bottles could be so complicated. How were we to learn all of this new terminology and processes? Let alone teach them? These were the questions my workplace instructor, Shea Hortman, and I asked ourselves after our first meeting with the stakeholders from the bottle-making company. We had taught sewing patterns and construction terms before, which were pretty straightforward, but never anything so detailed or that involved so many steps. We knew that in order to be able to “see” what we needed to focus on in the curriculum, as well as teach this new language and the related concepts, we had to first internalize it ourselves.

We did this by first learning the lingo, then narrowing down the big picture into manageable parts, and then focusing on the parts that would be the most valuable to both the learners and the company.

As we toured the plant, the noise from various machines made it difficult to hear what our tour guide was saying which made me worry that the company would want to focus on speaking and listening. Verbal communication was difficult on the floor due to the noise, even for a native English speaker. As we followed the conveyor lines of clear bottles that would later bear labels like “Pepsi” and “Gatorade” we learned that each had its own recipe and must be made to a certain specification. One machine checked the bottles for height, width, diameter, and capacity. Another attached the grooved top to

the bottle, where a lid would later be screwed on. Everything was monitored and checked for quality, both by a computer and by the employees we would be training. Information was entered into the computer, while other information was written on forms or in a log-book. Amidst all of it, defective bottles were being kicked off the line, computer operated “smart carts” were driving themselves and moving pallets from one place to another, and maintenance crews were fixing machines that had gone on the fritz. It was a whirl of activity.

The tour brought clarity where there had previously been confusion. We now understood the difference between the starting product versus the ending product and the tasks the employees were expected to complete along the way. Thankfully, there was a general consensus that filling out forms seemed to be the most troubling break in communication on the noisy plant floor, although the company wanted its non-English speakers to learn better verbal communication in the future. For the present training, though, Writes Clearly and Concisely would be the foundation skill we would focus on.

The tour helped us to understand the terminology and “learn” what the employees knew orally, but not in written form. The tour was also helpful as our contact began providing us with lists of common terminology that was used on the various forms. Because we had seen it firsthand, we had a visual cue that we could match to the words the employees were expected to be able to write. The company also provided us with copies of forms, training packets that were used with new employees, labeled pictures of the machines, and most importantly examples of forms that had been filled out by the employees. With each piece of information, more questions arose—Who? What? Where? Why? How? We were like detectives

following a trail of clues. As we began to understand the process and as words like “Sidel” and “24 hour report” became familiar, this new world began to not seem so strange.

The company also provided us with real forms that included part-tags that were affixed to the finished products, regrind forms for defective bottles, stop cards to document safe/unsafe practices, and copies of the employees’ log-book entries that had been recorded prior to the class. The stakeholders talked us through possible responses that would be acceptable on the forms.

Between the tour, the real-life forms, and the barrage of questions we asked the company reps, we began the process of learning what the employees knew with one key difference—they couldn’t yet express these concepts accurately in English in a written form. The next step was funneling all this information down by holding it up to our framework skill of Writes Clearly and Concisely.

Narrowing Down the Big Picture into Focused Expectations

At this point Shea and I knew a lot of information about making plastic bottles, so much so, that we could have made a career change into the bottle-making business if we had desired. Although this information was invaluable in communicating with the stakeholders and, as it turned out, the employees in the classroom, the company didn’t want us to teach bottle-making, they wanted us to teach writing. We had to narrow down, with the help of our stakeholders’ team, what we knew into what we should teach.

The company’s expectation was that our team would teach the employees the written terminology they needed to do their jobs correctly. Even with limited English, these Spanish-speaking men and women had

successfully picked up the physical aspects of their job duties. Over and over again they were described as “good” and motivated employees by their supervisors; however, when it came to the paperwork, they struggled.

The paperwork associated with the jobs ranged from simple fill-in-the-blank forms to detailed log-book entries. Employees were expected to write so that shifts could communicate with one another especially when machines were not working properly. As it stood, the paperwork filled out by the non-English speaking employees was riddled with errors, filled out incorrectly or not at all, and was sometimes illegible due to poor penmanship. It was our job to teach the employees how to write for their job. The next step was mapping what, when, and how we were going to teach and then putting it into practice.

When the light clicked on in the employees’ eyes and they began nodding their heads as the topic was explained we knew they understood.

Putting Curriculum into Practice

We had our raw materials—various forms, vocabulary lists, sample log-book entries. But where to start? We began by targeting the simplest forms the employees used on a daily basis. Many of the forms had similar fields: date, time, initials, part number, etc. Because of the repetitive nature of the forms, we decided that the first few lessons would focus on teaching these fields and writing in appropriate responses. The instructor used modeling of what a “good” and “bad” form would look like. Employees practiced their writing on the forms, which helped to transfer their learning from the class to the workplace since the forms they used in class were identical to the ones they used on the floor.

Vocabulary of the machines and their parts was introduced using pictures that had been provided by the company. After the fields on the forms had been explained and students' comprehension of the vocabulary had been checked, everyone had a chance to practice filling in the forms. Shea, our instructor, tried to make the experience fun. This was a competitive group and what better way to get them motivated than by dividing them into teams and having a contest to see which team could fill out the form with the fewest errors. Not only did the contest get the employees' interest, but it also served as a springboard for the employees to discuss the form and provide reasons for why they filled it out as they did. Even the supervisors got involved as they checked the completed forms and signed off on the ones that were filled out correctly, just like they would on the floor.

A more complicated form was the "24 hour report." It required straightforward written responses, such as date and time, which the employees had already practiced on the simpler forms, but it also contained sections that required more complicated writing skills, such as writing simple sentences. This was an important form as it served as a legal and binding document referred to during company audits and so it was imperative that it was filled out correctly. Examples of fields to be filled out on the "24 hour report" included why a machine broke down and what was done to correct the problem. This information also had to be written down in the log-book. Shea decided that each week she would teach five to six new vocabulary words related to the parts of the machines and common problems that occurred on the line. Spelling and readability was emphasized, as well as comprehension. It would do the employees no good to know simply how to spell the word but not know its meaning. As the vocabulary was taught, students asked many questions in order to clarify their understanding. We were

thankful we had taken the time to learn all the steps involved in bottle-making. All the details turned out to be extremely helpful when trying to relate words to their meaning. The more advanced students would also translate the more difficult concepts to the lower level students to make sure they understood what was being explained. When the light clicked on in the employees' eyes and they began nodding their heads as the topic was explained we knew they understood. Their understanding was also evident when they were able to accurately complete the forms in class, do their homework, and transfer the skills they learned in class to the floor. Even the supervisors recognized the employees' gains and saw that they were trying to use their new skills!

The advanced students cemented their learning because they helped to teach the lower-level students when these students had a question or didn't know the answer.

Challenges Along the Way

No journey is complete without its share of challenges, and this training was no exception. The first challenge came the first day of class when we realized the range of differences in the employees' English and literacy abilities. Before the training had begun, we were under the expectation that the majority of the employees would be at an intermediate level based on the employees we had met and the writing samples we had seen. However, this ended up being a multi-level class. Two students were at an advanced level, while the remaining 10 were at a beginner to low-intermediate level. Many of the lower level students were not completely literate in their first language which made teaching writing a difficult task. We had entered the training with the expectation that we would be perfecting writing skills in relation to their use on-the-job, not teaching things as simple as punctuation and formation of letters.

Prior to the training, I had set up the student achievement form and rubric in a one-size-fits-all format to measure the students' progression in their writing skills. Since I had been under the impression that all the participants were at a similar level and that all the forms had to be identical in the competencies they measured, the forms at first didn't take into account the variety in the students' literacy levels. Prior to the training the rubrics were set up to measure the following skills:

- Writes accurate notes and messages for different audiences
- Completes simple documents and forms completely and accurately
- Completes complex documents and forms completely and accurately
- Writes accurate and complete reports, including relevant and important details
- Revises materials to be concise, clear, and consistent

We realized that these skills would never be met by the low-level students during this initial training. We needed a more accurate measuring tool. With the help of PA WIN staff, the instructor and I decided to create a new rubric for the lower-level participants, keeping the original and more advanced rubric for the two advanced students. The rubrics for the lower level students now measured the following basic skills targeted at their level:

- Correctly uses capital letters and marks of punctuation (abbreviations, initials, etc.)
- Correctly spells familiar words (i.e. words studied from workplace vocabulary list)
- Completes simple documents and forms completely and accurately (i.e. part tag and regrind form)
- Writes simple sentences for log-book entries, using approximate spellings of unfamiliar words

The multi-level class also posed a challenge to the instructor as she juggled teaching simpler writing tasks to the lower-level employees, while trying to keep the more advanced students motivated. Although the training was probably at a slower pace than the advanced students would have liked, they commented that they did learn new skills, such as the appropriate spelling of some job-related words and the reasons that forms needed to be filled out in a certain way. The advanced students cemented their learning because they helped to teach the lower-level students when these students had a question or didn't know the answer. Both of the advanced students had a pleasant attitude and a willingness to learn and help others and this created an atmosphere of learning in the classroom that extended out into the workplace. The instructor also gave the advanced students more difficult assignments and helped them with their written grammar. They appreciated this additional feedback. One of the competencies that applied only to the advanced students was that they were to revise their work. Both became better at looking over their written work and using self-correction techniques before handing it in.

Having two of the supervisors present during the class time was one of the most valuable parts of the course. At first we were a little apprehensive of this arrangement and were worried that the presence of the supervisors would intimidate the employees, but this aspect of the training allowed it to be an effective and constructive learning experience since the supervisors could always give a reason as to why forms must be filled out a certain way with appropriate documentation. Once the employees understood the purpose of writing such information, they seemed enthusiastic about recording it. Having supervisors present during the class also allowed them to check on the employees'

progress in the plant and give them encouragement and praise, as well as support when a form wasn't filled in correctly. Due to the training, both sides have gotten to know each other better. Employees now feel more comfortable asking their supervisors questions on how to fill out forms or spell words. Communication between supervisors and line operators was one of the intangible benefits of this course.

That's A Wrap!

At the conclusion of the training we heard positive comments from both supervisors and employees. Supervisors reported that they had seen progress in the employees. Five employees filled out a survey on the last day of class. All five responded that they enjoyed the class, it was helpful in relation to their jobs, and they would like to continue taking similar workplace classes in the future to improve their work. They also indicated that this training was not long enough. One of the advanced employees wrote an insightful paragraph describing his thoughts on the class. It stated, "When they told me to attend the class, I thought I didn't need it because I have been working here for seven years and never had a problem. When I started going to the classes I found that this was interesting and helpful. I learned several things that helped me for my personal use but most important is that it will help me to grow at this company. I felt important as a human being due to that I noticed that the company shows interest in the employee no matter their origins."

What had once seemed like an unrealistic task, had turned into a simple one page curriculum by the process of focusing on what the employees really needed to know—filling out forms and reports, and writing entries in log-books. There were other problem areas that we could have included such as how to verbally communicate to a supervisor that the

line isn't working properly or how to call in sick, but we are learning that we can't teach it all—at least not during one training. By focusing and defining a clear-cut curriculum, we were able to meet the company's expectations and give the employees practical writing tools for their jobs. Perhaps someday we'll be able to impress friends at a party with our knowledge about the process of bottle-making, or at least when we return to the company to teach a second workplace course!

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The Power of Play



By Judi Taylor-Dunn

The Center for Literacy’s workforce teacher walked into the daycare center ready to implement a workplace communications course. The course was designed based on the needs analysis conducted by her and the program developer, Stephanie Korber. Jane is a very experienced instructor who knows that no matter how much up front prep you have done, you never know what will happen when you enter that classroom.

Flashback to the Needs Analysis

Jane asked the following questions at the stakeholders’ meeting:

- What key tasks do you perform on a daily basis that requires oral and written communications?
- In what areas would you like to perform more efficiently and effectively?
- What kinds of issues occur as a result of unclear communications?
- What communication skills would you put at the top of the list?

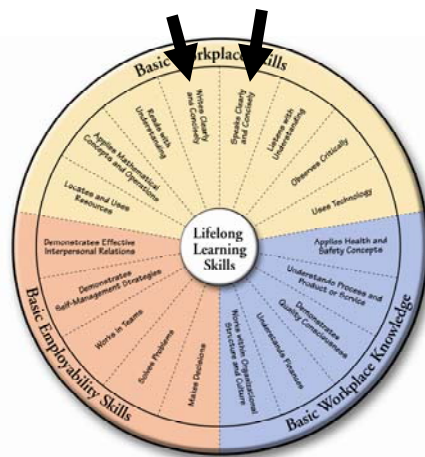
Based on their responses, she knew that they

wanted to improve the communications between themselves and the parents of the children enrolled at the center. The management also felt that the communications needed to be improved. Their workers needed to learn how to respond to parents who have questions or concerns about the curriculum, activities, or incidents that typically occur in their workplace. Jane prepared the curriculum based on the results of the needs analysis.

Flash Forward

Eight workers were waiting for their course to begin. The training was occurring during children’s nap time. The workers were slouched in their chairs with scowls on their faces. Their body language was clear – “We don’t need or want this training.” Jane thinks to herself, “Oh! This is going to be a tough group!” She begins by introducing herself and asking questions about the communication process in order to ascertain their background knowledge. She’s met with blank stares. Since their body language was so negative, she begins

to ask questions about the role of body language in the communication process. One worker responds that it doesn’t have a role. The others agree that it is what you say that matters. Jane thinks to herself, “...I’ve got them engaged...” She asks them for examples to support what they are saying. They then begin to share stories of how the



parents talk to them. Basically, they share that it is the parents who need to improve their communication skills, not the workers. Jane attempts to have them reflect on their own communication strengths and struggles but with little success. She hands out a behavior checklist entitled “Are You an Active Listener” that asks participants to measure themselves on the following criteria: Gives Eye Contact, Does Not Interrupt Speaker, Uses Supportive Body Language, Paraphrases Facts and Feelings, Asks Clarifying Questions, Asks Probing Questions, and Summarizes Facts and Feelings. The participants reject the criteria, the activity, and Jane. At the end of the two-hour session, the participants knew that they had given Jane a hard time and asked if they could pray for her!

Session II – A New Approach

After hours of self-reflection and evaluation, Jane decides to take a different approach. It was clear that the participants were unwilling or unable to evaluate their own skill set. Instead, she developed scenarios that they could act out and evaluate so that it wouldn't be personal. The lesson plan is below:

Goal: To use “play” to heighten each worker’s awareness of the role body language and choice of pronouns play in the communication process.

Step 1: Childcare worker assumes role of a parent who is unhappy about the children playing all day. The role is acted out with the gestures and facial expressions that they feel parents show when upset. A second childcare worker plays the role of the employee who is faced with the angry parent. The class is initially asked to focus their attention on recording the body movement (hand gestures, facial expressions, etc.) of both the parent and worker. The teacher facilitates the discussion. During the discussion, the pronouns that the child care worker uses to respond to the parent

are also discussed. For instance, stating that “your child” or “you don’t understand” can cause the situation to escalate. Responding with “I understand your concern” helps to de-escalate the situation.

Step 2: Together, the class reads an article on how children learn from play.

Step 3: The role-play is repeated, but this time the two workers who are acting out the scenario use the information gained through the discussion and article to respond to the angry parent. The teacher guides the group to focus on the pronouns used and non verbal gestures.

It’s a success! Contextualizing and depersonalizing the communication topic helped the workers accept the information. Using play made the sessions fun and was relevant to their business of working with preschool children. All subsequent sessions included role-play activities. Seven out of the eight participants improved their ability to communicate to parents as measured by their ability to give appropriate responses to parents’ concerns in a role-play situation.

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textures can be expected for each stone profile. The average weight is 10-12 pounds per square foot. This did not appear to be easy work! The floor was set up basically as a large production line. The first station would do their job then pass it on to the next. The employees appeared to be in auto-drive and looked as though they could have performed their duties with their eyes closed. We were greeted with happy smiles as we observed the swift activity that was occurring. I immediately felt that this was a sign of good employee morale. We then proceeded throughout the facility with brief stops at each station. The noise was excessive and the dust was extreme. We watched as skid loaders moved the product from the main floor to the storage area. We noted that there was one native English speaker sitting at the door checking off each load as it was moved through. He was speaking English to the employees. Most signs were printed in both English and Spanish throughout the facility.

We asked management to provide us with some very specific authentic materials.

Our tour then led us to the Quality Control room. It was simply amazing to see all of the color and pattern choices that are available to consumers. It was noted that this was a very critical area based on the fact that if the wrong color or pattern is conveyed, it could be a very costly mistake. Our next stop was the warehouse. Large forklifts and skid loaders were moving quickly past us. It was a very hot and humid day. The kind of day that could make even the nicest person a bit grouchy! Again, we couldn't help but notice that all of the employees were performing their duties with smiling faces and very pleasant dispositions. This is where our tour ended. Now it was time to get to work.

After compiling all of our data from the needs assessment, we looked at it closely to see how

we could best serve the employees and management. We concluded that in order to enhance productivity by improving upon the communication between employees we needed to focus on Basic Workplace Skills. We chose to concentrate our training on the foundation skills: Speaks Clearly and Concisely and Listens with Understanding. We then created a list of questions for the management team. We began by asking what the expectations for the employees were as a result of the training. We then gathered pertinent information as to who the learners would be, what their English speaking/comprehension levels currently were, and what did they feel the most challenging areas were for the employees. The next 12 questions were program specific questions such as, "What types of written information do the employees need to read and comprehend?" The next set of questions related to the logistics of the program. Questions such as days of the week that would work, what times of the day would be best, and questions relating to the physical space for training.

There was, without a doubt, a special camaraderie between all of the employees. If an employee was missing at the start of the class, another employee was on a walkie-talkie...

We asked management to provide us with some very specific authentic materials. We requested a flow chart of both the production floor and the warehouse. We also asked for any written materials the employees needed to be able to read such as safety manuals, production schedules, color training manuals, disciplinary actions, timesheets, etc.

The management team selected the front line employees who they felt would benefit most from the training. We administered the BEST Plus Assessment to 20 learners. The

dynamics of the class were intriguing. Despite the fact that there were 500 employees, all of the 20 learners knew one another. The group was comprised of 16 males and 4 females with each one looking out for the other. There was, without a doubt, a special camaraderie between all of the employees. If an employee was missing at the start of the class, another employee was on a walkie-talkie “requesting their presence” in the classroom. In addition, our observation of employee morale was accurate. They all seemed to be very happy employees.

Our third, and perhaps the most difficult, challenge we faced was the issue of how to train 20 employees with varying levels of English speaking skills in the allotted time we had to conduct the training.

We faced some initial challenges during the implementation of the program. The first concern was the location for the training. It was agreed (for lack of available options) that we would conduct the training in the upstairs conference room where we first met. There was enough seating for about eight at the table comfortably. Extra seats could be brought in if necessary. The next concern was the lack of a white board. There were plenty in the room, but each was filled with highly important information that could not be removed. Our third, and perhaps the most difficult, challenge we faced was the issue of how to train 20 employees with varying levels of English speaking skills in the allotted time we had to conduct the training. We chose to conduct the classes in two separate groups based upon the fact that the conference room could not accommodate all 20 employees at one time. Classes were held from 1:00-3:00 p.m. and from 3:00-5:00 p.m. This also proved to be beneficial because we did not need to pull all of the employees from the floor at one time. We also found that it was a

way for us to break the group up better according to their English ability levels.

The training (and challenges) begin! Our first day of class was interesting—to say the least! We had 20 employees show up (some on time, while others trickled in as their schedules permitted) for pre-assessment testing. Jeanette, the instructor was set up in the classroom while I was in an office to administer the BEST Plus assessment and to complete intake forms on the learners. The employees were very reserved, some quite shy. As with most groups, we had one or two “leaders” who took charge. I pulled each learner one by one to assess. Like most adult education classes, the levels can vary greatly. This group was no different. We had learners who tested on a zero level to those who tested at about a level six.

After the testing was complete, Jeanette and I sat down and looked at the class composition, divided them accordingly, and devised our plan of attack. We would have two groups of ten in two classes per day twice per week.

Our physical space presented perhaps the biggest challenge. We had 10 learners and the instructor crammed in a room that could comfortably seat 8. We had eight learners at the table and two seated around the perimeter of the room with no surface to write on. Because there were no other options as far as available space, we had to make the most of it. The company provided the learners with hard binders to use as a writing surface. In addition, Jeanette would “shuffle” the group so that the same learners were not always stuck against the wall. The white board issue was resolved by our purchase of a portable one with an easel base. Total cost was about \$100.00. This allowed for easy transport and viewing of the board. There were times when the meeting room was being used by management and we were shuffled to the

cafeteria (of all places!) for the classes. The cafeteria is a place of constant activity. Workers not only take their lunch breaks there, but they also take their fifteen minute breaks every four hours in there. It was a very noisy and distracting location. We never knew ahead of time if there would be a conflict with the conference room. Jeanette grew to be creative when she had to relocate. There was a nice, quiet outdoor space available with some picnic tables for use. She used this space in lieu of the cafeteria and it worked quite well.

The instructor was very aware of the learners' abilities and created her lesson plans carefully so that she could accommodate each and every learner as best she could.

Although we had broken the groups into two levels according to ability, the levels still varied and both groups were still somewhat multi-leveled. The instructor was very aware of the learners' abilities and created her lesson plans carefully so that she could accommodate each and every learner as best she could. The curriculum was developed with all learners in mind. It was designed to include the development of basic English skills, with specific emphasis on vocabulary and phrases specific to the workplace.

The resources included authentic materials including timesheets, workplace terms and pictures, simple forms, color charts, role-plays, paychecks, safety policies, body part diagrams, and other appropriate materials. Flashcards and sentence strips were specifically designed for the training. The instructor created materials that were more simplistic for the lower level learners and more difficult for the higher level learners. She was very careful as to how she presented the materials. She did not want to offend any of the beginner learners.

The training went very smoothly. Of the 20 learners who began the program, 18 completed it. The reason for the loss of two learners was due to schedule conflicts.

The management made a special point to stop into the classroom on our final day and thank us for what we had done. They stated that they had been observing improvements and overheard some employees speaking English on the production floor.

The learners' reactions to the program were heartwarming and validating. During post-testing, I briefly interviewed each learner and asked their thoughts on the program. Each and every one of them asked that we continue. They felt that it was a great program and they wanted more. Employees told me that they felt that they had learned something (or many things) from the program. They clearly felt more comfortable speaking English to me during our post assessment time. I recorded gains on the BEST Plus on almost every learner. In addition, the instructor recorded gains using the Foundation Skills Rubric. It was noted that each learner who completed the training showed improvement during the eight week program. The Foundation Skills Rubric was an excellent tool of documentation that we were able to share with the learners.

The instructor also measured informal gains in the classroom by observations and quizzes. It was also noted that, as time went on, the employees grew quite comfortable in the class and became more open and responsive to the instructor as well as their classmates. Role playing seemed to play an important part in these improvements. The management made a special point to stop into the classroom on our final day and thank us for what we had done. They stated that they had been observing improvements and overheard some employees speaking English on the

production floor. They also shared with us that some employees brought their paychecks to the office and asked some questions that they had not asked before. They had a better understanding of their deductions, gross, and net pay.

In conclusion, all adult education programs force us to face questions and challenges. It is our responsibility and duty as adult educators to find the best possible solutions to allow us to benefit each and every learner that we teach. Sometimes it takes a great deal of creativity and effort. Despite the challenges we faced, we were able to create a very relevant and inclusive curriculum that provided the learners with a tremendous amount of information in a very short period of time. It required the whole team to make this training work. It took management, the instructor, and most importantly the learners to achieve the success that we did.

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Real Life English for Workplace Classes



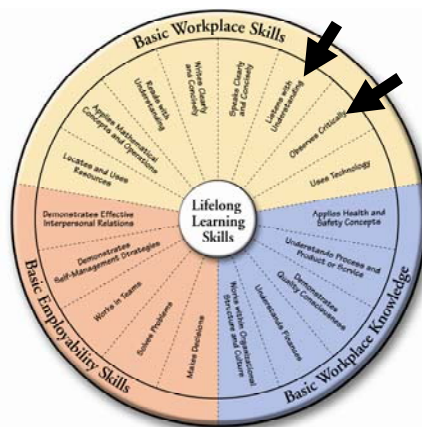
By Ashley Messinger

When I began to teach a workplace English as a Second Language (ESL) class at a wood products company, I found myself in an ideal situation. I was in the midst of dedicated students, eager to learn and a supportive staff that provided an abundance of authentic materials. The company chose *Reads with Understanding and Writes Clearly and Concisely* as the foundation skills on which they wanted to focus. During the first few weeks, through intensive practice, the students made headway on these skills. However, it was apparent that the class also wanted, and desperately needed, assistance with the skill of *Listens with Understanding*.

I began to take stock of available resources and to consider effective techniques I could employ in the short time that remained before the workplace class ended.

Staff supplied me with authentic materials that many of the students worked with each day. These included: various styles of wood molding, numerous samples of common stain colors, exotic wood samples, commonly used forms, and personal protective equipment (PPE). I taught the students the meaning of some basic commands through total physical response and a limited amount of translation, as the entire class of 14 spoke Spanish as a first language. These commands included: *put, grab, take, and bring*.

We studied prepositions of description, like, *under, on top of, beside, next to, inside, in front of, and behind*. Preposition study centered on a multi-sensory activity with a rock and a box. The teacher first models these sentences:



“The rock is on top of the box.” “The rock is under the box.” “The rock is beside the box.” “The rock is next to the box.” “The rock is inside the box.” (Repeat for each preposition in your lesson.)

As the teacher says the sentences she/he also places the rock in the correct position.

Students are given a typed copy of the sentences or they are written on the board. After sufficient group practice each student is asked to repeat the activity for the teacher. Repetition is key with this activity.

The directions of *left* and *right* were also studied. Several students could not distinguish between these even in their first language. For weeks the students had studied vocabulary, such as, the names of wood types, moldings, colors, written forms, and PPE. At last, they could take advantage of their newly acquired knowledge in a low-pressure environment. In fact, that was my objective when I put this strategy into action: create an authentic environment for practice with low pressure.

I achieved this by arranging the authentic materials on a large table at the front of the classroom. Purposefully, I put things *on top of, under, inside of, behind, in front of, and next to* others. After introducing and modeling the activity I began to call up the students one by one to take a turn. The advanced students went first, then intermediate, and finally beginners. That strategy allowed shy beginners to feel slightly less apprehensive having seen and heard the process many times. I gave each student approximately five commands, waiting after each for the correct response. For example: *“Grab the shoe molding, take it to the other end of the table, put it on the left of the job traveler form, bring me the maple sample, put on the apron.”*

“Grab the mahogany and bring it to me, take it back and put it beside the nose molding, grab the defect form to right of the safety glasses, put it under the oak wood.”

Difficulty and speed of these commands was adapted to the level of each learner. To cause less distraction for the participating student,

the classroom was setup so that the observing students could hear the commands and see the responses but not face the participating student directly. Since the tendency to help one another was prevalent in the class I told observing students to wait for my signal before offering explanation when a participant struggled with a command.

It was very easy for the students and myself to see that they were learning. There was simply no way to fake it. If the participant understood they produced the correct response. We did this activity for a total duration of approximately three hours over several classes. Though some were initially shy, all enjoyed themselves by the end of the activity. All showed an obvious improvement from the first time to the last time we did the activity. I noted this improvement on a separate rubric apart from the one detailing changes in Reads with Understanding and Writes Clearly and Concisely. Verbally the students expressed that this was their favorite activity because it mirrored their everyday challenges.

The outcome was improved comprehension in areas that are completely relevant to the specific work environment as well as general life situations outside of work. Students were more confident about their English comprehension abilities and more likely to attempt communication in various forums.

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Happy New Year

**eliminating racism
empowering women**
ywca

By Jae Hively

Just two weeks after finally getting a job, the learner returned to class downcast and defeated.

“I got fired,” she said in a low voice.

“I’m sorry. What happened?” the instructor asked.

“Nothing really. I was barely late a few times and I couldn’t go in one day because I had a doctor’s appointment and the next thing I knew they said I wasn’t reliable enough and let me go.”

It was at this juncture we decided to focus on the foundation skill of **Demonstrates Self Management Strategies** through incorporating time management into the curriculum and embedding it into the classroom in various ways.

Tools for Success

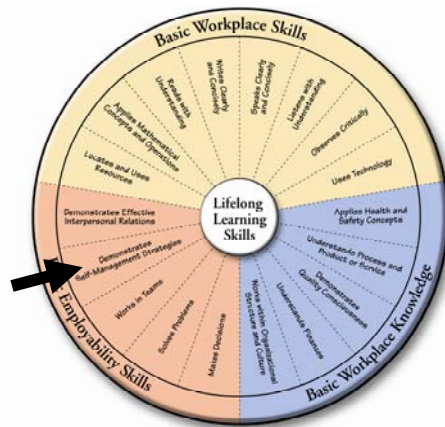
First, a time clock was purchased with time cards and a time card rack – to simulate the workplace. Students would clock in and clock out instead of a paper sign in. Next we added

Day-Timers and small electronic organizers with the calendar for the new year, note pages, and an address and phone section. Students would be able to choose the one they preferred. Last, a small, working alarm clock!

Armed with these *Tools for Success*, we planned our strategy. We waited to make changes and begin the project until just after the New Year’s break in January.

Challenges

While some resistance was expected, the free time management tools and curriculum eased students into the new process. We began with discussions and journaling about new beginnings which helped students express how they felt about change and new processes. Because punching and seeing their own timecard each day indisputably showed if they were late as well as how many hours they had actually been in class during the week, it introduced a new level of personal accountability.



Students enjoyed receiving the free Day-Timers or electronic organizer. The Day-Timers were a simple way of tracking activities and time, and students could see in print that an appointment at 10:00 a.m. didn’t affect coming to class at 12:30 p.m. It sectioned off their day and became a picture, and a record, of how they spend their time.

Using and having a daily plan gave students a concrete way of putting a time frame on making, managing, and completing job search and personal goals.

For students who preferred the electronic organizer, it was fun and challenging to learn how to use, and they liked having it and showing it off to others. The challenge of using both the Day-Timer and electronic organizer was consistency. In order to be effective, students had to create a habit of putting information in and depending on the tool for information.

While students said they already had alarm clocks, some didn't have batteries and some clocks didn't work. Other clients may have hesitated to receive an alarm clock because it created new responsibility. The clock had to be set at night, and they had to respond to the alarm in the morning. Learning and accepting how managing one's time is a personal responsibility was an ongoing challenge.

Tick Tock

The time management tools are an asset in the classroom and an effective teaching tool in managing one's life, but it takes consistency and perseverance to deliver results, and to be most effective, learners must create a new habit. As time went on, using the time clock became routine and the staff rejoiced knowing that this would be one skill that wouldn't need to be freshly learned and adjusted to when learners started a job.

Creating a new routine was a challenge, but learners became used to the presence of an alarm clock at minimum, and for those using the alarm clock on a regular basis, they had become more responsible for getting themselves up and on time to a specific place on a regular basis.

Learning to use the Day-Timers and electronic organizers made a difference for moms who used it for their daily activities and also activities involving their children. It began to help students think beyond today and to plan ahead. The planners raised awareness that today was only part of the week and that weeks turn into months and months turn into years. They were literally seeing their lives written down on the pages. Because perseverance is also a learned skill and not one that all of our students have learned already, the time management project was an opportunity for learners to do something over a long period of time.

Project Successes

An unexpected but welcome surprise was that as students punched in and out themselves and saw their arrival and departure times, there were no questions about when they arrived or how much time they spent in class. The timecard spoke for itself – just like at work.

The planners raised awareness that today was only part of the week and that weeks turn into months and months turn into years.

The time clock provided an accurate record of information for our data. Sign in sheets were no longer necessary to create, keep, or file. The classroom had a more professional atmosphere.

We used a survey as the measurement tool. From it, we determined that time management can help in the following ways:

- Increase effectiveness,
- Reduce stress,
- Be more in control of what you do,
- Be able to concentrate on results and not on being busy.

We also learned that people don't manage their time because they don't know about it or they are too lazy to plan.

Time management tools empowered our students to take responsibility for planning and managing their time and provided them with a concrete way of putting a time frame on making, managing, and completing their literacy and personal goals. The time clock simulated the workplace, better preparing students for employment. The project taught perseverance and heightened awareness of personal accountability for time. In some cases, it created new habits that would serve learners well in the future.

There are good habits and bad habits. Bad habits own you. Good habits serve you.

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Focusing Student Learning Toward Work Readiness Skills



**Dr. Gertrude A. Barber
National Institute**
Making dreams come true

By Barbara Warner

When we address the class and say that we're going to work on building work readiness skills, we may not be greeted with yelps of enthusiasm. Many of the students we work with have been employed in our subsidized workshops or employment training programs for several years now. They think they know all there is to know about performing their jobs. Of those students who are unemployed, some may be actively seeking employment through one of our programs, OVR or independently, while others seem to be happy with not working. It takes enthusiasm and determination on the instructor's part to motivate students to go beyond their current level of understanding and learn some new skills. These newly acquired skills will serve to improve the current work habits of the employed or increase the potential for those seeking employment to get the chance to become satisfied, productive employees in the future.

Foundation Skills Addressed and Their Corresponding Activities

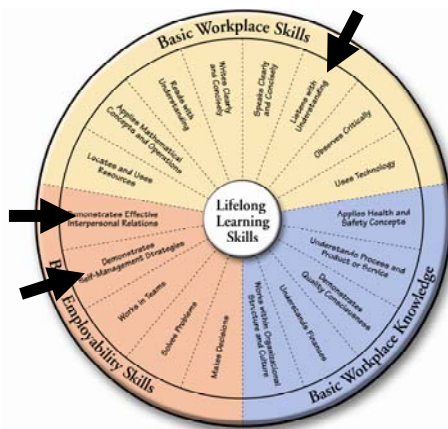
This year we chose three skills from the

Foundation Skills Framework and one or two competencies under each skill for our students involved in the project to focus on. We divided these students into two levels, those who would work on the basic skill and those who could try a higher level skill. As often as possible, we included the remainder of the students in the instruction as all could benefit from learning these skills. However, we only collected data on 20 students.

The first foundation skill we decided to address this year is Listens with Understanding. This is a skill we have worked on in previous years, and it is one that could be revisited again in future projects.

For those involved in the first level, we decided that the competency of follows oral instruction would be challenging enough. For many of the students, all of the senses need to be actively involved for learning to take place. We used Unifix cubes to teach this skill, having the students connect a stack of cubes in a certain color pattern as the teacher

directed them. We also did counting and bundling of various materials to simulate the activity that is found in our subsidized workshop. After some repetition and practice, most students were able to complete the task in a competent fashion. The second level of students worked on the competency of modify a task based on changes provided in oral



instruction. The concept of placing items on a shelf in a certain way was tried. For example, students may have the direction to place the white box on the top shelf, the green box on bottom shelf, and the red box on the second shelf from the top. When this had been accomplished a few times, the directions might be changed to now move the white box to the bottom shelf and place the green box above the red one. Modifying tasks proved to be a challenge for some students because once they learn a skill in a certain way it is hard to stop before doing the next normal step and do something differently based on the teacher's instruction.

An example of an instructor's activity follows:

What I did was I created about five simple sentences comprised of primarily Dolch words, and I dictated them to the students. They were working at the computers, typing (in Microsoft Word®) the words that I spoke. After I read all of the sentences and the students had typed them, I went back to each sentence and had them change one word in the sentence. For example, if sentence number one was originally - "The dog is brown", I would have them go back and change it to read - "The cat is brown". If they did not know how to edit the text, I would slowly explain the procedure step by step. I assessed the success rates by how many times I had to repeat the correction or the procedures for each student. I wasn't looking for correct spelling, but I did slowly sound out the words that the students did not know how to spell. I told them that spelling was not being assessed; rather I was concerned by how well they were listening to and following the instructions. They worked well when I told them this. I

did not just do this with the chosen students, but I did it as a total class project, and I paid special attention to those specific students.

We were looking for 75% accuracy and most students did master the skill by the end of the project.

The second foundation skill that we focused on was Demonstrates Effective Interpersonal Relations. For the first group of students, we used the competency of interacts with others in ways that are tactful, courteous, and friendly with an appropriate level of 50% of their scheduled class time. The second level of students worked on the competency of demonstrates respect for others ideas, opinions, and contributions with an appropriate level of 75% of their scheduled class time. These practices can sometimes be difficult for many to adhere to, not just the students in our special population. Everyone has their own thoughts and ideas which they want to be voiced and heard. Even our non-verbal students have ways of making their wishes known. We used many classroom examples of displaying correct behavior. Examples include reading stories which asked the question "What would you do in this circumstance?" and role playing various situations, to emphasize what we were trying to teach. Students were slowly made aware of others feelings and ideas and did better at giving one another a chance to answer questions in class. The percentages were reached and all improved to some degree in their manners and politeness toward one another.

The third foundation skill we chose to cover in class was Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies. The first group worked on the competency of follows class rules and regulations, displaying responsible work behaviors with 50% accuracy. The second

group used the competency of manage time effectively by completing work tasks on time with 75% accuracy. This program year, we had to cut our class times in half because of time regulations set for the subsidized workshop. With less time to complete each lesson, it was very important for the students to come into the classroom and quickly get settled in order for the lesson to begin promptly. We have discovered that Direct Instruction works best with our students. First, students need to have the skill demonstrated correctly, then they can follow along and perform the skill with the instructor before the final step of attempting to try the skill on their own, staying on task until it's completion. This only happened with much repetition and reinforcement in future lessons. It was thought that if the students practiced our class rules, ones like being on time, keeping hands to oneself, and not speaking out, these authentic practices would easily transfer to the workplace.

Our greatest results come from using Direct Instruction, using authentic materials, and total class involvement.

Managing time effectively by completing work tasks on time is a very important ability to possess in the classroom, home, or workplace. We all have schedules and deadlines that we need to adhere to whether it is getting up and dressed in time to catch the bus, completing a report by a certain due date, or finishing a certain amount of piecework in a delegated time frame. Students reviewed telling time to the hour, half hour, and quarter hour as this is when our classes are scheduled and most jobs adhere to these class times too. Students needed to be aware of the start and end times of class and how much time they had to complete a given task. Special attention also needed to be given to the task at hand. If projects weren't put together correctly, their usefulness would be lost.

Emphasis was placed on quality as well as quantity. Students would be rewarded for a job well done, which compares to getting a bonus from your employer.

Success and Challenges

At the close of the WorkABLE demonstration project, results showed that the overall project had proved successful. On average, we went beyond the percentage score which we had established. For the competencies worked on under the skill Listens with Understanding, there was an average increase of 12.5% points. The competencies being measured under the skill Demonstrates Effective Interpersonal Relations saw an average increase of 11.25% points. And for the competencies worked on under the skill Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies there was an average increase of 11.25% per student. Each student made great strides in learning the necessary skills for improving work habits or building the skills in order to gain employment. Students felt proud about what they had learned and the accomplishments of their workmanship. Students appeared enthusiastic about adding more work related skills to classroom instruction during the following school year.

One challenge that we faced was that not all staff followed the same procedures for recording data. Most classes worked on the project all year, but some early procedures were not recorded. More training may be necessary regarding expectations, setting dates for goal achievement, and accountability at every stage of the project.

Resources and Measurement Tools

The resources we tend to use in our classroom are ones that are hands-on manipulative tools. Clocks with hands that can be moved, Unifix cubes which can be sorted by colors, blocks that one can build with or sort into shapes, alphabet letters of various textures and sizes,

realistic money for identification and counting, grocery store items, and newspapers to name a few. Our students love to play games, with all types of Bingo being the favorite. One of our instructors even developed her own game called “Hygiene Jeopardy,” which the students enjoy. Students need to be actively involved in the lesson as much as possible. If students aren’t performing the task with the one volunteering to complete it, minds and hands may wander. We have had individual dry erase boards made so that students can work out the problems with the volunteer. There are, of course, those times when students listen to a story or watch a performance, but at those times, students should be actively listening for certain cues and a measurement of comprehension will follow. Our greatest results come from using Direct Instruction, using authentic materials, and total class involvement.

We use the CASAS test for our formal assessment because it has some great examples of life skills and work readiness skills. These tests are a great way to check students’ skills. If students are not up to par in an area, resources are available with ideas to help students increase their skills. In regards to measuring student gains, our favorite tool is simple observation. Were students correctly completing the timed experiments in the delegated time frame? Were the blocks in the right order, the sentences modified correctly and the boxes placed in the right spot or counted? We also used a rubric to document information. Here is what one teacher shared: “With regards to tactful interactions and following class rules, I simply monitored the students. I watched them before class, during class, and after class. I watched them while they were in their actual work stations. I tried to see if their interactions were changing after proper behaviors were discussed in class. Were the

students offering to help each other, were they being polite to each other, were they listening in class, were they following instructions while on the job, were they raising their hand during class, were they waiting for conversations to end before they spoke to staff or other students, were they working as a team?—These are the basic questions that I asked myself.”

In closing, students know that they are learning because we explain what we will be working on at the beginning of class. We also tell students why it is useful to them, giving them examples of how the skills can be transferred. We know that they are learning by the smiles we see on their faces when they get the idea and are able to accomplish the task. Those already working are able to take the work-based foundation skills learned in class and use them to complete their job tasks in a more successful pattern. Those students who will be looking for jobs have learned important skills to help make their job search more successful.

We thank the WERC team for supporting us through the years with their advice, assistance and wonderful trainings. Our students have been able to learn the work readiness skills which will make them effective workers as well as increase their independence in the home and community.

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Life After Prison



Renewal, Inc.

By Barbara Huffman

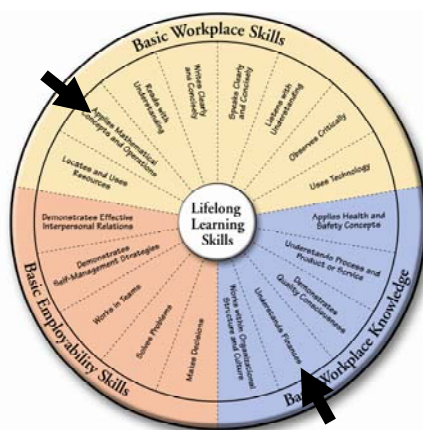
Do you control your money or does your money control you? Do you even make enough money to control? These might be interesting questions for any of us, but what if you just got released from jail, have little or no work history, and not much education. Where do you start? We started with the Foundation Skills Wheel, a little training from WERC staff, and a program improvement team comprised of teachers, a human resource manager, an executive secretary, a program administrator, and an employment facilitator. Each person on the team brought an area of expertise that was used to create 17 life skills/job readiness classes to help our residents obtain and retain employment. These classes have evolved over the years and different instructors, past and present, have added to the success of these classes. The class I chose to write about is personal finance. In the class students learn basic budget concepts from the

Foundation Skills Wheel, are held accountable for a balanced spending plan, can explain how and why investments are important, list personal expenses and personal income sources on a budget sheet, learn basic financial vocabulary, and gain an understanding of why savings are so important.

Personal Finance

When we first taught the personal finance class, nobody really liked it, not the instructors and definitely not the residents. We constantly heard complaints. “What do I need this for? I can count money.” Even though the residents admitted their money controlled them, they did not seem to care or realize that they could or should control their money. Investing or saving for a rainy day was a foreign concept that had no relevance in the lives of our students. They viewed working as a way to get out of the building, weren’t concerned about finding a job that they might consider keeping after they got released, and certainly did not consider whether their salary was enough to support them. We were trying to teach something we valued, fiscal responsibility, but they did not.

After several frustrating months, the instructors got together and changed the class. We took what we heard from the residents,



bought some play money, created a scenario based on a typical resident's real life experience, and devised a role play that takes participants through one month of someone's life. By using authentic materials that reflected the residents' backgrounds, interests, and experiences, we created a new class that did everything we tried to do before, show them how planning and managing their money was something they could value in their lives. This class became one of the residents' favorites. Not only do they have fun participating in the role play, but as the class progressed, the students changed their ideas about the importance of having a good job with benefits. After the first week, students usually say, "Bob needs a better paying job or he won't be able to meet his expenses." When it is time to go grocery shopping they aren't even sure he can afford peanut butter and jelly. Something else that is observed by the instructor is that the answers to how much things cost and how money is spent changes as the role play progresses through the weeks. Even the quiet students participate.

Activity One

First, we asked for two volunteers but stressed that it has to be someone who likes to handle money and is also good at counting money. We always have lots of volunteers. One person is the banker and gets all of the money. The other person is whose life we follow for the month. The rest of the class are critical observers. It is up to them to make sure all transactions are accurate and to counsel the volunteer on how he/she spends his/her money. The instructor explains the volunteer's (we'll call him Bob) scenario.

Scenario: Bob just got a job working at a recycling plant making \$8.25 per hour, working 40 hour weeks. He gets paid weekly every Friday. He does not have a car or license, so he uses the bus to get around. He lives alone but has one child with his former

girlfriend. Bob pays child support. Bob is currently in AA and needs to attend meetings as indicated on his green sheet.

In this activity, we will go through one month of Bob's life, week by week. For each week, the instructor will identify Bob's expenses. It is up to the class (with Bob having the final say) to identify where Bob will get his needed resources and how much his expenses will be. The class gets to determine how much rent will cost, what he pays for utilities and his phone, the cost of bus passes (both Zone 1 and Zone 2), child support, court costs, etc. This should be determined before the role play begins and cannot be changed once the role play begins.

By using authentic materials that reflected the residents' backgrounds, interests, and experiences, we created a new class that did everything we tried to do before, show them how planning and managing your money was something they could value in their lives.

After making sure everything is realistic about the scenario and making any adjustments necessary, we calculate Bob's gross and net pay and what that means. Once a student has an answer about what the gross and net pay is, he/she explains how he/she found the answer. Now that the students know how much Bob will be taking home each week, we begin the role play writing down each week and the correlating expenses on the board. We keep track of how the expense was met and how much it cost on the board. Either the instructor or a student can write everything down on the board as we record suggestions and ideas students have for meeting or cutting expenses. Bob has fixed expenses such as rent and child support as well as variable expenses such as utilities, groceries, court costs, bus pass, entertainment, clothing, laundry, personal care items, etc. Bob hopes to pay off his court

costs in a timely manner so he can get his driver's license back.

Week 1

- On Friday Bob gets paid and the banker gives him money.
- On Saturday it's Bob's girlfriend's birthday. What can he do to celebrate the occasion and how much does it cost? Bob gives the banker the money he spends.
- On Sunday Bob does his grocery shopping for the week. Where can he go? What can he buy? How much should he spend? Bob gives the banker the money he spends.
- On Wednesday Bob gets his phone bill for the month.
- On Thursday Bob goes to the Port Authority and gets a monthly bus pass (which one?).

Week 2

- On Friday Bob gets paid and the banker gives him money.
- On Friday evening Bob wants to relax. What can he do? How much does he spend? He gives the banker the money.
- On Saturday Bob realizes he needs a new coat for winter. Where can he go? How much can he spend? He gives the banker the money.
- On Sunday, Bob wants to do something fun with his friends. What can they do? How much can he spend? Give the banker the money.
- On Monday Bob gets his electricity bill for the month
- On Tuesday he gets his gas bill for the month.
- On Wednesday he needs groceries. Where can he go? What can he buy? How much does he spend? Pay the banker.
- Bob also goes to the store for personal care items. How much?

Week 3

- On Friday Bob gets paid. The banker gives him the money.
- This is his weekend with his daughter. What can they do? Where can they go? How much should he spend? Pay the banker
- On Monday Bob needs groceries for the week. Where can he go? What can he buy? How much can he spend? Pay the banker.
- Rent is due by the 16th of each month.
- On Thursday Bob realizes he needs to do laundry. Where? How much? Pay the banker.

Week 4

- Bob gets paid on Friday and the banker gives him the money.
- On Saturday Bob wants to do something nice with his girlfriend. What? Where? How much? Pay the banker.
- On Tuesday Bob buys groceries.

Throughout the month, the class keeps questioning Bob about when he will pay his bills. When will he pay court costs? What about meetings? The one he likes requires a Zone 2 bus pass but work is a Zone 1. It becomes apparent very early on Bob does not make enough money. What are his options?

Activity Two

Pass out a budget form with space for fixed and variable expenses. Students look at the fixed and variable expenses listed on the board and they list them on the form. They can work individually or in small groups. After working through any confusion, have them record the Actual Monthly Expense for each fixed and variable expense, then add up fixed and variable expenses and record the totals on the form.

Talk to students about the importance of saving and what kinds of savings there are (emergency, savings account, 401K retirement, other types of investments). Relate the benefits of savings to Bob's situation.

What are Bob's options?

The final part of creating a budget is targeting how much you can spend for all expenses you expect to have. This is the budgeted monthly expense. Look at Bob's scenario, estimate as a class how much Bob should spend each month per expense based on his monthly net pay. Have students record the answers on the form.

Now that the form is almost complete, students should calculate how much Bob spent in total. They should calculate if Bob spent more or less than his targeted budgeted amount.

Completed budget form is assessed using a rubric.

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Maximizing Instruction Time



By Katherine Stamler

A work-based class was established in Punxsutawney and a variety of skills were addressed for individual students, most of which included computer skills. The students in the class established work-based goals and 85% completed at least one work-based goal based on checklists and assessments. The project utilized existing materials, developed new materials, and piloted two initiatives in which some students were involved.

Community Action, Inc.'s Adult Education Project, in order to merge work-based instruction into the regular classroom, piloted an innovative strategy this year. The innovative strategy was intended to give the instructors the ability to use a sample business and generate examples and lessons to be used for instruction. We projected it would lessen the time and effort instructors needed to manage a multi-level classroom.

Instructors were asked to group students and to create and establish an imaginary business.

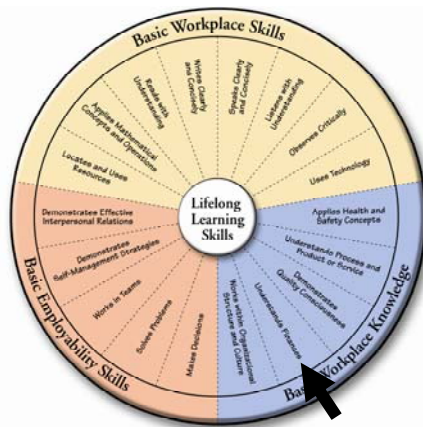
Students were instructed to develop personal and business budgets which would be used to compare “expenses” so they could understand their importance in the workplace. It could also be used to support and enhance instruction and to provide relevant examples for students.

Explanations and examples could be used by all students (even ones with different goals) and most would be able to participate in discussions and use the examples. One expected result was to foster group bonding and maximize instruction time. All students could be increasing their skills and their capacity to understand the work world without

losing the knowledge and cohesiveness of the group. We also hoped these efforts would increase retention. With the same business as a base, instructors would be able to incorporate and utilize ideas and suggestions from other instructors thus decreasing work and planning time. As teachers developed, adapted and shared materials, the programs work-based

resources would be enriched thus improving the quality and quantity of work-based materials.

A meeting was held with instructors where the goals of the project were explained. Instructors were introduced to the Work-skills Goal Sheets and asked to prepare students and



themselves for the initial assignments by having them develop personal budgets and discuss an “independent” business. They were given several weeks to accomplish the goal. They were asked to develop a business budget containing similar components to the personal budgets. Once accomplished, all the budgets were to be submitted. A checklist was used to determine the projects success in the Understands Finances skill of the Foundation Skills Wheel.

Although most students accomplished the assignment, as the project unfolded, we began to see some resistance from students. Some either did not see the benefits of the exercise and did not want to do it, or they saw it as a waste of time which interfered with their goal pursuit. In addition, the businesses were widely varied and did not have much continuity, and the personal budgets varied almost as much. We concluded that students did not seem to have a common idea of what a budget should include or how it should be structured.

As teachers developed, adapted and shared materials, the programs work-based resources would be enriched thus improving the quality and quantity of work-based materials.

Instructors were able to use examples in their classes and make comparisons to business budgets. Some students had additional computer skills goals. Two goals were targeted from the Foundation Skills Goal Sheet: Understands Finances and Uses Technology. Checklists were used to measure outcomes and to track computer skills toward computer skill goal attainment. All students with computer skills goals gained. Retention did not seem to be affected.

Checklists were also used to measure other outcomes. Other project goals and outcomes were as follows:

Objective: 80% of learners will be able to create a chart depicting general budgetary household/family needs as demonstrated by submitting final copies of budget structure with at least 10 items. A customized checklist will be used to measure success.

Outcome: 12 out of 14 people completed budget structures with at least 10 items (86%). Two completed business budgets.

Objective: With a given salary, 80% of learners will work through a budget for one month as demonstrated by hard copy of final submission with 80% accuracy. A customized checklist will be used to determine success.

Outcome: Of the 12 personal budgets, 10 covered at least one month (83%).

Objective: Following computer skills instruction, 80% of learners indicating computer skill needs will develop/create a budget using Microsoft Word® or Excel® utilizing skills required as demonstrated by the electronic version of the budget with 80% accuracy. A customized checklist will be used to determine success.

Outcome: Of the completed 10 budgets for those targeting some computer skills, 10 completed them on the computer (100%).

Objective: Students completing budgets will be able to compare business and personal budgets.

Outcome: All of these students could discuss budgets and budget items comparing personal and business.

Although the idea was sound and benefited students, the instructors decided the introduction of the process needed to occur earlier in the year and a pre-constructed budget framework was necessary to guide

students in their efforts, thus saving frustration and wasted time. After careful consideration, instructors also concluded they did not give enough guidance to the students or prepare them properly.

After a lengthy discussion it was also concluded that the classroom business, which may carry a different name in each class, should be introduced at the start of the new year's classes and be the same throughout the project so instructors and students could share ideas, exercises, and materials that were virtually the same for each class. The instructors would realize a savings of time, be assured their efforts could be put to good use in other classrooms, and would add to the volume of programmatic work-based materials that could be accessed thus making goal setting and instruction easier.

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Climbing the Mountain with the Recent High School Drop-Out

Employment Skills Center

Education ■ Training ■ Workforce Development

By Dotty Brlansky

Tuning Out

During new student orientations, I often hear, “I wasn’t learning anything in school” or “I didn’t fit in.” After the initial session, I felt we were headed in this same direction. While viewing a video on goal setting, I could actually see the students’ eyes glazing over. I sensed that I was losing my audience before I had a chance to introduce the value of the classes. Luckily, this was my initial experience with WorkABLE! Suzanne Webster described WorkABLE as ‘works in progress.’ This gave me the confidence to adjust my carefully planned curriculum.

I put aside my agenda and began a discussion on what the learners would like to learn. I explained my need to have their feedback as to their expectations and needs. I espoused my genuine desire to help them formulate a

plan for their future. I promoted our vast resources that were at their disposal and the importance of this, since they did not have the resources from the high school any longer. We ended this first class on a high note – we each took a personality test and the results hooked them. I also showed them that they could have fun.

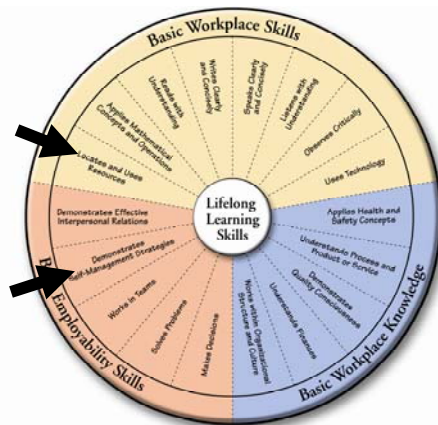
Teach Me How to Fish

I restructured the program to be more hands on and less lecture oriented. I decided to be creative and broaden their experiences of the internet to include college program research, vocational program research, employment research, job fairs, financial aid, learning sites (i.e. math.com), and interest and personality tests.

I was fortunate that the Carlisle Sentinel Newspaper had a virtual job fair during our sessions. Naturally, everyone began searching for opportunities in what they considered their dream job. The students learned what jobs were available and what jobs they were qualified for at this time.

Initially, they were disappointed at the slim availability of positions they were qualified for. The shocked commentary regarding the low wages would have made a terrific stand-up comic act!

With the exuberance of youth, the students set out on a quest to solve the dilemma of no



experience and little education in their career exploration. They spent time researching the probability of obtaining a position in their desired career, the expected availability of a position, and the likelihood (and necessity) of being able to live on the salary range of the job. Then, they researched the qualifications and education needed to obtain a job in that field.

I invited guest speakers to meet with my attendees. They were wonderful resources and powerful allies in my quest to motivate these young adults. One speaker presented (several times!) her program on building the workforce of tomorrow. “The Youth Development System is designed to ensure that every youth is given the opportunity to succeed and be productive citizens as they transition into the workforce.” The program she outlined is comprehensive, progressing from assessing needs to mentoring opportunities in postsecondary schooling and occupational skills training. She was a great adjunct to our career exploration session. She presented a booklet from the state that gave information on the careers that are in demand today and those that will be needed in the future. She offered guidance on career planning that would ensure that they would be self-sufficient in life. Another aspect of the South-central Youth Development System is on the job training and paid work experience.

My second guest speaker was Robert. He spoke eloquently and mesmerized the class with personal experiences in conducting job interviews. Our CNA (Certified Nurses Assistant) class joined us for this session. The interaction between the two groups was fascinating. Initially, each group sat at different tables and only talked within their group. As Robert warmed up, the class united into one group. They began to try and out perform the others critiquing interviews and job candidates. Interestingly, they each were

at different stages of their lives, but they shared a common bond of wanting/needing a job or a better job. At the end of the session, they were offering suggestions to each other and sharing some of their personal stories.

Scale That Wall

I decided that if we took a proactive approach to eliminate some of the obstacles that the teens perceived to be in their way, I could persuade the students to complete the program. I adapted the schedule for some students who experienced the challenge of a sick child, their own illness, an automobile accident, and a family funeral. I hoped to expose them to the reality that they needed to be responsible and dependable even in the face of real life challenges. I developed independent make-up sessions that could be done after their crisis had passed. It wasn't mandatory, but it was expected that they complete their commitment. I stressed that we could offer assistance (with their baggage) to enable them to concentrate on learning, but ultimately, I expected them to be accountable to their commitment to the program.

I made a verbal contract that if the learner came to sessions with an open mind, actively participated, and made up missed work, I would assist in their completing college applications, proofread their essays, and, **IF THEY EARNED IT**, I would write a recommendation for college or a job. I did not anticipate the degree of interest that this would generate.

The one challenge that I was particularly not happy with was the tardiness. This age group apparently either lacks watches or simply does not recognize the importance of arriving on time. We did agree to a compromise in that when I had a guest speaker, they **WOULD** arrive on time. If we did not have a speaker, they could call me if they were going to be late, and I would arrange for the work to be

available later in the day. I was embarrassed and disappointed the day my guest speaker did not call or put in an appearance. The class thought it was amusing!

Outcomes

- Every participant enrolled in the GED program. Two students achieved their GED. Four students have taken at least one GED test.
- There was a twenty percent increase between the pre- and post- PACE tests.
- Every participant compiled a list of employment and education goals. All but two students completed at least three job applications.
- Nine students researched higher education opportunities. One student has started at York Technical Institute. (His midterm grades are 3 A's and 2 B's!) He successfully completed financial aid forms and was awarded assistance. One student has applied to HACC (Harrisburg Area Community College).
- Five students have started PHEAA and other financial aid applications.
- Six students showed that they had acquired knowledge in basic and advanced job search skills. They were able to determine the availability of the position, the requirements for the position, and a detailed description of the work involved in the position.
- Five students are now employed at least part-time.

My Reflections

Every week I noticed something that I wanted to add "next time." Then, I began to understand that I didn't have to wait until next time. Many of my additions could easily be introduced into our GED classes. I was very fortunate to not only have the use of our computer lab, but I also have three computers in my classroom. We now offer the TV411 lessons, typing practice, job searches, math

and vocabulary lessons, and resume writing as additional learning opportunities in the GED classroom. I offer my oral contract to new students during orientation. I believe this increases our students' interest and commitment.

I embrace the symbiotic relationship between the education proficiencies, work habits, and employability skills. I hope to continue to integrate each aspect into existing and future classes. I want to expose our students to a variety of opportunities, teaching methods, and techniques to assure them of a chance for success. Many young people do not have an understanding of what they need to know in life. I have learned that we need to present opportunities, and make the students want to take advantage of them. As an adult educator, I feel that I have a responsibility to try and stop the cycle of unemployment and underemployment.

Our students have plans, dreams, and even visions of great success. My goal is to introduce careers and educational opportunities that they may be unaware exist. I want our students to realize that they can reach for and attain a higher style of living and employment that they are proud of and can enjoy. I intend to expose them to the benefits of hard work and good work habits, and prepare them for life.

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What an Employer Expects and How to Keep the Job



By Diane Smith

The Somerset County Technology WorkABLE innovative strategy focused on training individuals on probation and MHMR workers employed by the Somerset County Shelter Workshop. These are individuals who are ready to enter the workforce in the general population and have been referred to our program by the above facility administrators.

After trying several strategies to maintain enrollment and attendance, we have found managed enrollment/managed hours to be successful. After completion of the Worker's Self Appraisal, a common bond was discovered to exist between the two groups. Both groups were identified as needing remediation in the foundation skill Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies, particularly stress management, controlling of actions during stress (e.g., manages anger). Most individuals in the two groups were aware of job readiness skills, but they

acknowledged one of their greatest employment needs was in the area of maintaining relationships. Instruction was therefore designed in a holistic approach beginning with job ready skills to maintaining employment relationships.

Project Challenges

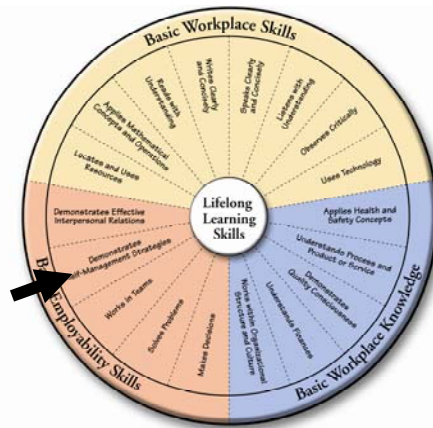
A few years ago, we affiliated with WorkABLE and began providing four hours of work-based basic skills instruction, two times a week for a six week program. Student's attendance would become sporadic after approximately three weeks. The program was re-designed to be held in two, six hour days or three, four hour days, depending upon the schedule of the facility.

Project Success

After making this change, we have had 23 students complete the program with 100% attendance. At the suggestion of students, we offer a two week follow-up to see what job search progress has been made. During this follow-up session, we do a round table discussion to see what each student has accomplished. Encouragement is offered and suggestions are given to student's questions or barriers.

Key Activities Incorporated

We begin our sessions with introductions of the instructor and each student. The instructor



then gives an overview of the program and the goals to be accomplished. Each participant is then given a short mini interview by the instructor. Questions pertaining to education, past work history, type of employment desired, driver's license, transportation, and the location of student's living area – rural or urban are asked. As the student answers these questions, the instructor fills out a Personal Survey Form. This activity gives the instructor knowledge of the student's background, and it also initiates a group bonding. If transportation is an issue, another student may suggest traveling together. If a student is interested in becoming a mechanic, another student may know of an opening in his/her neighborhood. Following the oral interview, the student is given the Worker Self Appraisal Inventory. The instructor reviews the Personal Survey Form and the Worker Self Appraisal Inventory form and Job Readiness Instruction begins. Instruction is given in lecture/discussion form with student activities provided. Activities include filling out an application, composing a resume, writing a cover letter, and writing a thank you letter. Interviews are discussed and the instructor will critique the short interview given at the beginning of the session. (This is a positive activity because the student is usually relaxed and does a good job, the instructor can therefore give encouragement for future interviews). Computers are available at both sites, the instructor will have students register on the PA CareerLink and will show them how to search for available job openings.

**Foundation Skills Addressed:
Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies**

The instructor begins a discussion of What an Employer Expects and How to Keep the Job. This is where training in stress management begins with an emphasis on anger management. The curriculum used is from a Jail to Job Project (1998) which is on file at

the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Resource Center. It consists of an Overview of Anger, Overview of Aggression Replacement Training, Evaluating and Relabeling Anger/Aggression, and AMBC of Anger (Activating event, Mind activity, Body signs, and Consequence). The instructor initiates discussion, role play, and writing activities. Different activities are used to reinforce the same anger management skills.

Most individuals in the two groups were aware of Job Readiness Skills, but they acknowledged one of their greatest employment needs was in the area of maintaining relationships.

The anger management instruction is followed by a continuation of What an Employer Expects and Keeping the Job. The instructor then begins to wrap up the session. Each student is given the following: a schedule of ABE/GED classes held in the area, a schedule of Sage Aptitude Testing, a list of possible employers, and a Job Tracking Roster. A date is then made for a two week follow-up meeting. Finally, a Certificate of Completion is given to each student.

Student's Reactions

Student's reaction to the 12-hour training is very favorable. Most all asked, "When will we meet again?" Before this class, most students had no alternative means to deal with anger. They were happy to gain new knowledge. The self-esteem of the students improved also. They were more willing to speak up and take part toward the end of the session.

Measurement Tools Used

- Worker Self Assessment Inventory
- Teacher Observation
- Completion of Activities

Key Insights

- Common issues of students
- Power of group bonding
- Students prefer concise information in shorter time frames

Outcomes

- The instructor held four 12-hour sessions with a total of 23 students. Each 12-hour session having 100% attendance and 100% completion of activities.
- Somerset Technology Center has been asked by working facilities to hold more instructional sessions with workers.

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Expanding Capacity



Scaffolding Grants: A Strategy for Reaching Sustainability

District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund



*Helping Today's Healthcare Workers
Prepare for Tomorrow's Workplace*

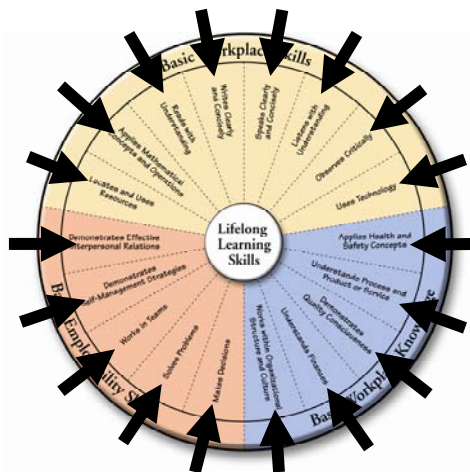
By Lynette Hazelton

If scaffolding lessons work to develop a student's proficiency—will scaffolding mini-grants work to develop an agency's ability to provide contextualized workplace education?

This was the plan behind District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund's three year series of WorkABLE innovative strategies. The idea of scaffolding was driven by the grand vision of embedding workplace education within our entire curriculum so that each one of the 4,000 students in our agency would be exposed to foundation skills in a consistent and meaningful way. Grand visions require both economic and technological support but no one mini-grant would provide the depth of assistance we would need for full

implementation. However, by dividing this complex dream into interrelated but doable components—each funded by its own grant but formed by the results of the prior grant—we feel we have made significant steps toward ultimately accomplishing this goal.

District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund is a union based training facility in Philadelphia which provides a variety of educational services for both community and union members. A substantial number of students come for ABE services in an effort to refresh their skills in order to enter a variety of postsecondary programs, including our own school of practical nursing, or to get a high school diploma or GED. However, the overarching impetus for our population of students to return to the classroom is to upgrade their job status—from unemployed to employed; from employed to better employed.



Our initial WorkABLE (2004-2005) focused on integrating workplace skills within our English as a

Second Language (ESL) classes. Each year, we serve about 50 ESL students, primarily from Haiti and Africa, many who are working but are professionally stymied. They need to improve their English skills to either advance in their current jobs or they need to enter training/postsecondary programs for training. This allowed the ESL teacher the opportunity

to look more closely at her current curriculum to determine where authentic workplace lessons could be implemented.

One major result from this experience was to use authentic scenarios for practicing professional language (especially speaking) skills and in a manner that allowed us to pre- and post-test students. The teacher reported that students were highly engaged because of the real-world activities and that authentic workplace scenarios sparked a tremendous amount of discussion—more than any other subject. Moreover, ESL students received concentrated workplace skill development—especially in the areas of communications and problem solving.

This resulted in engaged students and the teachers became advocates for the use of foundation skills.

The second year (2005-2006), we focused on the problem of professional development for aspiring nursing students. We have traditionally provided the hard academic skills (math, English and science) for students to transition to the nursing field, but we found the lack of the soft skills was derailing their efforts once they were in nursing school. Therefore, the instructor for our highest-level ABE students wrote and piloted a curriculum to embed basic workplace knowledge in the classroom. This resulted in engaged students and the teachers became advocates for the use of foundation skills. A more significant result is that we had two teachers fully convinced of the efficacy of incorporating foundation skills throughout the agency. They became our “early adapters” and helped to sell the program to other teachers.

In year three (2006-2007), we decided—based on the success with the previous two years—that we would provide professional development for the entire faculty and have all

teachers use the foundation skills in their classroom. This year the main goal was to familiarize teachers with the foundation skills and to create a process to document how teachers were using them in the everyday lessons.

Where are we now? I believe we are at the point where we have teacher buy in. The results from all three years show that teachers, when they have to use the foundation skills, find them easy but effective. They don’t experience them as a distraction to the “real work” of teaching their subject. It was important, if we were to reach our goal, that teachers see that providing contextualized workplace education is doable and can be intrinsic to many lessons they are already teaching.

I feel comfortable predicting that teachers, adequately trained and working in an agency that is making workplace education a major part of their learning environment, will integrate foundation skills in their lessons in a meaningful way.

But there are still challenges to meet. For example, in reviewing the lesson plans we used to document what workplace skills were being implemented in each lessons—I noticed that teachers more easily incorporated some skills (Reads with Understanding, Listens with Understanding, Writes Clearly and Concisely) than others (Applies Health and Safety Concepts, Understands Process and Product or Service, Demonstrates Quality Consciousness). As a next step, I would like to initiate discussion around these less frequently used skill sets to determine why we didn’t touch on them as well as to determine how they can be embedded into our curriculum.

In addition, we have to develop a workplace skills performance assessment with a pre- and

post- component that correlates to the foundation skills. Finally, we also need to determine the best way to train new agency teachers and to keep experienced teachers' skills fresh.

Over the past three years, WERC has helped District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund to create clear direction, to clarify our purpose in terms of workplace education, to pilot possibilities, and to provide feedback. With the knowledge we have gained through this process, we are certain that it will lead to an even more dynamic learning environment for our students.

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Online Auction as Authentic Learning



By Margaret Mechlenburg

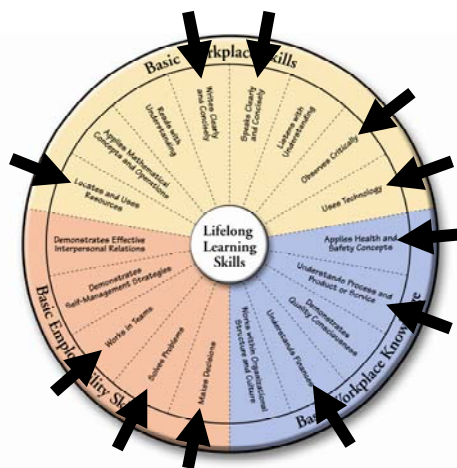
The evolution of an online auction club into an authentic learning project has created a dynamic learning environment for the development of job skills and life skills. Beginning as a “grass roots” student experiment utilizing eBay as a tool for learning computer skills and making money, it has grown into a teaching project that has grossed \$15,000 in online auction sales.

More than 60 adult learners, many of whom have been diagnosed with serious mental illness, have participated with Stellar Sellers. Of those 60 participants, 7 successfully completed Office of Vocational Rehabilitation job training, 4 successfully completed student internships, 2 completed community service hours, 4 started their own eBay sales, 6 found employment, and 2 have contributed to the community as volunteers. Those who have remained with the club continue to grow in their skill areas and/or act as mentors to new participants in the project.

Items that are sold by the group are usually

donated or are purchased at local auctions or estate sales. A percentage of profits are set aside by the group for such purchases. They also pay for supplies and divide profits among group members. Profit sharing checks are based on time worked for the project. Very quickly participants learn that if they want to make money, they have to work. (Basic Workplace Knowledge Skills—Understands Finances and Understands Process and Product or Service)

The eclectic mix of items that we list only adds to the interest or opportunity for learning. We may receive books from the 1820’s, obscure collectible water colors, or vintage ivory manicure sets. Our researchers eagerly use resources on the Internet, Kovel’s newsletters, or other resource books that they have frugally purchased at auction, to identify what their treasure may be and their potential value. (Basic Workplace Skill—Locates and Uses Resources)



Observation skills are honed in our writer’s circle.

Learners take turns handling the objects that they are going to write about (tactile learning), observe markings, or listen to sounds and share their thoughts about the item with the group. Comments are noted on pre-ad writing sheets and ads are then prepared by individuals using Microsoft Word® or Inspiration® planning software, and then

saved to disk. Worker's initials, date, and disk number for the ad are recorded on the item work order (our method of tracking an item from our inventory room to online auction sales). (Basic Employability Skills—Works in Teams, Basic Workplace Skills—Writes Clearly and Concisely and Speaks Clearly and Concisely)

Our photography crew strives to convey a crisp visual image of the item to be sold. We work with lighting effects, display, and backdrops. We have taken pictures standing over items, from angles, and straight on. We make frequent use of our scanner and our photo enhancing software. Jasc Paint Shop Pro® allows our photographers to adjust brightness, sharpness, and clarity. Our group recently purchased a photo lighting cube that they researched on eBay and are looking forward to experimenting with it. (Basic Workplace Skills—Observes Critically and Uses Technology).

As interest grew and our group expanded, so did the need for teaching skills that would enable participants to work together as a team in order to generate enough listings to make a profit.

Of course, these visual images would not be possible without the hard work and effort of our cleaning department. These folks do the work behind the scenes selecting cleaners appropriate for the item. Just as important, they are trained to know what to clean and what to leave as is. We have purchased cosmetic brushes to get in those hard to reach areas of collectibles and jewelry cleaner for gold and silver items. "Dawn" is a staple in our cupboard, cleaning glassware, plates, and diamonds. (Basic Employability Skills—Makes Decisions, Basic Workplace Knowledge—Applies Health and Safety Concepts)

Our listers provide the manpower to get the items up to eBay. Using Turbo Lister, you can find them at computers fervently getting items to auction. They are the "elite" of the group, as they have the final approval of whether or not the photo or ads are up to standard. They also set the opening bid and need to have knowledge of mailing methods. (Basic Workplace Knowledge—Understands Process and Product or Service, Basic Employability Skills—Solves Problems and Makes Decisions)

In addition, we have bookkeepers, packers, shippers, and inventory personnel. All of whom are integral to our operations. Learners participate in a dedicated weekly eBay class and in a weekly business meeting. In addition to our online auction sales, we place items for sale in our Nook and Cranny Gift Shop. With all this activity, there is always something to discuss at our business meetings.

As interest grew and our group expanded, so did the need for teaching skills that would enable participants to work together as a team in order to generate enough listings to make a profit. Each phase in the development of this project presented unique challenges and opportunities for learner-centered solutions. A cornerstone of this project has been the flexibility to allow for learner's to implement solutions and evaluate their effectiveness.

Just like any new business, the most difficult time period for the Stellar Sellers project was the start up. There were many activities that competed for attention. How will we organize the work that we do? Where will we obtain our start-up monies to buy items to sell? How can we develop contacts for donations? Where will we store our items and what will our process be for keeping track of what each club member does? These questions and more faced our group. In addition to addressing these questions, we needed to be

mindful of the processes of team development and establish norms for behavior within the group. The first six months were the most difficult, but with the help of a Schools of California Online Resources for Education (S.C.O.R.E.) volunteer and other resource people within our organization, we were able to set incremental goals and develop a process for resolving problems and conflict within our project. Instruction at this level centered on developing a work process or system for doing the work required for listing items on eBay and on understanding how online auctions work. Instructions or reference sheets needed to be developed that would include checklists for writing ads, procedures for how to scan, and steps to follow for doing a listing. We needed to learn about packing and shipping and we needed to develop an inventory of our items. Of course, our business card needed to be designed and individuals needed to nurture their observations skills.

Knowledge about collectibles was a critical factor in developing our business and we were fortunate to find people who were “expert” in these areas to give our group informal presentations about Depression glass, cut glass, and general collectibles.

Designing an efficient way to orient new members also presented a challenge and during our second year, the Stellar Sellers participated in a WorkABLE project developing PowerPoint® trainings in key skill areas that could be used to orient new members. The trainings were developed by the instructor and volunteers and presented to participants. Participants were encouraged to “critique” the trainings. Checklists for skill areas were also developed so that participants could see how their skills evolved over time. Participants also received feedback on performance while they were doing the work of the project, but the biggest source of

feedback was whether or not items listed resulted in items being sold.

Persevering in the activities relating to eBay sales, even if items were not sold, was a key factor in the success of the project. A facilitator needs to work hard to encourage and motivate learners to continue to work even if results are not immediately seen. This is not an easy task and requires stamina on the part of the educators involved with the project. Success must be related to the activities of doing and continuing to do even if rewards are not immediate. In my opinion, this is a key concept in the success of this project or any project of this type. The other critical factors include having a sense of humor and providing positive reinforcement for behaviors that are being shaped.

It is an opportunity for many to try out new skills in a supportive environment or to recover previous skills.

The Stellar Sellers has also participated in two other WorkABLE projects. One resulted in learners training another group of learners how to sell on eBay in another county in northwestern Pennsylvania. They planned, developed, practiced, and implemented their training and solicited feedback on the quality of their training. Wanting to grow their Nook and Cranny Gift shop, learners are expanding their abilities and preparing a marketing plan.

Opportunities for learning and creativity are available in abundance. We have taken field trips to local antique shops, have gone to a book store to learn how to write about books, planned parties, held tag sales, dined at local restaurants with profits, gone to auctions, and have held our own computer auction. We have created signs, posters, business cards, brochures, thank you cards, and videos. We have guest speakers and communicate to make a positive work environment. We have

met famous people—Naomi Judd and her husband bought a camera and a Dell computer. Participants have also learned how to read income and expense reports.

I am also thinking about how they will feel when they see their ideas being turned into reality while learning “they can do it!”

People who have been involved with our project have been enthusiastic about their experience. For some, their participation has meant something to get up for. They report feeling good about themselves and their contributions. Making money and deciding how to use it has been a rewarding experience for many. It is an opportunity for many to try out new skills in a supportive environment or to recover previous skills. Attendance rates for participants in this group are significantly above average; retention rates are good as well.

The uniqueness of the success of the project is that it is not based solely upon the knowledge centered environment (traditional classroom) but upon the interplay between the learner centered environments, the community-centered environment, and the assessment environment. The key concept critical to skill development is the use of the assessment environment to give feedback that is immediate and within context.

As for me, I enjoy doing what I do. Each student who comes to our group presents an opportunity for growth, both for the learner and instructor. It is gratifying to see change; an argumentative individual gradually becoming more cooperative, someone being able to print emails and route them to the “right spot,” or another individual observing and writing about what they see.

As I get ready for another program year, I am anticipating what might happen when we develop those windshield flyers and place them on cars at the library (that was Kathy’s idea) and how our gift shop business will grow when we start our registry (Todd’s idea).

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Incorporating Foundation Skills in the Workforce Education Classroom



By Linda Lazar

When the decision was made to move The Lifelong Learning Center's workforce program to a new location and to hire a new instructor, the time was right to develop a new curriculum. The new curriculum would include basic literacy skills and skills to help learners obtain and retain employment. The plan was to incorporate job readiness skills, basic literacy skills, and computer technology in a flowing and interesting class structured to help students learn skills and improve their chances for gainful employment.

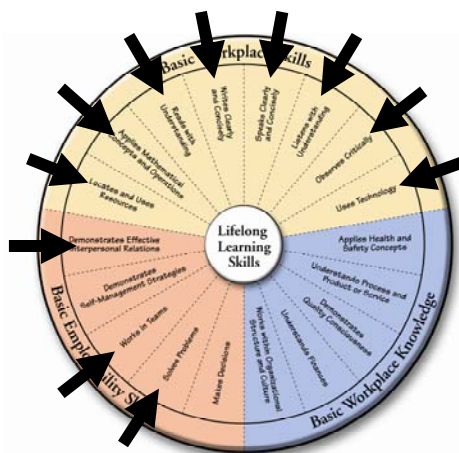
The priority was to find ways to overlap the three components of the class. Some of the main goals were to use math while teaching Microsoft Excel®; learn proper grammar, writing skills and interpersonal skills while using Microsoft Word®; learn to use the Internet to assist in finding employment. Another goal was to keep the class interesting and fun but still structured to prepare the students for the workplace.

Class Structure and Assessments

The class would meet three days per week for five hours with each session lasting seven weeks. The 105 hour course would be split into the three components. Morning sessions include job readiness skills, reading, math, communication for the workplace, Internet, and email lessons. Afternoon sessions focus on the Windows® operating system, Microsoft Word®, and Excel®. Students included displaced workers referred by the local PA CareerLink, former or current GED/ESL students, and anyone else in need of basic literacy and workplace skills.

Students initially were assessed using the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), but as the class developed, self-assessments and observations have been included. Upon completion of assessments, a plan would be developed for each learner to maximize their basic literacy skills using the CASAS student performance by competency lists. Self-assessments, surveys, and observations are used to develop technology and job readiness plans.

Checklists, observation, and assignments are now used with rubrics designed to measure gains in technology and the use of resources. Learner surveys were developed to be



completed the first day of class with expectations for the class and career paths students plan to follow. The surveys assist students in setting goals for the class as well as career goals.

While the initial goals for the class still exist it has grown beyond expectations. A description of the class components, foundation skills covered in each section as well as some lessons used to instruct the component is defined below.

Soft skills are an area that is challenging when working with students. Learners understand the importance of good communication and interpersonal skills when interviewing for employment. However, students do not always feel they need the same skills once they are employed.

Job Readiness, Career Assessment, and Soft Skills

Since most of the learners attending the workforce classes have a goal of obtaining and retaining employment this portion of the class is important to learners. Students learn the basics of filling out applications, creating resumes and cover letters, interview skills, and job searching. Worksheets are used to assist students in identifying their skills and for completing applications and resumes. The Internet, Winway Resume®, and Microsoft Word® are used extensively to assist students with job searching and resume writing. Learners also participate in mock interviews using ads found online during job searching. The interviewer reviews their interview skills, resumes, cover letters and applications and provides oral and written feedback to students. Foundation skills addressed: Writes Clearly and Concisely, Uses Technology, Speaks Clearly and Concisely, Listens with Understanding, Locates and Uses Resources.

Career assessment has become a very important part of our program. Since many of our learners have worked at the same job for many years and are now displaced and/or they have no idea what career path to follow, this lesson can help them decide on a career path that will lead to success. Learners use the *Pennsylvania Career Guide* and related websites to take interest surveys and to research jobs that match their interests, skills, education level, salary requirements, and local availability. After completion students can then use the information to job search for appropriate occupations and to create resumes to highlight the skills best suited to the chosen occupation. Students also have the opportunity to research schools that can provide them with the skills and/or education they need to obtain employment in the selected occupations. Skills learned in completing the career assessment transfer when students use similar resources for other research. Foundation skills addressed: Uses Technology, Locates and Uses Resources, Reads with Understanding, Observes Critically.

Soft skills are an area that is challenging when working with students. Learners understand the importance of good communication and interpersonal skills when interviewing for employment. However, students do not always feel they need the same skills once they are employed. Lessons focus on teaching students business writing, working in teams, workplace etiquette, and communication skills for the workplace. The *Workplace Essential Skills* and the *Ten Sigma Interacting with Others* workbooks have been used successfully to teach students about communication and interpersonal challenges in the workplace. Foundation skills addressed: Uses Technology, Demonstrates Effective Interpersonal Relations, Reads with Understanding, Writes Clearly and Concisely,

Speaks Clearly and Concisely, Listens with Understanding, Works in Teams, Solves Problems.

Basic Literacy Skills

Adult educators know that literacy skills are very important in the workplace. One of the problems faced by many employers is the lack of basic literacy skills possessed by employees and potential employees. Yet many learners expect a workforce class to concentrate on technology skills and job preparation skills. Learners often are “turned off” by inclusion of basic reading and math. While this can be a challenge, using Internet resources and *Workplace Essential Skills* workbooks can add fun and interest for students. One of the most exciting lessons for our students is the math preparation for Microsoft Excel®. Lessons include working with signed numbers, order of operations, and formulas. Students can work individually, in pairs or groups to complete the worksheets. Foundation skills addressed: Reads with Understanding, Writes Clearly and Concisely, Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations.

Basic Computer Literacy

The basic computer literacy component is by far the most successful portion of the class. Students learn the basics of the Internet, email, Microsoft Windows®, Microsoft Word®, and Microsoft Excel®. Each of the programs provides the opportunity to teach traditional writing, communication, research, and math skills. Lessons in Microsoft Word® include writing business letters and memos and solving workplace scenarios. Microsoft Excel® sessions include the learners preparing estimates for potential clients. Discussion and setup of budgets, checking account spreadsheets, and online banking are part of this class session. Internet lessons include using search engines, online directories, maps, and other resources. Email

lessons include setting up address books and sending attachments. Other computer skills include creating and organizing folders and learning to back up important data files.

Many lessons for the other components of the class are completed using computers. A typing program is also available for students who need keyboarding skills. As the class progresses, students spend the majority of class time using computers to complete assignments. Foundation skills addressed: Uses Technology, Locates and Uses Resources, Writes Clearly and Concisely, Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations, Observes Critically.

Portfolios

When the program is completed students compile their classroom work for inclusion in a portfolio. Resumes, cover letters, applications, career assessments, computer lessons are all included. Learners receive written evaluations on the mock interview and related documents. All surveys and self-assessments are also included in the portfolio. Rubrics are developed for job readiness skills, technology skills, and the learners’ ability to locate and use resources. Students receive a diskette or CD with the computer files accumulated during class.

Final Assessments

The CASAS is used as a formal post-test but students also complete final self-assessments. The Uses Technology competencies are used, with some modification, to help students gauge their progress in the computer literacy portion of the class. As stated earlier, this self-assessment is administered on the first day of class. It is again administered on the last day of class. This is a wonderful tool for students to actually see what they have learned in regards to computer literacy. Completed assignments, checklists, and observations are used to develop the other

rubrics to measure student gains. These assessments assist both students and instructors in seeing the actual gains students have made during the seven-week program.

Evaluations

Learners complete evaluations on the last day of class. Students can comment on class content and provide feedback on what they learned and if they met the goals set at the beginning of class. Student's reactions have been very positive with many students requesting longer classes or advanced classes to keep their new skills honed. All suggestions are considered and many have been included in the class.

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A Crosswalk Toward Improved Workplace Skills A Two Year Pilot Study Review

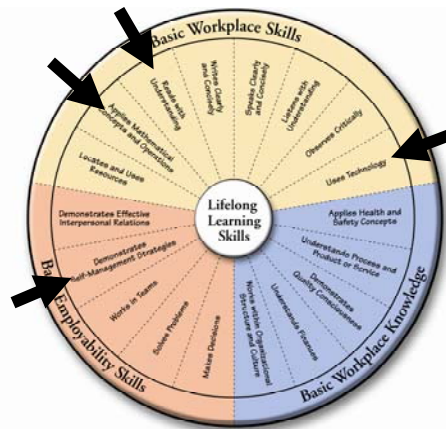


By Angela Kenes and Rachel Zilcosky

Let Us Begin

During the years of 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, the Intermediate Unit One completed pilot studies that focused primarily on two of the basic work-based foundation skills, Reads with Understanding and Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations. In 2004-2005, a group of 10 students, from Intermediate Unit One's Adult Learning Center in Uniontown, who were actively pursuing their GED, were selected to participate in the first year study. The focus of the pilot was to provide these individuals with the opportunity to utilize the web based Keys2Work instructional program to build their competencies in the areas of reading and math. Students were also allotted time to explore the career information available on the Keys2Work website, as well as engage in supplemental activities such as health literacy and resume writing. From this

experience, we were able to develop a crosswalk that allowed us to align those skills being developed through KeyTrain instruction to specific competences identified in the Work-based Foundation Skills Framework. This crosswalk then served as a valuable tool in guiding our instructional planning for the 2005-2006 pilot study. During this year, we again utilized the Keys2Work and KeyTrain web based programs to target specifically the Reads with Understanding and Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations skills, as well as provide opportunities for students to engage in career exploration and health literacy activities. The 10 individuals chosen to participate in this year's study were dislocated mine workers from the United Mine Workers organization. In both program years, supplemental materials from the *Exploring Work-Based Foundation Skills in the ABL Classroom* were used to enhance students' overall learning experience. Our findings during these two years clearly demonstrated the benefits of providing learners with a varied approach to basic skill development.



Year One

Our focus during this year was providing those students selected to participate in the study with basic workplace skills that targeted the areas of reading ability and mathematical computation. The students chosen were

committed to obtaining their GED and specifically interested in finding employment following the successful completion of the exam. One of our objectives was for each student to complete 25 hours of Keys2Work instruction, as well as have the opportunity to participate in health literacy and resume writing classes. All 10 of the students completed modules found in the Keys2Work program, while 4 of the 10 completed the health literacy classes and 8 of the 10 completed the resume writing classes. We were pleased that the 10 students averaged 24.70 hours of instruction. We did lose two students from the study due to their finding employment after passing the GED.

Each student began the program by completing a pre-test in reading and math that is available in the Keys2Work program. Based upon the scores on the pre-tests, students were then assigned a specific level from which to build their skills. Upon completion of the activities found at each level, students were required to take a quiz and earn an 80% prior to moving to a higher level. Students were then assessed in both areas using the WorkKeys Assessment, which is a part of the Keys2Work program process. The scores of this test are compared to the pre-test administered through the Keys2Work computer system. The challenge in this area is that although the pre-test is modeled after the WorkKeys Assessment, the two cannot be identified as a matching pre-/post-test assessment measure. Students were also administered the TABE and pre-/post-tests, and rubrics were created for the resume writing and the technology skills activities using the criteria from the *Foundation Skill/Competency Rubric Scoring Page*. When comparing the Keys2Work pre-test and level attainments, students demonstrated an average gain in math of 0.7 and average gain in reading of 0.9. A 60% gain was shown in resume writing skills and a 50% gain was

shown in technology. The least amount of gain was shown with those students who exited the program early. We were very pleased that in each area, our students showed a gain in each of the areas being addressed that clearly demonstrated both to the students and instructional team that their skills in reading and math had improved.

This experience also allowed students to consider the possibility of furthering their education and learned about programs that were available regionally to pursue this goal.

We had numerous informal conversations with our students to gain greater insight into what they believed were the benefits of this experience. Students noted that they greatly enjoyed the career exploration piece that allowed them to identify the skill level needed for them to be successful at any given occupation. This experience also allowed students to consider the possibility of furthering their education and learned about programs that were available regionally to pursue this goal. Another exciting benefit to this experience was that students were provided with completion certificates that identified the reading and math skill levels that they had attained upon completion of the program. These certificates were then signed by regional employers, which demonstrated their familiarity with the Keys2Work system. The resume writing portion of the program allowed students to polish their resume development skills, and for a few of them, the resume generated during this endeavor was their first. Our staff gained valuable experience in working with work-based materials, as well as provided a creative and flexible outlet for incorporating work-based materials into the GED structured program.

Following the completion of the pilot, a crosswalk was developed that correlated

Keys2Work Skill Levels, ranging from three to seven, to specific competencies identified in the Foundation Skills Wheel. From this crosswalk, we were able to plan and guide instruction for a pilot study conducted in the following year.

Year Two

In 2005-2006, we developed a pilot study that targeted 10 dislocated mine workers from the United Mine Workers cohort. The focus of the study was to assist this group in building their Basic Workplace Skill competencies in the areas of Reads with Understanding and Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations. Emphasis was placed upon those KeyTrain lessons identified on the crosswalk as directly correlating to specific foundation skills. Our goal was to provide each of the students with 20 hours of instruction. We included the career exploration activities that were utilized the previous year and supplemental materials from the *Exploring Work-Based Foundation Skills in the ABLE Classroom*. In this pilot study, we also focused on the Uses Technology skill, providing them with instruction in how to navigate the web based Keys2Work system. A health literacy component was also incorporated that addressed Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies.

From this crosswalk, we were able to plan and guide instruction for a pilot study conducted in the following year.

This group of students was extremely motivated and interested in participating in this program. We were pleased that the students averaged 50 hours of instruction. Of the 10 who began the program, two left due to beginning a postsecondary program. Each student completed the pre-tests in the Reading for Information and Applied Math sections of Keys2Work. Their final level attainment at the end of the study served as their post-test.

All 10 students completed activities in the Applied Math area, while 8 of the 10 also completed Reading for Information modules. All of the students completed the career exploration piece, and 9 of the 10 students completed the health literacy component. Each student was also assessed in the area of technology skills using the rubric. Each student also created a portfolio that contained a printout of the Keys2Work reports, career exploration results, resumes, and additional activities.

Students greatly benefited from their participation in the various activities. Through the career exploration piece, they gained a greater understanding of the competencies that would be expected of them when entering a new profession.

Our results from this study were very promising. All eight of the students who completed the program completed and passed at least one module of the Applied Math program and four of the eight students completed and passed at least one module in Reading for Information. We were particularly pleased that all of the students demonstrated an improvement in their computer skills. All 10 of the students observed demonstrated improved competencies in their ability to use an Internet browser, open a location using a URL or web address, navigate sites, and use bookmarks. Students also demonstrated increased knowledge on health related questions through their work in the health literacy portion of the study. Students also found the career exploration exercises to be helpful in providing them with a greater understanding of the skill levels needed to be successful in a particular occupation. Five of the 10 students completed the entire career exploration program and were interested in speaking to various institutions that offered training in their specific areas of interest.

Students greatly benefited from their participation in the various activities. Through the career exploration piece, they gained a greater understanding of the competencies that would be expected of them when entering a new profession. Since the Keys2Work program identifies the specific skill levels necessary for productivity in a given field, students demonstrated a great deal of motivation to improve and build their skills. Another benefit to students was the opportunity to utilize the computer and learn to navigate a web based system. All of the students who participated in the study had limited technology skills and the one-on-one instruction provided for this study greatly enhanced their confidence in their ability to use technology. Students had commented that they had difficulty utilizing the PA CareerLink job search system due to their limited knowledge of computers. They had also expressed trepidation about beginning a postsecondary program for the same reason. Each had commented that they now believed they possessed competent computer skills. Students also commented that the health literacy portion of the program provided them with a venue to discuss healthy lifestyles and consider those areas where they could make improvements.

Students then had a much clearer understanding of the expectations in a particular field and were more motivated to improve their reading and math skills.

The instructional team benefited from this experience by allowing them to increase their experience with work-based materials, particularly with a specialized population. Staff also gained a better understanding of industry clusters and high priority occupations, as well as a clearer insight to the skill levels expected for a variety of occupations.

Upon Reflection

Although the populations targeted in the first and second years of the pilot study were very different, both groups were able to demonstrate skill level gains in Reads with Understanding and Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations skills. The crosswalk that was developed specifically identified those areas that correlated to the Foundation Skill Framework. From this crosswalk, the instructional staff was able to focus on building those skills and increasing job related competencies. The technology aspect of the Keys2Work program was particularly beneficial to all students. Although the GED students in the first year pilot possessed greater familiarity with computer navigation, they still demonstrated technology related gains. However, the miner population was more intimidated by the technology aspect of the Keys2Work program.

Through the assistance of the instructors and computer aide at the Adult Learning Center, these individuals gained greater confidence in their computer related abilities and this experience could then be transferred to increasing their job search capabilities. The career exploration piece was also an integral component of the learning process in both years. All the students discovered the skill levels that were necessary and expected in a variety of occupations. Students then had a much clearer understanding of the expectations in a particular field and were more motivated to improve their reading and math skills. The signing of completion certificates by regional employers during the first year also demonstrated to the participants that the Keys2Work program was valued and recognized by area employers. The development of resumes in both years, as well as the use of the portfolios also provided concrete evidence of skill improvement. The health literacy components in both years also

allowed students the opportunity to reflect upon lifestyle changes that would benefit them in a variety of ways.

The challenges noted during both years, such as the losing of several participants and intimidation by the technology component of the program were soon overcome and students were able to make measurable gains in a number of competencies. The Keys2Work web based program was shown to be a valuable tool toward improving basic workplace skills while increasing the students overall technology related abilities. We look forward to utilizing this program in the future.

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for our students who emigrated from the countries of El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Honduras, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The result was a better understanding of the respective cultures and a gradual introduction to the culture of work here in the United States through the mask making portion of the project. The memory book became a summarization of their experiences with their instructor. Maria and I decided that the foundation skills we would address in the project were the following: Works in Teams and Writes Clearly and Concisely. As sub-units we would try to develop the participates as a team member competency within the Works in Teams skill focusing on the following indicators: works with others to identify teams goals, helps to meet team goals, respects different viewpoints and ideas, and accepts positive criticism. With the skill Writes Clearly and Concisely we concerned ourselves primarily with correct spelling and applying Standard English usage with verbs and pronouns. We chose these because a great number of our female students, who are also ESL learners, will find themselves in training programs for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA). CNA's spend most of their work hours in a team environment. They spend almost all of their time during a day using communication skills, either verbal or written. These skills also play an important role in the manufacturing environment, where workers are expected to perform their tasks as part of a team. Each member of that team has a critical role in the success or failure of team performance.

I enjoy using projects as a learning experience as it does keep the students interested while facilitating learning and gaining more knowledge about a work environment. The foundation skills especially lend themselves to this type of learning since they are geared toward the work environment where “project”

is a staple in the language. Each day they arrive for work, employees are expected to complete a “project” before their day or shift is over. We would be remiss if we do not allow the learners to function in this way. This is very true for the Move Up classes as it is our original mandate from the Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. A well designed project will allow the learners to experience different types of tasks. This may help the learners discover more about their own personality and what they need to be satisfied in a position at work. As the research is showing, these students absolutely need the skills education that we give in our classrooms. Not only are they in need of additional academic language, literacy, and numeracy training, they truly need educators to help move them through the maze of workplace expectations.

I enjoy using projects as a learning experience as it does keep the students interested while facilitating learning and gaining more knowledge about a work environment.

Our current students will most likely be entering into the workplace in entry level positions. Their own expectations of what employment means are often times not realistic. Many of our students have either held jobs for extremely limited amounts of time, or have never held a job; therefore, their own expectations of what employment means are often times not realistic. They are unable to understand their role in the workplace. At the same time, employers have their own set of expectations. Employers today need people who are coming with all of the academic skills we are teaching, but they also expect their new hires to be computer literate and have the soft skills necessary so that the business is able to function in a world-wide competitive environment. In conversations

with employers, this is the one area that we as a region are failing dramatically to accomplish. Workers are hired with the expectation that they will receive their reward (pay check) for showing up or not showing up, for completing tasks or not completing tasks, for doing a creditable job or not. As much as anything else, the correct attitude will keep a learner employed and long-term employees keep a business viable. One of our challenges in the project was to balance these hard literacy skills with the soft employability skills that combine to make a person a valuable employee.

Employers today need people who are coming with all of the academic skills we are teaching, but they also expect their new hires to be computer literate and have the soft skills necessary so that the business is able to function in a world-wide competitive environment.

For this project students were asked to make a product that was common across their representative countries; papier mache masks. For many people, papier mache brings back memories of childhood school projects. The materials were easy to obtain and proved to be inexpensive since mache is nothing more than paper and an adhesive. At its core, papier mache is nothing more than paper and glue. The Internet was the source of information on making papier mache with white glue, wallpaper paste, homemade glue, or starch. After viewing a few different sites, I decided that www.papiermache.co.uk held information that was most pertinent for this project. This web site is very informative and is helpful for the novice papier mache student. On the home page click on "Tutorials" and then go to the article by Jackie Hall. This will provide the basics for the students. Under the same tab for "Tutorials" there is another article describing more advanced papier mache techniques using smaller pieces of paper to achieve finer detail

in the finished product. Basic papier mache is layers of paper or similar material with an adhesive. In essence then, more newspaper equals increased integrity in the piece.

The basic form for the masks was done over a balloon to approximate the size and shape of a human head. You would need only to cover half of the balloon with the mache mixture. When the papier mache sets pop the balloon and remove it. The learners may now decorate as they wish. It is important to complete the drying process before applying any decoration. Our students decorated the masks with paint, glitter, glitter glue, and ribbons.

The process of quality control allows the learners to be positively criticized among their peers without the concurrent feelings of anger or rejection that would be present on the job. This would become a teaching opportunity to help the students understand the advantages of accepting positive correction from supervisors and peers.

The students were given the task of developing a simple method to paint the mask and keep the surrounding area clean. They set up a spray booth outside using a discarded copy paper box. This was another work related task as no one had seen or knew about a spray booth. They needed to collaborate in order to arrive at a workable solution for the problem. Students could paint the masks by hand, but the spray booth task added another level of problem solving to the project.

For this particular project, the class was divided into groups for each day they worked on the product. The instructor assigned the students a role they had to assume in their group. Some students were supervisors who watched over the general production. Some were assigned manufacturing tasks such as preparing the materials or making sure there

were enough materials for the day, while other students were assigned to clean up. The students learned they needed someone who was capable of spotting and correcting errors as the process progressed to ensure the best possible product at the end. The process of quality control allows the learners to be positively criticized among their peers without the concurrent feelings of anger or rejection that would be present on the job. This would become a teaching opportunity to help the students understand the advantages of accepting positive correction from supervisors and peers. It allows the group to develop effective communication tools when speaking with their supervisors.

The project was successful beyond our expectations.

After completing the mask making, the students were asked to research the food and music of their corresponding countries. Then, they were asked to give a final written evaluation of the project and what they learned from their work. These were collected into a notebook and were evaluated by the instructor.

The final portion of the project was a celebration of their efforts. The students arranged a day where their music, dances, food, and festivals were celebrated in the classroom. The ESL class invited students and educators from our other classes to join in the festivities. Everyone was duly impressed by the mastery of the process that was portrayed in the finished masks. The students were truly thrilled to exhibit their work for the guests and were humbled by the appreciation everyone showed for their efforts.

The project was successful beyond our expectations. The students marveled at the fact that these masks were important in so many cultures. The masks led to discussion

and to learning about food and music from the representative cultures of our students. The students finished the project obtaining a wealth of information they were able to transfer to their family setting.

There were two methods of evaluation used in the project. Student progress was measured with a rubric developed by our program for this project. The rubric incorporated the competencies that were mentioned above and were checked regularly to ensure the students made progress in all areas. Regular classroom instruction was used to review these competencies as well. A final evaluation was written by each student. This evaluation gave us their level of achievement for the written competencies such as spelling and conventional use of the English language.

Our greatest challenge was one that we educators face and a challenge that employers face daily. How do we keep students in class or on the job when life intervenes?

There were 14 students involved in the project. Of that number, all made at least one level of progress from beginning or emerging to developing or competent based on the Foundation Skills Rubric. Eight of the students made two levels of progress in four or more of the competencies. Most students were able to correctly spell the words used in their final evaluation either by memory or through the use of a dictionary, and they understood the structure of a simple English sentence. To us, it was equally important to be able to spell a word as it was to know which resources to use if they did not understand a word or needed help spelling that word.

Our greatest challenge was one that we educators face and a challenge that employers face daily. How do we keep students in class

or on the job when life intervenes? If we are able to give them all the academic skills they would ever need but still have not had them grow in the types of decision-making skills an employer needs, we have not completed our job. We need to help our students (TANF recipients, in this case) see their role as an employee and balance that against their role as head-of-household, nurturer, and income producer. We need to help them develop the tools to take along that will allow them to stay employed: back-up babysitters, assertiveness when scheduling appointments, or decision-making skills for correct use of time off. This is why each lesson ended with a discussion of the production difficulties encountered during that day and how best to correct those problems or how to avoid them in the future.

Our students used their personal experiences as a basis for the project; however, there are a number of web sites with pictures and explanations for the use and form of the masks that can be used for reference. For masks from the Caribbean you can visit www.dominicanmasks.com or www.puertoricomasks.com. For examples of African masks you can go to the web site www.wgbh.org/pages/pri/spirit/specials/masks.html. Finally, for the Mexican students there is a selection of photos of Mexican masks at www.latinamericanfolkart.com/mexican_masks.htm. The last site includes examples of masks from other countries in Latin America.

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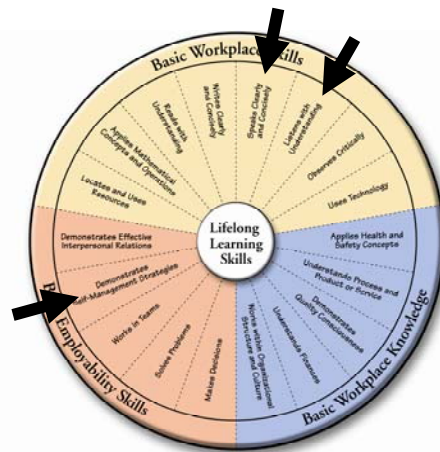
Adapting a Nurses Assistant Program for ESL



By Gina Venuti

Innovative strategies seem like they should be new and original inventions; yet upon checking the dictionary, it was discovered that an innovation could also be a new twist on a working plan or a departure from the way in which things are usually done. Chester County OIC's (CCOIC) innovative strategy was inspired by necessity. We needed to adapt a program which provided identical training to two different populations: immigrant non-native English speakers and native English speakers needing career training to break out of poverty to become self-sufficient. Since language was the barrier to successful training, we used all the lessons learned from our many years providing ESL instruction to successfully train Nurse Assistants who did not speak or read English as their native language. We created our literacy preparation class to break down that barrier; not only train them, but also, prepare them to pass a rigorous 100 question written examination. We operated on the premise that addressing the language deficiency was the primary goal in the

training, while employability and job retention skill training with a targeted literacy component ensured success for the traditional class participants. Therefore, training sessions were run on two tracks, ESL and English. It was a very successful model, and we were graduating well-trained Nurse Assistants in all sessions, but the pace of the training schedule placed a strain on our staff and our facility. Balancing separate nurse aide training programs within the same facility was expensive. The calendar was running out on us to meet contractual obligations. Our instructors, who also worked full time as long-term care nurses, had an almost non-stop training schedule. Combining the two programs was the only answer. A new twist on the old plan was needed. Our challenge was to integrate two training tracks, turn out new Nurse Assistants, and continue to do that successfully.



History

Chester County OIC has had a thriving program training Nurse Assistants for certification since 2003. We

began training individuals to become nurse aides to enter the targeted growth industry of health care. Over the years, there has been a great response to the program from both prospective students and employers. The graduates of our program are rapidly employed by the many long term health care facilities in the county. At the close of each

session, the program is reviewed and employers are surveyed to improve the work readiness of our graduates. Though regulated by state program requirements in the 126 hour certificate program, we have adapted the wrap around curriculum to help overcome the trainees' barriers to employment and target prospective employers' needs. We have the reputation of turning out highly skilled, job ready, health care professionals.

In fact, the parallel training course for the immigrant population was developed at the request of District 1199C Training and Upgrading Fund of Philadelphia and OICA (our funding source) to train non-native English speakers living in the suburban counties. We adapted eligibility requirements for entrance into the program to the state standard of 6th grade TABE scores and requiring proof of completion of secondary school in a native country. The state standard for training does not require a GED or high school diploma, though CCOIC does make it a requirement because most employers do.

The Project

It was essential that Chester County OIC merge these redundant programs that served two populations, Nurse Assistant Training (NAT) and Non-Native English Speaking Nurse Assistant Training (NNES). From July 2006 through January 2007, we operated four training sessions, two sessions trained non-native English speakers only. Sessions are held seven hours per day, four days per week. The classroom theory and skills training remained the same, although the NNES Nurse Assistant Training course contained scheduled flexible time if the students needed extra time to learn the material presented. The preliminary preparatory classes were very different. In the native English speaking program the trainees received two weeks of employability and job retention skills training with a health care focus, followed by two

weeks of an ABE class that taught measurement, the metric system, and study skills. Medical terminology and the role and function of a Nurse Assistant were also covered in the curriculum. The NNES' preliminary preparatory class was given a flexible time frame of four to six weeks to accomplish an intense ESL class with emphasis on medical vocabulary and conversation skills. Their program consisted of four weeks of seven hour classes four days a week of English language skills and medical vocabulary. The instructors also conduct twice a week skill classes to prepare the students for the certification exam which usually takes place about a month after graduation.

From the first day in the employability class, the instructor reiterates the program's policy regarding punctuality and absence, appropriate attire, participation, and preparedness for class. This forms the basis of the students' daily evaluation.

Since we had modified the program entrance prerequisites, would the NNES students be able to keep up the learning pace of the regular class? Would the language and cultural diversity create an obstacle to class bonding? Could the NAT students learn life lessons from the NNES students about dedication and sacrifice? The Nurse Assistant Training Program staff and ABLE coordinators had met and planned. The orientation had been held. Policy was explained. Student contracts were signed. Session 10 was ready to start. It was time to find out what would work and what would not.

From the first day in the employability class, the instructor reiterates the program's policy regarding punctuality and absence, appropriate attire, participation, and

preparedness for class. This forms the basis of the students' daily evaluation. Daily quizzes or tests on the previous day's class work and completed homework assignments are part of the literacy and NAT instructors' daily schedule. Since one component builds on another, it is important to conduct all aspects of the program as a model workplace with the students' bearing the responsibility to be on time, dressed appropriately, and ready to work. Attendance and punctuality were issues during the first two weeks with nearly 50% of the students having one incidence of lateness. The students are only allowed 14 hours of excused absence time for the entire 40 days of instruction. The time and work missed must be made up within three days. According to the training policy, more than three incidences of lateness can be counted as an entire day of missed time. Instructors are at liberty to enforce that portion of the policy. Students are evaluated by checklists, quizzes, tests, and observations on a daily basis, receiving advice and test scores from the instructors regularly. They must achieve and maintain a grade average of 80% throughout the ten weeks.

Speakers such as credit counselors, human resource managers from local long term health care facilities, partner agencies, and graduates of the program who are working in the field bring expertise, authentic learning experiences, and variety.

Performance

Session 10 of the Nurse Aide Training Program launched with a class of eleven. Two students from Sierra Leone and one from Columbia joined eight other students to train as Nurse Aides. Two weeks of employability and job retention skills started off the session. During this skills class, workplace expectations topics such as: attitude, punctuality, absence, and chain of command

are covered. Personal management skills: goal-setting, financial literacy, time and stress management are included along with the basics of resume writing, interview tips and techniques, appropriate dress, and business etiquette. The employability instructor uses a variety of teaching tools including: lecture, videos, computer software, workbooks, role play, and team exercises. Speakers such as credit counselors, human resource managers from local long term health care facilities, partner agencies, and graduates of the program who are working in the field bring expertise, authentic learning experiences, and variety. Usually, the students tour a local health care facility and visit a health care career fair. To help the NNES students' transition into the program during the first two weeks, they were given eight hours of group language support with the literacy instructor. They reviewed vocabulary used in the workplace and in conversation. The three NNES students missed eight hours during the employability skills class for the language review time. Several NAT students made sure their classmates were kept up to date with handouts, summaries of class discussions, and assignments. The instructor broke the class into three teams mixing the NNES, one in each group. When two native English speaking students were having difficulty getting to class by 8:30 a.m., the class along with the instructor brainstormed to help them to implement time management skills and create backup plans to help them arrive to CCOIC on time. All the students gained understanding about the seriousness of punctuality and teamwork in the healthcare field. The NNES students shared about life in their countries and how they wanted to succeed to help support their families still overseas, hoping one day to bring them to the U.S. The native English speaking students benefited by reaching out beyond them and in so doing began to break down the cultural barriers that also affected them. The ESL and

native English speaking students shared a similar need to acquire workplace foundation skills in Self-Management Strategies, Speaks Clearly and Concisely, as well as Listens with Understanding. A clear demonstration of competence or growth in these areas would be necessary to master the material and skills taught in the Nurse Aide Training.

The native English speaking students benefited by reaching out beyond them and in so doing began to break down the cultural barriers that also affected them.

The literacy instructor divides the curriculum into lessons that cover math skills such as learning how to read a thermometer and scales as well as how to convert English measures to metric meters and liters and Fahrenheit to Celsius. Multiplication is covered for pulse taking and respiration. Reading skills are covered with medical vocabulary, terminology, symbols, and abbreviations. The students read articles about care of the elderly, Alzheimer's, and the culture of long term care. Nutrition covers food groups, the food pyramid, and portion size. Students spend some class time in our computer lab visiting websites like www.mypyramid.gov, www.alzheimers.about.com, www.hospicefoundation.org, and www.nursingassistantcentral.homestead.com to enhance their learning and build personal and career resources. One native English speaking student was completely unaware of portion sizes and commented that she had eaten two pounds of shrimp for dinner. It was the first time she had encountered this information. The instructor encouraged her to personalize her own eating plan using the www.mypyramid.gov website. The literacy instructor also observed the camaraderie of this group. Daily they continued to form into study partnerships and cross-cultural friendships. One such friendship developed between Ray, a 50 year old musician with

experience as a home health aide and Abdul, a young man from Sierra Leone. On the same team, they would spend serious study time together and joke and banter as well. Ray offered to accompany Abdul to the uniform store to be sure to find the location and that the store clerk would understand Abdul's accented English. Learning to speak clearly and concisely was not just about accent reduction in the NNES but also learning the proper use of medical terminology and reduce the use of cultural slang in the workplace for the other students.

Outcome

Both instructors graded the students on a daily basis, using scored evaluations, tests and quizzes, and monitored sign in attendance sheets. They also utilized the Foundation Skills Rubric to measure from observation the learners' progress toward meeting the difficult to measure goals from the Foundation Skills Framework, such as: Speaks Clearly and Concisely, Listens with Understanding, and Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies. The questions and concerns about the TABE test scores, language levels, and cultural differences of the participants were answered by the end of the first week.

The earnest and eager NNES students were quickly adopted by the rest of the American students, many of whom were endeavoring to break the cycle of poverty or improve the quality of their lives by entering a career path with a living wage and a future. The class formed into a group that was on a common mission to succeed. Everyone began to adjust to the classroom expectations. Punctuality and attendance were issues with the native English speaking students in particular, but two of the NNES arrived late to class once. Attendance was an issue with two native English speaking students who had child care difficulties. These students learned that poor planning has consequences. Managing the

unexpected is essential to career success. Ultimately, both attendance and punctuality were better than projected. The 8 of 11 students demonstrated developing or competent levels of Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies. Only three students were still at the emergent level by the end of the four weeks. All students demonstrated growth and competence in Listens with Understanding as they strove to expand their comprehension of verbal communication, knowledge of workplace vocabulary, and used questioning strategies to obtain or clarify information at the developing to competent levels. The program requires an 80% grade average in order to remain in the program. Students are given one opportunity to retake each test or quiz, if necessary. The highest grade was 100%, with a NNES student having the lowest grade of 89%. All 11 students who began the class passed into the Nurse Aide Training portion to begin the actual classroom theory, skills, and clinical practicum.

On May 23, 2007 the Nurse Assistant Training Program graduated nine trained Nurse Assistants from Session 10 the combined class. Two native English speaking students did not finish the training, one due to ill health and the other exceeded the 14 hour limit on missed class time. That student has already enrolled for the next session and will begin again in August. The graduation was a joyous occasion for CCOIC's staff and NAT students. All of the students, along with their instructors, gained valuable knowledge and relationships. We had successfully integrated the two tracks, never sacrificed progress in English language skills or the quality of the Nurse Assistant Training program. With the roster filling up for the next session, the staff is excited to follow the new, improved, and effective model set by Session 10 that educates, assimilates, and cultivates skills that work.

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Collaborative Efforts



Pipeline to Bottom Line: A Business and ABE Partnership



By Cheryl Hiester

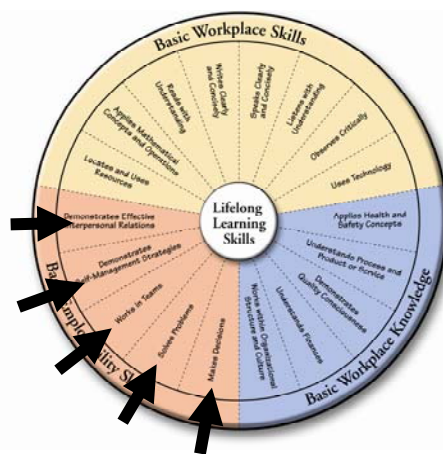
For many adults with basic skills limitations, getting a job is difficult. Keeping a job can be even harder. For employers hiring low skilled workers, the cost of employee turnover is considerable. Last summer, a group of manufacturing companies formed a consortium to address the problems they face in finding and keeping quality workers to fill unskilled labor jobs in the Lebanon Valley.

The consortium explored a variety of intervention strategies that would help address finding and keeping employees. They considered retention incentives in the form of monetary compensation for staying employed. The group sought the assistance of the Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce and the SCWIB (South Central Workforce Investment Board).

A comprehensive pipeline training project was created as a result of this employer driven

problem and solution identification. The project was funded with money from the Pennsylvania Workforce Development System, specifically, from the Pennsylvania Industry Partnership. Last year, \$5 M was available for industry partnerships, and \$15 M was available for incumbent worker training. Projects that are funded with Pennsylvania Industry Partnership dollars need to:

- Focus on specific industry clusters
- Bring employers together to address common problems
- Use a consortia model
- Identify skill gaps
- Develop training interventions
- Involve local education providers

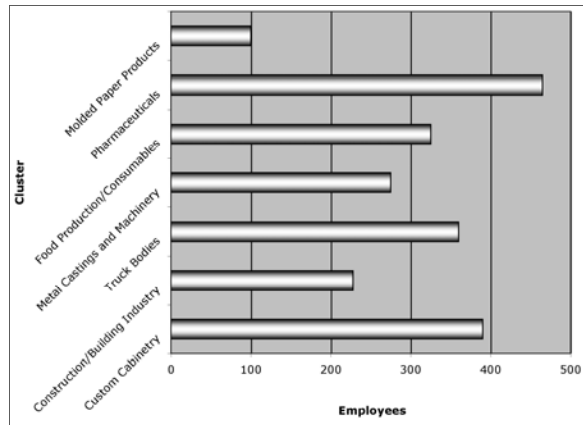


The SCWIB Executive Director, Dr. Robert Garraty, assisted the group in accessing the funding for this project. Fifty thousand dollars were committed to the Lebanon Valley Manufacturing Consortium, and the group chose to work with the Adult Education Program of Lancaster Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (IU 13). The first step

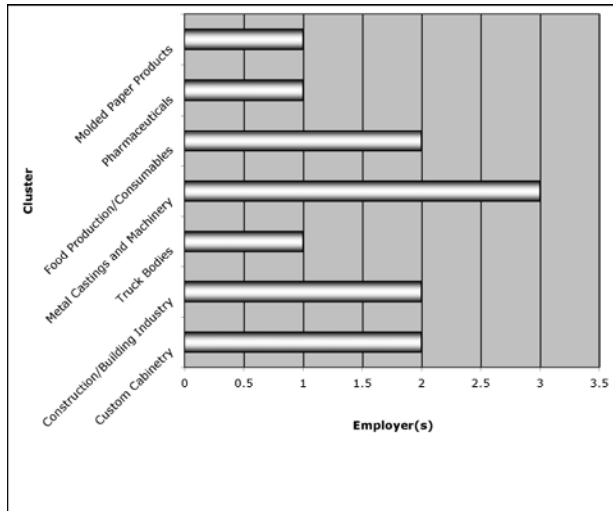
was to determine the details of the problem identified by the employers. How difficult was it to find qualified workers? What were the factors that impacted hiring? How bad was the retention problem? Was it across the board or isolated?

IU 13 staff first met individually with every employer who expressed an interest in the consortium. There were 11 employers that contributed to the needs assessment. Here is what the group looked like:

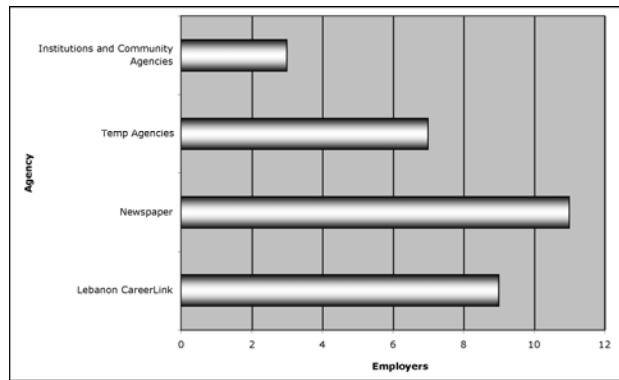
Number of employees by industry cluster



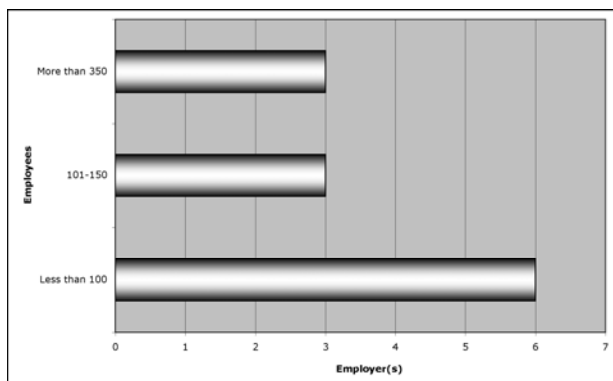
Products manufactured



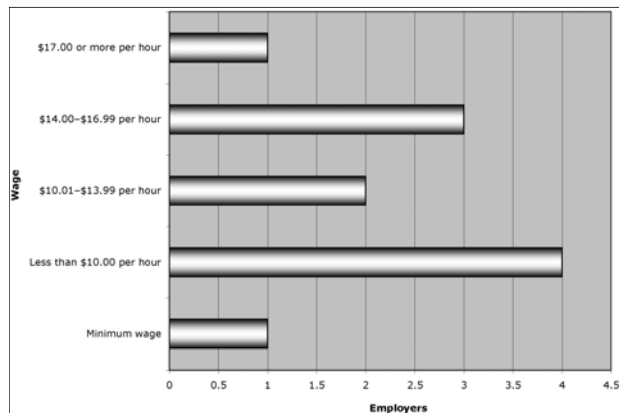
Preference for recruiting employees



Number of employees



Starting wage



Through the needs assessment process, IU 13 staff were able to uncover important information that helped us design a process to help get qualified employees in the pipeline so that employers could experience a positive impact on their bottom line. We learned that employers were not using the PA CareerLink to its fullest capability. There were several reasons for this. Some wanted to completely control their hiring. Others were known as employers of choice and did not need to advertise job openings, as those openings became known through word of mouth. Some employers believed that the quality of applicants sent by the PA CareerLink was deficient. There were even a few employers whose turnover rate was so high that they were hiring 8-10 people every week. We also learned that each employer had a favorite method for recruiting new employees.

Clearly, the Lebanon Valley has a system in place for finding workers that was being underutilized. It was also clear that this group of employers needed to recruit from a larger pool of applicants and develop a stronger partnership with the PA CareerLink. We learned that employers all shared the need for workers with improved “soft skills.” These skills are generally defined as a set of skills that impact how well we work with others. These skills include effective communication, flexibility, problem solving, conflict management, and work readiness.

The conclusions stated above led to the following recommendations:

1. Diversify recruitment strategies through the Lebanon PA CareerLink.
2. Provide high quality soft skills training to job-seekers.
3. Provide job coaching to new hires that have completed the soft skills training.
4. Offer incumbent worker training to employers upon request.

To address the diversification of recruitment strategies, IU 13 worked closely with the PA CareerLink in Lebanon County. We decided to create a manufacturing tool kit for job seekers that PA CareerLink staff could use to connect the right people to the right job. We gave employers a suggested list of items to include in their company’s toolkit. These items were:

- List of job openings
- Hiring criteria
- Type and level of experience
- Education-HS diploma, GED, etc.
- Computer skills
- Other skills
- Physical requirements
- Language requirements
- Availability
- Work ethic
- Retention expectations
- Personality and demeanor
- Application for employment
- Information about drug screening
- Information about the company
- Hiring procedures
- Salary and benefits

Start planting seeds with your workforce development partners at your local PA CareerLink. Let them know who you are and what you do.

Of the 11 employers involved in the Consortium, only two provided tool kits to the PA CareerLink. These were the two employers that had job openings at the time. Others will provide their tool kits when they are ready to hire.

To address the availability of qualified workers, the IU 13 staff developed and delivered Work Ready Training for job seekers. The training was rooted in the Work-based Foundation Skills Framework.

The training focused on Basic Employability Skills: Demonstrates Effective Interpersonal Skills, Demonstrates Self-Management Strategies, Works in Teams, Solves Problems, and Makes Decisions.

The training was a 20-hour course that was held at the PA CareerLink Lebanon County. Each participant underwent a work history assessment, academic assessment, Foundation Skills Framework Self-Assessment, and support and barriers to working assessment. The content of the training covered attitude in the workplace, giving and receiving feedback, knowledge, skills and abilities that employers are seeking, dealing with conflict and differences of opinion, roles and responsibilities at work, problem solving, job hunting, and creating a portfolio.

The participant feedback to the training was very positive. The employer feedback to the training was equally positive. One employer sent this email to the IU staff, “We had [nine Work Ready] Training graduates come for interviews yesterday. In general they presented themselves much better than our normal applicant pool, both in appearance and willingness to talk to those involved in the interview process. Andy was able to have a one-on-one discussion with one of the applicants, and he indicated that he learned a lot during the training sessions, both about what business expects and about himself and his attitudes. I believe that most; if not all of the other eight will be starting either Sunday evening or Monday morning, assuming that they accept the positions.”

After a job seeker completed Work Ready Training, s/he looked for work. Participants who completed the training were now in the pipeline for job openings that consortium members needed to fill. Of course, people could look for work anywhere they wanted to work and were given information about all job

openings through the PA CareerLink, job fairs, and classified ads. Only two of the companies in the consortium were hiring after the training. These companies interviewed everyone who completed the training. It was at this point that the job coaching support began. All training participants were provided with job coaching services. While the role of the job coach is still being developed, the importance of this support cannot be emphasized enough. Most of the job seekers going through this process will be hired in entry-level jobs. These workers are often low skilled, low income, and have limited work histories. For these workers, 20-hour training is not enough to help them be successful. The job coach can assist people facing life issues that may interfere with their ability to work. Individuals may need help finding services for substance abuse, transportation, family problems, housing, childcare, medical problems, and other health concerns.

The participant feedback to the training was very positive. The employer feedback to the training was equally positive.

There were two levels of job coaching support. The first was coaching to find a job. The job coach worked at the PA CareerLink and was there to assist in job seeking activities. The job coach helped people research job openings, reviewed job applications and gave feedback, practiced interviewing, practiced calling employers on the phone, and helped people consider all aspects of a job to help insure that it was the right fit.

When a training participant was hired, the job coach assisted the employee and employer in maintaining a feedback loop about expectations and performance. Too many times, entry-level workers find out that they have performance problems too late. This process created instant feedback to help new

hires create good work habits. The job coach provided a daily performance feedback form to the employer. The employer completed this form at the end of every day for two weeks. Performance criteria included:

- Shows up on time
- Observes break time
- Finishes shift
- Willing to work overtime
- Demonstrates positive attitude
- Shows courtesy and tact
- Cooperates with others
- Cooperates with supervisor
- Shows initiative
- Knows how to do job
- Gets job done
- Produces quality work

Thirty-nine people participated in the Work Ready Training. As of June 4, 2007, 24 of them were employed full time. Ten of the training participants have achieved the 60-day retention benchmark. Consortium members have committed to supporting retention by providing incentives to employees who reach 30 days, 60 days and 90 days. Employers will purchase a VISA gift card in the amount of \$50 for the 30 and 60-day benchmarks and \$100 for employees who are still working after 90 days.

Many of these employers recognize that they are transitional employers and a positive outcome is when someone quits for a better job.

Through the efforts of employers, the local Chamber of Commerce, the local ABLE provider, the regional WIB, and Pennsylvania Workforce Development funding, one community created a model for getting low skilled people into the pipeline for entry level manufacturing jobs. While these may not be the highest paying jobs in the region, they

offer people jobs with benefits. Many of these employers recognize that they are transitional employers and a positive outcome is when someone quits for a better job.

There are ideas in the pipeline for extending the project to other industry clusters. The message for ABLE providers is simple - you can be an active player in your workforce development community. Start planting seeds with your workforce development partners at your local PA CareerLink. Let them know who you are and what you do.

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Winning Workers with WorkKeys: A Title I - Title II Collaboration



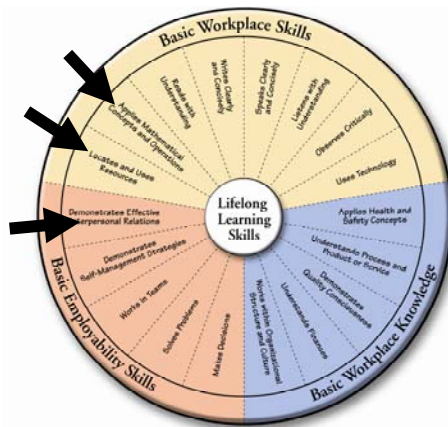
By Carolyn Kline

The Tuscarora Intermediate Unit (TIU) Community Education Services' 15 month WorkKeys pilot concluded in June 2007. It has been an exciting time for increased collaboration among partners benefiting job seekers in the PA CareerLink Mifflin County, in Lewistown.

The project began during the winter of 2006 when the TIU Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II provider was invited by the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education to be part of an initiative, along with two other counties in Pennsylvania, to pilot the use of WorkKeys within Title II delivery. At the same time, the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation, Mifflin County's local Workforce Investment Board, began the process of implementing WorkKeys and the Worldwide Interactive Network (WIN) into the Central region's PA CareerLink services.

Since last March the partners in the PA CareerLink Mifflin County have been

collaborating to provide various activities around the implementation of WorkKeys and WIN. The main goal of the partnership is to improve the skill levels of our local job seekers and in so doing offer a better skilled workforce to local employers. WorkKeys is a job skills assessment system measuring skills that employers believe are critical to job success. The WorkKeys Career Readiness Certificates are issued in Bronze, Silver, or Gold based on test performance. WIN is online courseware that offers learners the opportunity to take a placement test and to brush-up for the WorkKeys assessment.



To better prepare our learners to meet their job goals, all learners who enter the Career Resource Center are informed about the WorkKeys assessment. If interested, learners are encouraged to take a placement test using the WIN courseware to get an idea of how they would do on the actual WorkKeys assessment. Once a

placement test is completed, the learner meets with a Career Specialist to review the scores received. At this time, the Career Specialist introduces the learner to a website called WIN Careers. This website allows career specialists to see what the recommended scores are for over 10,000 profiled positions. If learners' scores match their job goal they are referred to take the WorkKeys assessment. If the learner has high level scores but is not

sure of a job goal, they are referred to WIA workshops for career exploration and career counseling. If the learner has scores that are either not at the level for the job goal or are in need of some remediation, the Career Specialist schedules an intake appointment for the learner to meet with an Adult Basic Education (ABE) instructor.

While the learner is brushing up, the instructors are closely watching the progress of the learner both in WIN courseware as well as through other curriculum and direct instruction the learner is receiving.

During the ABE intake, the instructor uses the WIN Careers website to further explore the employment goal and scores needed. The instructor then reviews the WIN courseware scope and sequence to give the learner an idea of what type of skills they need to build for their job goal. During the intake the learner is introduced to the different options available for instruction. The TIU offers work-based foundation skills classes, WIN labs, tutoring, Even Start classes, distance learning, and occupation-based managed enrollment classes such as Health Care Prep class. At this time, the learner is set up to complete the TABE survey and given a schedule for remediation that meets the learner's needs.

While the learner is brushing up, the instructors are closely watching the progress of the learner both in WIN courseware as well as through other curriculum and direct instruction the learner is receiving. The use of the WorkKeys Career Readiness Certificate in our ABE/GED program has given students a connection between adult education and their ultimate goal of employment or postsecondary education. The work-based foundation skills classes that are held 15 hours a week use the Work-based Foundation Skills Wheel as a framework for all lessons. The WorkKeys

Career Readiness Certificate specifically focuses on the work-based foundation skills: Reads with Understanding, Applies Mathematical Concepts and Operations, and Locates and Uses Resources. Once a learner has reached the scores needed to achieve the desired certificate a referral is made back to Title I services. Title I will then proceed with scheduling the learner to take the WorkKeys assessment and attend WIA workshops if needed.

Through this collaboration, referrals to Title II services from Title I services, as well as from Title II to Title I have increased.

A challenge the partners have faced is getting learners interested in the WorkKeys Assessment while in the Career Resource Area of the PA CareerLink. Many learners want a job immediately and do not feel they have the time to spend taking a test. Throughout the year we have tried many different avenues to encourage learners to test for a WorkKeys Certificate. Most recently we have had our greatest success when some local employers signed contracts with the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation to place "WorkKeys Preferred" in employment openings. This buy-in from employers has helped increase the number of learners participating in WorkKeys testing and WIN remediation.

The WorkKeys initiative has encouraged more understanding among PA CareerLink partners and mutual referrals. TIU and partner staff all believe in the worth of the Career Readiness Certificate to our learners. Through this collaboration, referrals to Title II services from Title I services, as well as from Title II to Title I have increased. As of March 2007, 107 ABE learners had used the WIN courseware, and 30 learners received

WorkKeys certificates. The use of WorkKeys and WIN Courseware has given the partners a shared infrastructure of learner service and has offered an important credential to those who may not have other documentation of their skills. Title II has also used the process to better guide our learners into employment, postsecondary education, or training.

We look forward to continuing the work started last year and offering these more comprehensive services to our learners on a continuing basis.

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