

The Connection:

The ABE, ESL & Citizenship Newsletter

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Hollywood Jobs Center Uses Distance Learning



Lou Fossum (front row, second from left) and some of his students at the Hollywood Jobs Center.

Most of the time, the students come to the teacher. But Lou Fossum brings his ESL class to the students. For nearly seven years, he has been teaching day laborers, nannies and housekeepers at the Hollywood Jobs Center as part of the ESL Distance Learning program of Hollywood Community Adult School.

Fossum's class, a combination of distance learning and teacher-directed instruction, meets three times a week in a blue trailer on the Jobs Center site next to the Home Depot on Sunset Boulevard. Outside, men and women gather under a large white canopy where they wait to secure work.

Students in his multi-level course are constantly plucked from class for work, but Fossum is enthusiastic about the synergy between his program and the Jobs Center. The center provides workers with ID cards, guarantees them at least \$10 an hour for a minimum number of hours of work.

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EBRI? What's That?

EBRI stands for Evidence-Based Reading Instruction, and it's the current buzzword in ABE circles around the country. At conferences and meetings, wherever ABE teachers, program directors and researchers get together, EBRI is the hot topic of conversation. Here's a quick look at EBRI to get you up to speed.

OK, so what is Evidence-Based Reading Instruction all about?

EBRI is not a curriculum. It's an approach to teaching reading. It grew out of a body of research which identified a set of effective instructional strategies for teaching reading to adults. While reading is the most basic of skills, teaching reading is a complex process that is often misunderstood. EBRI demystifies the teaching of reading because it lays out effective instructional strategies that are backed by data. Because EBRI is not a curriculum, implementing it is not dependent on a certain set of materials. No matter what materials are being used, EBRI provides teachers with the tools to deliver effective instruction.

Sounds great on paper, but what does EBRI look like in the ABE classroom?

A major conclusion drawn from the research is that ABE reading instruction should be explicit and direct in the four key components of reading: alphabets, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. In the ABE classroom, that translates to more small-group and whole-group instruction, rather than mainly individualized instruction. EBRI means that instruction begins with assessment of students' skills in the four components, not just assessment via a silent

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Kit's Korner

Our Vital Roles



When you began teaching, did you imagine that your role as an ESL or ABE teacher would become so vital to the lifelong success of your students? I didn't. I thought I was just going to teach my students to speak English. But the complexity of U. S. society is growing at a pace that keeps even the most educated of us in a near-constant state of

breathless bewilderment. We, and our students, are barraged by choices and the need to make educated decisions every day. Besides not knowing the language or lacking basic skills, many of our students have little knowledge of American culture and its complex social systems, knowledge they need in order to survive and thrive.

When the sub-prime mortgage scandal broke, my first thoughts were of my former students. Foreclosures, an article posted on www.citymayors.com reported, clustered "around low-income and minority communities where residents often had little job security, little financial savvy, low credit worthiness, and few borrowing options." That sure sounded like a profile of many of my past students. Had some of them fallen victim to predatory lending practices? I hope not. Had I taught them the skills they needed to avoid these pitfalls? I hope so.

And what about navigating today's U. S. health system? Should I choose an HMO or a PPO? How much is the co-pay? How much will I owe the hospital? Do I need a second opinion? If these basic health matters challenge you and me, what about our students?

When we teach our students the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and computation, we must also teach them to use these skills to seek out knowledge and access resources. We must be sure that the lessons and the curriculum we write teach problem solving and the means to negotiate complex systems. When we teach math skills, we must not only teach how to read credit card bills and bank statements, but also how to avoid costly interest rates and overdraft penalties. When we create reading lessons, we must make sure that we are not only teaching how to interpret the headlines, but also the importance of reading the fine print. Classroom activities need to include practice in formulating questions as well as providing students with the confidence to ask them, even if their English isn't "perfect."

Facing the challenge of being an ESL or ABE instructor today means we must never lose sight of the challenges facing our students. When our courses, instructional materials, lessons and efforts put student needs first, our role as educators truly is a vital one in helping our students survive and thrive.

Kit Bell

Field Notes

Computers, Community, Commitment

Ed Rodriguez has found a way to increase attendance in his Intermediate High A ESL class. Since 2006, the **Jefferson Community Adult School** instructor has been teaching his students how to use Microsoft Word on Thursdays for an hour. They learn how to open and save files and practice their writing. For his part, Rodriguez has an average class size of 25 on a day that had meager attendance. He also takes his students on field trips to the local and downtown libraries, introduces them to free community resources, and culminates the term



Students in Ed Rodriguez's Level 4 ESL class tour the Getty Museum.

with a visit to the Getty Museum. "I want them to know there's something bigger out there," he says. "I get an inner smile when their horizons have been broadened." In May, the class attended a Dodgers game; they will return to the Getty in early summer. "Build the trust," he says, "and they'll keep coming, no matter what."

No Day of Rest Here

Evans Community Adult School opened Sunday classes on April 15, and they were an instant hit according to APO **Janet MacLeod**. The now seven-day-a-week school offers one computer lab, three ESL/Citizenship classes, and eight ESL classes that meet from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. "One new enrollee comes all the way from Long Beach," says MacLeod. Child care and cafeteria services are already available, and there are plans to add Distance Learning and a Chinese/Mandarin class. Who wants to go to school on Sunday? MacLeod says that students tend to be slightly older than weekday scholars. The success suggests Evans is filling a need, and as of this writing, has the market all to itself.

Center of Attention

Los Angeles Technology Center became the first DACE school to publicly adopt the new ECC tag, celebrating its renaming as **Education and Career Center, Mid-Wilshire** campus at a public ceremony on May 10. The main speaker, **Rafael Nadal**, is an alum of the ESL and ABE programs when the school was known as LATC, and is

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Presenting Five CALPRO Colleagues from LAUSD



The California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project (CALPRO) is proud to have these talented ESL and ABE teachers from LAUSD presenting professional development workshops.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, **Guillermo Verdin** teaches Basic Language Arts and the II lab at Belmont's Mid-City campus and GED Prep to recovering drug addicts and alcoholics at the Midnight Mission in downtown Los Angeles. Students appreciate his patience and knack for explaining things. An avid runner, Guillermo recently completed the LA Marathon. With that kind of schedule, it is no wonder that his favorite weekend activity is "sleeping." That and watching the TV show *Golden Girls*. Guillermo is the trainer for the CALPRO workshops on **Critical Thinking**.



California native **Jenny Moreno** has always had a passion for learning and teaching, especially in a cross-cultural setting. That's why she finds her career as an ESL teacher at Wilson-Lincoln CAS and a coordinator at Franklin CAS to be so rewarding. Those who attend her workshops leave exhilarated



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Field Notes

now a Field Representative for 48th District California State Assemblyman **Mike Davis**. Festivities included music, food, an Open House, and College and Career Fair. School Board member **Marguerite LaMotte** was one of the notable guests at the event, which was coordinated by Teacher Advisor **Victor Gomez**, and lauded as a great success by Principal **Maxine Hammond**. □

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Jobs Center Distance Learning

"My students are getting the jobs before anybody else," he says, "because of their English skills."

Hollywood CAS Principal **Cynthia Tollette** calls Fossum a "dedicated, community service-oriented teacher who is helping people improve their skills and obtain or upgrade employment. I'm elated to have him on our staff." □

rated by her infectious enthusiasm. Jenny is the CALPRO trainer for **Effective Lesson Planning** and **Multilevel ESL Instruction**.

Hollywood CAS instructor **Jill Gluck** is the facilitator for the CALPRO **Network Meetings on Multilevel ESL**. She knows firsthand how challenging it is to teach a multilevel class, and how important it is for teachers to have an outlet to share with colleagues. With an MA in Linguistics, and more than 20 years of ESL experience, Jill deftly leads the group in what she terms, "a different kind of learning." Jill is fluent in Spanish and Italian, and loves to travel in Europe, where she finds inspiration for her photography and oil painting.



Laurie Pincus was working at a preschool when a college friend convinced her to try the adult school. It is 28 years later, and Laurie is still teaching adults. She currently teaches reading and language arts at Abram Friedman Occupational Center. Whether teaching students or peers, Laurie understands what her learners want and need, and she knows how to deliver. When she's not in the classroom, she enjoys reading, walking, and quilt-making. It is her not-so-secret fantasy to retire and sell enough quilts to keep herself in fabric. Laurie is the trainer for the CALPRO **Research-Based Reading** workshops.



Marjorie Schneider left her career as a high school Spanish teacher to teach ESL and ABE at El Camino Real Adult School. Students like Ramiro Uribe are glad she's there. He credits her with taking him from a 6th-grade to a 10th-grade reading level. Marjorie knows what it takes to get results, and she brings that focused excellence to her workshops. When she's not working,



Marjorie enjoys movies, reading, and gardening. She shares her expertise in the new CALPRO workshop series on **Research-Based Reading Instruction**. □

Visit CALPRO-online.org in the fall to see the free CALPRO professional development workshops and events for 2007-08. View the CALPRO-LAUSD Calendar by clicking on Professional Development Centers, then LAUSD, then Calendar, or call CALPRO-LAUSD Professional Development Center Manager Liz Koenig at 213-241-3723. □

Learner Persistence

Tea Time Is Team Time

The classroom is alive with conversation. Students talk in pairs, sip tea and nibble on snacks. The teacher circulates and observes, perhaps answers a question. At a given point, she signals and the students switch partners and begin talking again.

The scene is a class-building activity, a *Getting to Know You Tea*, which ESL teacher **Suzette Cuseo** uses with her Intermediate High class at the **Rinaldi Adult Learning Center**. Class-building, or building community, is one way of empowering students by increasing their ownership of the learning process, according to Spencer Kagan, author of *Cooperative Learning*. Class-building activities motivate students because it helps them feel connected to their classmates.

Cuseo picked up the idea for the *Tea* from ESL Teacher Adviser **Ronna Magy**, who serves up this activity in Learner Persistence workshops. At the tea, which lasts about 45 minutes, students enjoy light refreshments and use a list of 10 prepared questions to prompt conversations with two or three other students. The teacher observes and responds to questions.

“The activity exceeded my expectations,” says Cuseo. “The room buzzed with laughter and smiles. Above everything else, it was gratifying to see my students have so much fun while they were talking.”

“The activity definitely helped to cement camaraderie among the students and bolster their support of one another.”

Cuseo plans to take the idea to the next level by setting up mixers between Intermediate Low and High classes, so students will get a sense of what to expect in the next step of their educational journey. Class-building activities such as the *Tea* can naturally be extended to connect neighboring classrooms of students and even larger campus populations.

Getting-to-Know-You Tea: How to Do It

Preparation

At the beginning of the third week of class, introduce the idea of an informal intraclass or interclass mixer. Explain the purpose of the mixer, and tell students they will have a short list of prepared questions to use as conversation prompts while they enjoy light refreshments (questions can be prepared from a class brainstorming activity). Questions should contain known



Students in Suzette Cuseo’s Intermediate High ESL class at Rinaldi Adult Learning Center get to know each other during a class-building tea. From left to right: Naomi Cho, Noriko Inoue, Sonia Restrepo and Thao Bui.

vocabulary and previously mastered grammar. Together, set the date for the event. Students can bring food; the teacher supplies the tea, coffee, and tableware. Remind students of the event the day before.

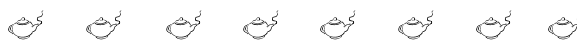
Day of the Tea

Set up for the party. Give each student the list of questions. Review the questions and explain the activity: students find and talk with a partner or partners until a bell is rung, at which point students find someone else to talk to. Students can exceed the prompts, and extend the conversations.

The Activity

Wander the room as the students talk. Listen in, take photos, but keep to the background. After 20 minutes, ring the bell and allow the students to find a new partner. Call time after another 20 minutes. Clean up and resume class.

For more information about Learner Retention workshops and class-building activities, contact Ronna Magy at 213-241-3775.



Suzette’s Conversation Prompts

1. How are you doing in your English class?
2. How do you like the school?
3. How long have you lived in California?
4. What were you doing before you moved to the USA?
5. Do you ever practice English outside of class? Where?
6. What do you like to do in your free time?
7. Do you like animals?
8. What are you planning to do after you finish your classes?
9. Do you drive?
10. What are some of your favorite restaurants?

Tech Talk

Adventures of an Urban Reading Teacher

ABE teacher **Delondra Williams** has helped bring the ABE Program into the 21st century with an informative and entertaining blog about her experiences teaching reading at **ECC Los Angeles** (formerly Los Angeles Community Adult School).



She shares her failures (“We got our CASAS scores in this week... it turns out they're dismal”), touts her triumphs (“In fact, it was the only day that whole week that they refrained from bouncing around the room and screaming, ‘This is booooooring!’ at the top of their lungs”), and flogs herself (“Did my class actually make them dumber?!”) She doesn’t pull any punches, and any teacher can relate.

“A blog is such a great way for us to talk about the issues that are really important and get instant feedback,” she says. “Sometimes when you’re dealing with a tough lesson plan or out-of-control students or a confus-

ing district policy, you just feel totally alone. But you’re not. There’s a whole community of teachers in L.A., and we need to support each other.”

She has posted an entry almost every school night since she started in mid-May, mixing descriptions of her classroom goings on with serious discussion of materials, lesson planning and pedagogy. She started the blog to document the strategies she is using with the new *AMP Reading System* she is piloting for the ABE program. AMP is a reading intervention program for use with secondary students with 3rd to 5th grade reading levels.

“Sharing our experiences can make us better educators,” she says. “I hope that within the next five years, all LAUSD teachers are online, whether they’re writing their own blogs or contributing to someone else’s.”

Go to urbanreadingteacher.blogharbor.com to visit Delondra’s blog and join the discussion. □

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EBRI: Hot Topic for Reading Teachers

comprehension test (i.e., TABE). EBRI means teachers will be planning lessons more carefully to incorporate direct instruction.

The four components of reading? What are those?

Reading is a complex process of deriving meaning from print. Research has identified four key components in that process:

- **alphabetic**s—phonemic awareness, word analysis, decoding, sight words
- **fluency**—the ability to read with accuracy, rate, expression and meaning
- **vocabulary**—the knowledge of word meanings
- **comprehension**—the end result of reading

What are the advantages of EBRI?

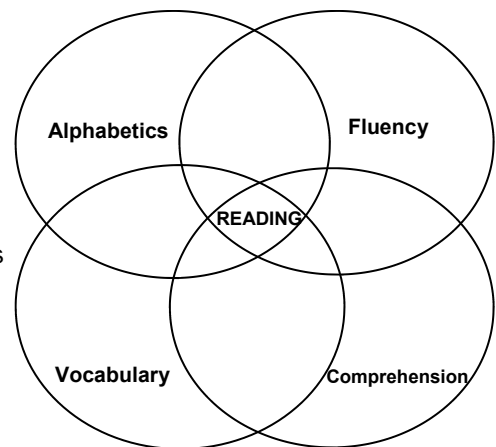
EBRI gives teachers greater understanding of the process of reading and how to teach it. EBRI offers teachers concrete tools to use to help students gain mastery of the four components of reading. Direct, explicit instruction means all students, not just a few, get “teacher time” in every class session. In addition, EBRI empowers students with the knowledge of where their strengths and weaknesses lie.

Are DACE ABE teachers expected to implement EBRI right away?

No. However, EBRI is the future of ABE. Before teachers are asked to implement EBRI, the ABE Program will design workshops to give all teachers a chance to learn about EBRI and use it in their classrooms.

How can ABE teachers in the field learn more about EBRI?

A report issued in 2002 titled “Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction” summarizes the research base. The report is available at www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading (click on Publications). Another useful document, “Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers,” by Susan McShane, offers teachers clear explanations of the four components, as well as instructional strategies. It’s available also online at www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading. Teachers may also contact the ABE office to request a copy (213-241-3164). □



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Previous issues of *The Connection* are available online at <http://esl.adultinstruction.org> and abe.adultinstruction.org.

Burning Question

How Do I Work with the Teens in My ABE Class?



Any suggestions for classroom management and instructional strategies that work with concurrent and young adult students? —Trying to Adjust

We took your question to Julie Zeller, a Developing Reading and Writing Course (DRWC) expert with LAUSD's secondary program. Zeller, who has presented her *Adolescents and Learning* workshops several times to Division ABE, ASE, and ESL teachers, has a winning set of strategies to help. A former high school science teacher, Zeller says not to personalize disrespectful and disruptive behavior. It is the teenagers' "job" to challenge authority. Adolescents need to have boundaries set for them, because their brains aren't fully mature in the areas of reasoning, impulse control, emotional maturity and organizational/planning ability. You can calmly lay down the law, without yelling or screaming.

Start at Intake. Zeller suggests using a questionnaire that asks for contact phone numbers (including the parents' and high-school counselor's), the reason for attending adult school, and the student's ultimate goal. Younger students need more personal attention and connection than typical adults. Get to know them, says Zeller, and don't hesitate to call for parental reinforcement as needed.

Good behavior is a product of effective classroom management. Many adult classrooms are in session for two or three hours at time in an environment where students often work independently on assignments. Typical high-school age students, however, do not function well in this setting. They are used to a highly structured environment in which instruction is teacher-directed and everyone studies the same curriculum in shorter chunks of time.

Help students stay on task. Zeller recommends students complete a daily or weekly goal sheet. They'll need your help to determine what tasks and assignments they can realistically accomplish each class period. Refer to the goal sheet when a student needs to be shepherded back onto the learning trail. Go to the ABE website, <http://abe.adultinstruction.org>, for .pdf files of the intake questionnaire and goal sheet.

Good lesson structure wards off bad behavior. Another helpful resource is Cris Tovani's book *I Read It, But I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers* (Stenhouse Publishers, 2000). Tovani's advice: Don't lock students into one type of activity for long periods of time. Design lessons that juggle direct instruction, book work, and small-group activities. Give students opportunities to express themselves. And remember that all students appreciate honesty, sincerity and humor.

For information about Julie Zeller's next presentation, contact the ABE office at 213-241-3164. □

Calendar

July

19 Thursday. *CBET Meeting.* Abram Friedman Occupational Center; 1:30-4:30 p.m.

27 Friday. *ESL New Teacher Orientation.* North Hollywood Adult Learning Center; 1:00-4:30 p.m. Pre-registration required. 213-241-3166.

September

19 Wednesday. *CBET Coordinators' Meeting.* Abram Friedman Occupational Center; 1:30-4:30 p.m.

28 Friday. *Integrated Basic Reading and Language Arts-Advanced Workshop.* Location and time TBA. Pre-registration required. 213-241-3164.

28 Friday. *ESL New Teacher Orientation.* North Hollywood Adult Learning Center; 1:00-4:30 p.m. Pre-registration required. 213-241-3166.

28 Friday. *ESL/CBET Technology Colloquium.* Location and time TBA. Pre-registration required. 213-241-3166.

October

5 Friday. *ABE Teacher Orientation;* 1:15-4:30 p.m. Location TBA. Pre-registration required. 213-241-3164.

12 Friday. *ESL/CBET Technology Colloquium.* Location and time TBA. Pre-registration required. 213-241-3166.