

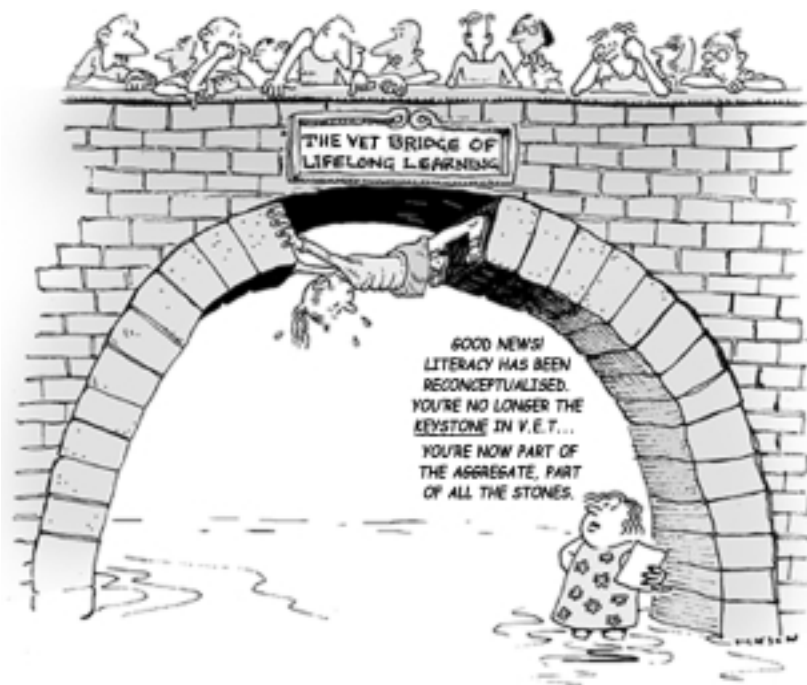


Integrating language, literacy & numeracy into all vocational training

The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) aroused strong feelings in Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) practitioners in the energetic discussion at the ACAL Forum in Melbourne in 2002. There were (and still are) concerns that neither the field nor the general vocational training community would ever be ready for the challenges the AQTF demands.

Some practitioners feel that there is much to gain from the AQTF—that it is plain common sense to better align LLN with the actual demands of training in the workplace. On page 8 of this issue there is a positive review of a new AQTF resource that is intended to answer some of the queries held by LLN practitioners.

Certainly, the integrating of LLN issues across the whole set of industry competency standards calls into question the qualifications of both specialists from within the LLN field, and those 'Certificate IV' industry trainers and assessors with no LLN background. Read about the new Training and Assessment (TAA) Training Package on page 4 of this issue to learn about its broader implications for LLN practitioners.



under the Strategic Plan. Each portfolio meets by teleconference and reports to the executive. Currently the portfolio groups' membership and main activities are:

ACAL portfolios

In 2002, the ACAL Executive Committee formed five portfolio groups to share the workload involved in meeting the objectives outlined

Research—Geraldine Castleton, Pauline O'Maley and Jan Hagston—Representing ACAL in national research selection processes—NCVER, ANTA Equity, On-line Toolboxes; responding to new research issues and initiatives; linking visiting international researchers with state associations (continued over)

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'Shaping our Future'—workshopping ANTA's national strategy

by Pat Hazell

Adult Learning Australia hosted a morning workshop at the University of Technology, Sydney, on 5 February, 2003, as part of ANTA's consultation process as it develops its next national strategy, entitled 'Shaping our Future: Creating the national strategy for vocational education and training 2004 - 2010'. The workshop was based on ANTA's discussion starter document, which is available at www.anta.gov.au/dapstrategy.asp. About thirty people, as well as ANTA and DEST personnel, from around the nation attended.

"...some elements of the current ANTA strategy will not change—training will continue to be industry driven."

An introductory session, led by Joyce Turnbull, Director of Strategic Directions, ANTA, acknowledged the lack of consultation in previous ANTA strategies, and stressed the importance of the consultative process this time. She outlined the timeline for the process, with a draft due for ministerial comment in the middle of the year. She referred to the Discussion Starter as designed to inform and stimulate discussion at regional forums and other consultations, and noted that, while this document is not set in stone, it does contain elements that ANTA hopes will be validated.

Turnbull noted that some elements of the current strategy will not change—training will continue to be industry driven—and drew

attention to 'Aims for a national strategy' (p.8) which outlines six principles to guide the future:

1. Building skills for Australian industry
2. Supporting communities
3. Enabling individuals to learn throughout life
4. Renewing and sharing Indigenous learning culture
5. Guaranteeing quality products and services
6. Investing in Australia's skills.

Points that emerged from the round table sessions included:

- The language in the document is heartening, but needs to be more tangible for community education.
- A need for greater flexibility in pathways. How can DEST offer something to people who see themselves outside the system?
- A funding model is needed which includes people in ACE who may see themselves outside the system.
- There are new industries emerging from community education activities, such as new age health and renewable energy. The draft strategy is not picking this up.
- There is a need for a localised, community driven response, rather than only an industry driven response.
- Community activity often reflects industry. The strategy needs to recognise that industries move in two directions.

To comment on the draft strategy, or obtain further information contact ANTA—

ph: 07 3246 2379

email: nationalstrategyfeedback@anta.gov.au.

ACAL portfolios (cont.)

Professional Development—Pat Hazell, Sheila O'Leary-Woodhouse, Robin Jay, Helen Foley, Philippa McLean, Sheryl Sinclair, Lorraine Sushames, Ann Brown and Geraldine Castleton—Organising two national forums; liaising with the 2003 National Conference Committee (Lorraine Sushames, Rosa McKenna, Geraldine Castleton, Ian Falk, Philippa McLean, Suzanne Bozorth-Baines, Ann Brown, Dorothy Lucardie, Paul Fitzsimons)

Policy—Rosie Wickert, Jim Thompson, Karen Dymke, Jana Scmazzon, Lois McManus and Lorraine Sushames—Responding to national strategies, initiatives and emerging trends impacting on adult literacy and numeracy including the ANTA national strategy ('Shaping our Future'), 'Training Package for Training and Assessment', the NCVER 'Student Outcomes

Survey' and the ANTA LLN Resource for VET sector

Marketing and Public Relations—Jana Scmazzon, Sheryl Sinclair, Christine O'Callaghan, Robyn Jay and Karen Dymke—Developing and implementing strategies for promotion of ACAL and associated activities, coordinating the ACAL web site (Robyn Jay) and production and distribution of *Literacy Link*

Governance—Suzanne Bozorth-Baines, Jim Thompson, Pauline O'Maley, Jan Hagston and Geraldine Castleton—Managing and administering ACAL business; monitoring and review of Strategic Plan

Executive support is provided for all of the above activities by Alex Tsakmakis who manages the ACAL office, based in Melbourne.

National adult literacy research program

NCVER, on behalf of the Department of Education, Science and Training is managing the national Adult Literacy Research Program. The aim of the program is to provide research findings that contribute to policy development and practice in adult literacy.

In 2002, the advisory group to the program selected five projects to investigate a range of issues. They include issues associated with adult literacy in Australian workplaces, public safety organisations, indigenous communities and amongst people from a non-English speaking background participating in vocational education and training. Researchers are employing a range of methodologies to investigate these issues in the various settings.

Projects under way include:

- Literacy in the new millennium (Australian Centre for Educational Research)
- Transferability in the workplace (Workplace Learning Initiatives Pty Ltd)
- Aboriginal Adult Literacy Practices, Community Capacity, Health and Vocational


Learning (Central Australian Remote Health Development Services)

- Opening up the mainstream (Non-English Speaking Backgrounds focus) (Judith Miralles & Associates)
- Adult Learning through Public Safety Organisations (Swinburne University of Technology and University of Ballarat)

Project descriptions, including researcher contact details, project purpose, research questions, methodology and organisation details are available for each project on the NCVER web site at www.ncver.edu.au.

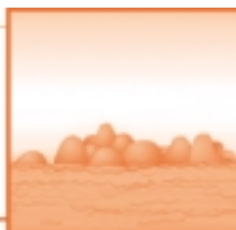
NCVER will publish project reports and an *Adult Literacy At A Glance* for this suite of research when completed. It is anticipated that most project reports will be available after August 2003.

*Please contact Suzanne Curyer
at NCVER with any queries.
ph 08 8333 8687
email at suzannec@ncver.edu.au*



ACAL
CONFERENCE
19-20 SEPT. 2003
ALICE SPRINGS, NT

Metropolis to Desert Sands
—literacy in multiple environments
ACAL National Literacy Conference
19—20 Sept, 2003
Alice Springs Convention Centre, NT



Call for papers

Note: Since the scheduled publication date of this newsletter gave very little time in which to lodge applications it has been decided to extend the due-by date for applications until **31 March**. If possible, lodge applications by email (see below).

ACAL would like to hear from practitioners and researchers who wish to share their experiences and expertise in the form of a paper or workshop. Please indicate if you would like your paper to be refereed. Be sure to include the following information—

- *title & type (paper or workshop) of presentation:*
- *name of presenter/s: (title, first name and last name)*
- *abstract: 150 word (approx.) outline of your session*
- *preferred setting: (round table/open square, theatre style, computer lab, other)*
- *personal biography*
- *audio/visual requirements*

The conference committee will select sessions with a view to convening an interesting and balanced program. Please submit your paper or PowerPoint presentation for the **conference publication** by 30 April 2003.

email: acal@mira.net
ACAL, PO Box 850
Reservoir VIC 3073
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Defining vocational competence for literacy practitioners using specialist practice units in the Training and Assessment (TAA) Training Package

by Lynne Fitzpatrick

Business Services Training Australia (BSTA), National Assessors and Workplace Trainers (NAWT) division, is developing the new Training and Assessment (TAA) Training Package, which will replace the current Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training. Communication in Education & Training P/L (Commet) has responsibility for developing the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) components of the new Training Package

How familiar are you with relevant current VET initiatives and policies?

- 1 In Australia, which organisations/authorities have responsibility for implementation of training, eg, nominal hours, accrediting courses, signing off on Training Packages?
- 2 What is the acronym for the framework which sets out the standards for training provision which apply to all RTOs nationally, and includes a number of standards which relate to language, literacy and numeracy?
- 3 Which organisation/authority has responsibility for overall management of training policy nationally?
- 4 What is the name of the Training Package which has the code BSZ98?
- 5 What is VET? Is literacy part of VET?
- 6 The Key Competencies in Training Packages are known by another name in the CGEA. These are the?
- 7 The acronym NAWT stands for ..?
- 8 What is the acronym which stands for the body which develops Training Packages for a particular industry area?
- 9 Is it part of ANTA policy that LLN be integrated implicitly or explicitly into Training Packages?
- 10 Are there any VET acronyms we haven't mentioned?

(answers on page 12)

Why is the Cert IV (Assessment and Workplace Training) being redeveloped?

All Training Packages have to be reviewed every 3 years. The National Assessors and Workplace Trainers (NAWT) which is part of BSTA has been carrying out a comprehensive review of the 'current' Training Package (BSZ98) which includes the 'ubiquitous' Cert IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. There is a detailed account of the review process and the recommendations on the web-site: http://www.nawt.com.au/NawtWebsite/Training_Package_Review/TPreview_stage1.htm

Two of the recommendations of particular relevance to the literacy field are:

Recommendation 9: Qualifications restructure
That as a means of meeting the needs of different users and effectively representing the scope of coverage, the existing structure of qualifications be revised and broadened in the following ways:
(iv) the revision of the Certificate IV to ensure a core based on edited existing units and a range of electives from some of the new competency areas to be developed

(v) the complete redevelopment of the existing Diploma with establishment of two qualification streams - a higher level practitioner stream and a coordinator/management stream

Recommendation 13: Implementation guidelines
In recognition that this Training Package underpins the VET system and to support improved quality of implementation, the Assessment Guidelines should be broadened and renamed 'Implementation Guidelines'. These Guidelines should include advice relevant to assessment requirements and additional guidance on other key aspects of quality implementation including: possessing relevant technical expertise/competency in the vocational area of delivery, if working for an RTO (xvi) Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) entry requirements/expectations

What is the project about?

We are integrating 'adult English language, literacy and numeracy' into the new TAA Training Package in the following ways:

- Building in language, literacy and numeracy as appropriate in the Core Units of the Training Package.
- Developing specialist Units related to teaching language, literacy and numeracy in the VET sector. Where possible these build on existing professional development courses such as ALT and ANT. See below.
- Monitoring the language of the document to promote readability, and ensuring scaffolding for likely users of the Training Package.

How will LLN be addressed in the new Cert IV? Will there be specific qualifications for LLN practitioners above the Cert IV?

As indicated in Recommendation 9 above, the proposed structure of the new Training Package is more complex than the current BSZ98.

Cert IV

- In the new Certificate IV we are proposing two approaches to addressing LLN: the first is integration of LLN across the units; the second involves the development of one 'specialist' unit at this level.
- In the proposed Training Package there will be a number of Core Units at Cert IV which are then 'nested' at other higher AQF levels. We will be integrating language, literacy and numeracy into these Core Units. The advan-

tage of building language, literacy and numeracy into the Core is that these Units must be achieved by all persons undertaking this qualification. Accordingly, LLN becomes part of core competence. This approach both reinforces and provides a mechanism for meeting the AQTF which requires all trainers and assessors to show that they can identify learners who may need language, literacy and numeracy support. Part of this generic competence includes the capacity to develop strategies to support learners with different LLN learning needs and to identify and ensure the language, literacy and numeracy requirements built into industry Training Packages, training programs or courses are met.

- We are proposing only one stand-alone language, literacy and numeracy unit in the Cert IV. This is an elective unit, and builds on the volunteer tutor training courses. It has application for Volunteer Literacy Tutor Training Programs, ESL Home Tutors, volunteer agencies, peer tutoring, vocational trainers, and in a specific workplace context. It will provide strategies for trainers and assessors to assist learners with language, literacy and numeracy, but it will not 'qualify' a person as a language, literacy and numeracy specialist.

Diploma/Advanced Diploma

The majority of specialist units in LLN practice have been 'packaged' as electives at the Diploma and Advanced Diploma level. The first drafts of these Units were available for comment from mid-November 2002 to mid-January 2003. As a result of the consultations and feedback, the units have been re-drafted.

The proposed Units presently are:

- *Design an adult English language, literacy, numeracy, and general education program*
- *Design an adult English language, literacy, numeracy program for workplace delivery*
- *Place learner in an adult English language, literacy and numeracy program*
- *Deliver an adult English language program*
- *Deliver an adult literacy program*
- *Deliver an adult numeracy program*
- *Deliver an adult general education program*
- *Deliver adult English language, literacy, numeracy in an on-the-job learning environment*
- *Provide adult English language, literacy and numeracy support in an off-the-job learning environment*
- *Co-ordinate tutors delivering an adult English language, literacy and numeracy program*

The full units and qualification packaging arrangements will be available for further comment and feedback from mid-March to mid-April at: <http://nawt.bsitab.net/>

One of the key outcomes from the development of these units is that there is now clear defini-

tion of the subject matter expertise of LLN practitioners making compliance with the AQTF clearer. The units also provide a unique model within VET by defining two layers of competence which you need to deliver as an LLN practitioner and which defines your area of expertise, as defined in the knowledge requirements of the units

Defining vocational competence is difficult for the literacy field. Vocational competencies are usually described in Training Packages. There is no Training Package for language, literacy and numeracy.

Including specialist practice units in the TAA Training Package may be a way around this.

What are the broader implications for LLN teachers?

Many language, literacy and numeracy teachers are well qualified with degrees, and post-graduate qualifications in teaching. However, there is a need to ensure that LLN is addressed at every level of VET practice and this begins with the revised Training Package which aims to provide a range of VET-based qualifications from Certificate IV to Advanced Diploma. Each level of qualification is designed to provide an increasing level of knowledge and expertise, which in turn may be extended further through Higher Education, if that is the desired level of specialisation sought. For others, the proposed specialist focus on LLN within the Training Package may represent a level of knowledge and skill that is appropriate for the work being undertaken.

The new Certificate IV is designed to ensure that all trainers and assessors have some knowledge around literacy and training issues, and have strategies to make their own training accessible to all. This level of competence represents a very different order to having the depth of knowledge and skill required in a specialist role. In this project we have set out to try to define where that specialisation lies, and to define required knowledge and skills for inclusion in the Training Package, primarily in the Advanced Diploma.

The feedback we have had generally acknowledges that the draft units do capture the required knowledge and skills but there is concern that by introducing qualifications at this level (i.e. that are VET-based) the language, literacy and numeracy fields are being downgraded. The whole discussion of 'downgrading' raises fundamental questions about where and

continued over

Providing classes for the Afghani refugees—the story behind the news

by Anne Bell

The story of the Hazara migrants of Young, NSW achieved much prominence in the national media. The story stands out as heartening in a time of otherwise depressing news (at least as far as migration and multiculturalism are concerned). TAFE teacher Anne Bell reveals some important lessons for practitioners and providers. In organising classes for the Afghani men, who were only on Temporary Protection Visas and therefore without any 'rights' as regards receiving an education, Anne battled on regardless, side-stepping those who stood in her way and enlisting some willing supporters along the way.

If anyone had asked me what I knew about Afghanistan 18 months ago I could have said a little of what I knew about the Taliban and their repressive regime and the arrival of the boat people in Australia. If anyone had asked me who the Hazara people are, I would have stared blankly at them. That all changed 16 months ago when a young man called Abdalqafoor Nazari arrived at the TAFE college where I work in Young and inquired about English language classes. Nazari had arrived in Young a few days earlier from Adelaide and was about to start his first full-time job in Australia. He had earlier been at the Woomera Detention Centre.

Like any good ESOL teacher I asked to see Nazari's visa, to see whether he was eligible to attend classes. He had a Temporary Protection Visa and when I looked up the schedule I found he would have to pay \$8 per hour if he wanted to learn English. When I told Nazari this, his face dropped and he went away to think about whether he could afford this amount.

I went away thinking that the system was not quite fair to Nazari. He had arrived in Australia with little more than the clothes he had on his back, he had spent the last six months in detention, he had been assessed as being a genuine refugee, he was about to start work at the local abattoirs, earning the wages of a labourer, he had only a few words of English and he was

expected to pay for what should be the basic right of anybody living in a community: the right to learn the language of that community. After thinking about this situation, I rang Nazari and told him he could start classes the following week. I did not ask him to pay any fee and I did not enter him on any roll.

Nazari started English classes and proved to be a dedicated student. He enjoyed not only the learning but also the social interaction, which the class gave opportunity for. Two weeks after Nazari started at TAFE, another Hazara man came to the College with the same inquiry. This time I came to the decision more quickly; I told Esmatollah he could start immediately.

It was not long after this that I read in the local paper that approximately 80 more Hazaras would be arriving in Young to take up job offers at Burrangong Meat Processors. I could get away with two un-enrolled students in a class but 80 would be a little more difficult. Within days of their arrival in town, the Hazara men began approaching TAFE, making enquiries about English language classes. I first rang the TAFE Multi-Cultural advisor for the Riverina. She told me that the students could apply for exemptions. They must do so in writing, stating details of their social and financial hardship. She also advised me that such exemptions were not easy to come by. Applying for the exemptions was a daunting prospect. I would

Defining vocational competence for literacy practitioners using the Training and Assessment (TAA) Training Package (cont.)

how we learned to be 'literacy teachers'. I think my experiences are probably fairly typical when I say that, for me, this has been far from a linear process, but rather a synthesis of knowledge and skills gained by doing Higher Ed courses, the Volunteer Tutor Training Program I did in TAFE, reading, professional development sessions I have participated in, colleagues, and learning from students I've taught. I would like to think that this sort of theoretical/practical, pure and applied collaboration will continue in the future. Including LLN into the Training

Package is another manifestation of this broader developmental process. The intent is not to 'replace' higher education qualifications with the Training Package but to provide a vehicle which enables VET practitioners to develop a range of LLN skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and operating context and to provide the means for those coming into the field to receive relevant training.

Lynne Fitzpatrick
Communication in Education & Training

have to interview each potential student, perhaps using an interpreter and ask for information about their individual situation. Then I would have to type this into a letter to the Institute Director. I was looking at a minimum of one hour per student. If this was multiplied by even 50 the task would be huge.

I decided to look for an easier way. I contacted other TAFE colleges in NSW to see if they had any suggestions. No-one could help or give any advice. It was not until my husband mentioned my dilemma to Penny Carosi at a Council Meeting of the NSW Teachers' Federation, that I was able to get the advice I had been seeking. Penny, who is the Multi-Cultural Advisor for the Federation, suggested that I devise a form letter and have each applicant sign a copy. She said any application I made on behalf of the asylum seekers in Young, would have the backing of the Federation. So I drafted a form letter, which ran along these lines: *'I wish to apply for fee exemption on the grounds of social and financial hardship. I have recently arrived in Young after spending months in a detention centre and will presently begin my first full time job in this country. My wages will be those of an unskilled labourer. I need to learn English so that I can function safely in my job and also so I can function within the local community'*. These letters were distributed to all the Hazara men at the abattoirs and they were asked to fill in details such as their names, addresses and signatures.

The local Palm Sunday Rally was the first social gathering to which the men were invited. Members of Amnesty International organized a picnic and soccer game in the park and about 20 of the men attended. Everyone brought a plate. During this picnic the men again talked of English classes, so I organized a conversation group: anyone who was interested would come to the TAFE and we would help them practise English by chatting about any subject that came up. Within weeks we had about 40 men and about 20 local volunteers attending these sessions. Later some trained as volunteer tutors through AMES. The TAFE became a focal point of support for the Hazaras. Local agencies such as St Vincent de Paul contacted me asking what sort of help they could give. The local Catholic church inquired about how they could help. Funding for the classes was approved in May of this year. We were given 12 hours/week for teaching the classes and 50 hours to set up and co-ordinate a volunteer tutor programme. Shortly before classes began, numbers at the abattoirs were cut back to 50 workers.

Assessments took place in the first week in May. The students were assessed in groups of ten. They were given a simple form to fill out and were asked to rate themselves according to how they saw their skills in listening and

speaking when compared to their peers. They were also asked about their skills in their first language. The aim was to roughly divide them into 3 groups according to ability. In the end this was not practical as the class they attended depended on what day they could get a lift to TAFE. If the person with a car at your flat came on a particular night then everyone from that household also came on that night.

It became obvious that boredom and depression were major problems for the men. I talked to the local members of Amnesty International and together we began to organise social events. These included games nights, barbecues and visits. We organised soccer and volleyball games and these now take place every weekend. We now have a community garden and some of the men who enjoy woodwork, visit a local craftsman and use the facilities of his workshop.

The volunteer tutors have become very involved with their students and have organised bus trips to Dubbo Zoo and Canberra. They also invite groups of students to their homes for get-togethers. STARTTS have held seminars on torture and trauma and this, together with the social activities, has helped to alleviate the depression which haunts these men. The Afghan Cultural Evening held recently was a great success and attended by about 40 Afghans and 80 locals.



Hazara men on the pig line at Burrangong Meat Processors

In closing I would like to give one example that demonstrates what is happening in Young. I met Meehrdad on a Sunday afternoon, when I went to visit an Afghan student. Meehrdad introduced himself and said that he had only arrived in Young that morning, hoping for work at the abattoirs. I invited him to English classes. That week he attended classes three nights and on Thursday he came to the Volunteer Tutor Program, where a tutor helped him use the Internet for the first time. On Saturday he had the opportunity to meet new friends when he joined in the volleyball. On Saturday night he came to the Afghan Cultural Evening where he danced the night away. A warm welcome to a new resident!

The Community is now working towards keeping the Hazara men in Young and we are starting to realise that our town will be the poorer if they are not given permanent protection and allowed to stay.

*Anne Bell
TAFE teacher, Young NSW*

A new resource from ANTA is set to clarify many burning questions raised by providers and Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) practitioners since the full implementation of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) in July 2002. ANTA has put together answers to frequently asked questions about language, literacy and numeracy in the Australian Quality Training Framework. The resource is based on discussions held around the country which broached important issues about how language, literacy and numeracy training coexists with and affects vocational training and AQTF compliance.

The introduction of the AQTF last year saw howls of protest from LLN practitioners—Where precisely did LLN fit in? How were Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to respond to complex LLN issues within their training businesses?

Thankfully, in answering many of the valid concerns raised, ANTA has come up with a document that plainly outlines a strong case, based firmly within the standards, for RTOs to lift their game around LLN. It provides a clear succinct explanation of topics, short sharp suggestions for action and links to other resources related to each theme.

For advocates of LLN it means that, finally, ANTA has documented some of the key issues and positive suggestions for improvements so that the next time a vocational trainer or tetchy RTO says 'Who says so?' or 'Why do I have to do that?' or 'I can't!' we can point to a document and answer, 'ANTA, AQTF,' and say, 'Yes you can.'

The question and answer format works well in directing RTOs to information and extra resources to help them to consider core issues in compliance.

It is important for LLN practitioners and advocates to remember that in the harried and competitive world of training, 'have to's' ALWAYS come before 'right to do's' and it is crucial to situate advice of best practice within the mandatory regulations where possible. To this aim, references in the document to the Australian Quality Training Framework refer to the whole suite of official AQTF documentation—including the national ANTA Guidelines for Course Developers that are often ignored in debates about the standards.

Many of the issues raised by the LLN field in recent years, particularly around RTOs communicating with a broad range clients and the touchy issue of wordy and difficult training materials, have been tackled succinctly and authoritatively in the document.

RTOs are reminded of the importance of aligning LLN demands of training with the workplace through examples that are simple, real and punchy. Short sharp suggestions for being more inclusive in client communication also help to raise the bar in regard to what should be a basic and reasonable approach. Each section is clearly linked to specific detail in the standards so there is no mistaking the weight of compliance that backs up the discussion.

This resource insists there is no last word on the nature and intent of the AQTF as a business improvement and compliance model; this means there will always be room for how an RTO might comply. However, the suggestions do provide realistic expectations around the issues raised.



'The resource has a very modern look - cover, layout and colours (shocking purple and yellow ochre) all say up front that this material is urgent, relevant and now.'

No resource will answer all questions that could be asked around LLN and the AQTF and no doubt practitioners and RTOs will still have concerns they feel are unanswered. Consider though, when you read this resource, how

— is it for everyone?

Is online banking safe? How do I bank online? Where do I click next? There's so much information! Have your students asked you these questions? Olympic Adult Education is developing a resource on online banking as part of ANTA Adult Literacy Innovative Project funding.

The online banking resource will consist of both paper-based and web-based elements to ensure each maximises learning for the users. Each element will be 'stand-alone' though the web site will offer literacy and numeracy activities to reinforce student learning. Both booklets and web site will include a teacher's resource.

The paper-based materials will comprise a set of six booklets written around the Certificate 1 in General Education for Adults (CGEA) and mapped against the National Reporting System. Topics covered include: the pros and cons of online banking, security issues, your rights and making complaints.

The web site will incorporate multimedia, audio, and constructivist learning activities. An important issue in developing the web site has been to ensure it is accessible and usable by everyone. Literacy learners, in particular, need sites that have minimal text, graphics to support text, ease-of-navigation and a consistent, uncluttered layout. An important feature is the

practice bank section where learners get the opportunity to have a go at online banking in a simulated situation.

The project is due for completion at the end of June 2003 and is a collaborative process that draws on the expertise of a team of project workers to create a high quality resource for people in the community who have low levels of literacy and numeracy.

Members of the Reference group include a representative from the National Australia Bank, a planning and marketing person from the Maroondah Credit Union, a financial counsellor from the Northern Region of Gamblers' Help, a representative from the Consumer and Tenant Advice Service and an adult literacy consultant. The Project Manager is Cathy Milesi who is currently the Learning Technologies Co-ordinator at Olympic Adult Education.

Olympic Adult Education welcomes any input or comments on the project from adult literacy and numeracy teachers.

Cathy Milesi
Olympic Adult Education
Project Manager
ANTA Online Banking Resource
Email: cmilesi@vicnet.net.au

different the training world would be if every RTO in Australia took on even half the suggestions it makes. We would see a dramatic shift in the quality of LLN provision within vocational training, and students articulating from literacy or access to mainstream vocational programs would have fewer hurdles to overcome and a better chance of achieving their potential.

Those hoping for a separatist approach to LLN in the AQTF will be sorely disappointed. This document supports a fully integrated approach to LLN in vocational training and to integrating LLN issues across the whole set of standards, not merely those that explicitly mention LLN. Not all are confident that either the LLN field or the general vocational training community is ready for this.

Whatever the electronic version of 'gathering dust on the shelves' is, let's hope it isn't the fate of this resource. Download the resource from the ANTA web site—

<http://www.anta.gov.au/publication.asp?qsID=435>

Helen Foley
helen.foley@det.qld.gov.au

The Commonwealth Bank met a storm of protest after it was revealed that the former CEO of the bank's fund management arm had received a payment of around \$A33 million when he resigned.

THE AGE 14 Feb 03



A woman receives a letter from her bank, which starts with the words 'Great News! We have simplified your bank account!' This is followed by three pages of small print which includes things she may need to do in certain cases, numerous options for the new 'simplified' system of banking and the associated costs—all new too. The recipient speaks another language at home and has all of her income from Centrelink going into this account. She has also experienced violence from her partner, and lacks not only the complex reading skills but the confidence to know how she must proceed. She does know that she has to follow up on this, and wants assistance with sorting through the material.

Another woman has just joyously moved into a Housing Trust home, and is establishing a life in which she is doing some of the things she has always wanted to. She is now receiving a pension, which will give a little of the financial freedom and responsibility that she has been denied in the past by an abusive partner. She is excited about making a new start. After making her first rent payment in cash she receives notification from Centrelink that they have deducted the rent from her pension. The documents from the Trust don't indicate anywhere that this is likely to happen. The information from Centrelink doesn't ask whether she has already paid any rent. The two sets of information will need to be linked and the woman will need to unravel where her money is going, and if she has been charged twice.

These are two of examples of the complex literacy tasks required of people today. They are challenging for many of us, and require a range of skills which are more than just 'reading,' so that we know what our choices are and how to get our entitlements.

The Redesigning Social Futures Project, (Funded by the Australian National Training Authority Adult Literacy National Project through Department of Education Science and Training), supported women who have experienced violence at home and who have literacy needs. Adelaide Central Community Health Service and Protea Training are collaborating to deliver the program called 'Your Future Your Say' as part of the longer project. The program was delivered in 2002, used a range of literacy strategies to develop women's confidence and literacy skills, and incorporates the guiding principles related to intervention practices, which are in summary:

- safety
- empowerment of the woman

- responsibility for the violence remaining with the perpetrator
- respect for the woman's choices

The longer term outcome of the project is to assess the need for and develop a model or resource to support workers from both the Health and Community Services sector and the English as a Second Language and Literacy sector who work with women who have experienced violence at home.

The program (delivered over 20 weeks to a group of 11 women, aged from early 30s to 60s, some from non-English speaking backgrounds) met weekly to work on literacy skills, self esteem and long-term planning. The sessions incorporated time for the women to bring items such as documents, forms and letters to discuss with the facilitators. Other activities included practising literacy skills such as using street directories, writing personal formal letters and writing their own stories. Visits to libraries and TAFEs gave the women some structured ways of linking the future plans they were working on with resources to support them.

The project (funded by the Spencer Foundation and the University of South Australia) developed out of my research. A paper giving the theoretical underpinnings to the project can be downloaded from www.proteatraining.com.au

A report of the project will also be available on this site in the next few weeks. 'Redesigning social futures: supporting women from domestic violence situations with literacy needs' aimed to develop a collaborative process between community health agencies, community groups and adult literacy providers to address the literacy needs of women who have experienced violence at home.

The key objectives of the project included

- exploring roles of ESL/literacy providers in relation to issues women have around domestic violence
- identifying activities in which women (in DV situations) want to be able to improve their literacy skills
- providing a program in a safe venue which meets these identified needs
- assisting the women to develop longer term plans (eg for return to study/literacy classes or seeking employment) and the confidence and knowledge of resources to pursue these plans
- using the information gained through this process to develop a model which strengthens links between the community health

Benefits of literacy skills—exploring the International Adult Literacy Survey data

by Jan Hagston

Between 1994 and 1998, 20 countries took part in the world's first large scale, comparative assessment of adult literacy, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). Australia participated in 1996 and the data was published in two Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) publications: *Aspects of literacy: profiles and perceptions*, Australia 1996 and *Aspects of literacy: assessed skill levels*, Australia 1996. Since then there has been little detailed analysis or research undertaken on the Australian data. This article summarises the findings of a project funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training which explored how the data has been used in other countries, in order to highlight how the Australian IALS data may be better used. (Note that sources to the quoted elements in the article had to be deleted due to space considerations—Ed.)

Literacy is increasingly understood to be fundamental not only to countries' economic performance but also to the democratic strength of a country and individuals' social and economic well being. For the individual, literacy contributes to personal development and enables more effective participation in society. The IALS data indicates that unemployment, receipt of welfare benefits, health, criminal activity and community participation are linked with literacy skills and educational attainment.

High levels of literacy are associated with better health outcomes, such as increased longevity

and healthier habits and life styles, and life expectancy is higher in countries that have a higher proportion of the population with high levels of literacy.

Literacy skills and the health of an individual are linked through ready access to a range of information and the ability to read and interpret information on which decisions are based, for example, health information material, instructions and appointments. People with low literacy skills are not as likely to pursue preventative health measures.

(continued over)

sector and ESL/literacy providers

The linkage of confidence in literate practices as part of a radical new self-conception for women who have experienced violence at home is an aspect of domestic violence research that needs to be explored further. The experiences of victims of domestic violence are well documented in many reports, (see the bibliography in Strategic Partners Pty Ltd and Research Centre for Gender Studies, 1999b) but, apart from the work of Horsman and her associates, there is limited material available specifically related to the literacy needs of these women and the Australian context. A search conducted in cooperation with the Australian Domestic Violence Clearinghouse found little on the topic (see <http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au>)

Where education is mentioned in reports on domestic violence, it is in the context of community education about preventing domestic violence and of targeting groups such as perpetrators, adolescents or Indigenous Australians. Occasional references are made to the compounding of problems for victims by issues like speaking a language other than English and their inability to access services due to language constraints or the need for culturally appropriate services.

In my study, the goals of literacy learning have been reframed to acknowledge literacy as 'social practice'—one in which we all participate. This approach draws on the work of the New London Group, a collective of academics and researchers who describe literacy learning as follows:

creating access to the evolving language of work, power and community, and fostering the critical engagement necessary for [women] to design their social futures and achieve success.

Following the completion of the program five women returned to study in various settings. Both Women's Education and Community Health providers have commented on the high rate of success of the course.

I am keen to hear from agencies and individuals who would like to participate in further discussion about the issues and possible ways in which the two sectors can develop links and work more effectively. Please contact me.

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- 1 State Training Authorities
- 2 AQTF (Australian Quality Training Framework)
- 3 ANTA (Australian National Training Authority)
- 4 Cert IV in Assessment & Workplace Training
- 5 Vocational Education and Training. Yes.

- 6 General Curriculum Options
- 7 National Assessors and Workplace Trainers
- 8 ITAB (Industry Training Advisory Board)
- 9 Explicitly
- 10 We have only just begun to scratch the surface! Look at the following web sites: www.anta.gov.au, www.offe.vic.gov.au

One of the most obvious and critical areas where literacy can have a direct effect on the health of an individual, is the failure to understand how to take prescription drugs. Patients also need to be able to read appointment slips, consent forms and health education materials. However, American research has shown that the readability level of medical forms is considerably higher than the reading level of patients.

The link between literacy skills and health has particular implications for older adults who often have chronic health conditions, take several different drugs and who are likely to have very low literacy levels (Roberts & Fawcett, 1998: 18). The IALS data shows a strong decline in the literacy skills of older adults. Given Australia's ageing population, this has implications in terms of health and financial management (eg. superannuation) for these older adults.

Although it can be assumed that in Australia the link between literacy skills and health and welfare is similar to countries such as US and Canada, the relationship has not been investigated fully. Given the economic and social implications of this link for the individual and for the community, it is one that deserves further consideration.

The contribution that literacy makes to society as a whole is less evident. While literacy does not itself create a just and egalitarian society, it does provide the means for greater participation in society. Participation in the community increases social cohesion and decreases social exclusion.

In terms of health and welfare, higher literacy skills benefit the community as well as the individual. Healthy communities, with fewer people reliant on welfare, free up public funds, enabling them to be spent on developing individuals and the community more holistically, eg. child care, public libraries, parks, support for educational programs, etc.

Those able to manage their own finances, which requires reasonably high levels of literacy and numeracy, are also less likely to be dependent on social welfare benefits. This has particular importance for the ageing population who are increasingly being required to manage superannuation benefits and investments.

There is also a relationship between literacy and participation in social and community activities such as attending a movie, play or concert, attending or taking part in a sporting event and participating in volunteer or community organisations. Participation in such activities by those with basic levels of literacy is low. Lack of community participation has an effect on the

individual and on society more generally. For the individual it can cause isolation from the community as a whole and limit their ability to take part in decision-making and their fundamental civic rights.

The importance of literacy skills to the economy of a country and to an individual's economic position and options are now well recognised. Literacy skills are a prerequisite for meeting the requirements of the information economy and the resultant changes to the labour market. Countries with a skilled labour force attract investment and technologically based industries, which in turn create a demand for skilled labour. Those countries are in the best position to exploit the new economic environment by strengthening 'the capacity of firms and labour markets to adjust to change, improve their productivity and capitalise on innovation'. The capacity to respond to change is dependent on the knowledge and skills of the population. Literacy, being one of the most important skills of a population in that it is not only important in its own right, but also in that it underpins other skills and knowledge is, therefore, a 'powerful determinant' of a country's 'innovative and adaptive capacity, and hence ... [their] future economic prosperity'.

The expansion of the knowledge society and economy has seen an increase in demand for workers with high skill levels and a decrease in the number of jobs requiring low skill levels. Strong literacy skills are 'fundamental to people's adaptability and flexibility in the new information economy'. They enable individuals to develop work related skills which are 'crucial for improving their employment and income prospects and reducing the risk of becoming economically disadvantaged'.

As the information economy strengthens and the knowledge intensity of jobs increases, the economic returns for individuals with high skill levels will increase. Adults with high levels of literacy, on average, earn higher wages and experience less frequent and shorter periods of unemployment than those with low literacy skills. They are also more likely to be in highly skilled white collar jobs.

In all countries low wages are associated with low literacy skills although the monetary returns for good literacy skills are greater in some countries than others eg. Ireland, United States, United Kingdom. Overall there are also greater returns for quantitative skills than for prose literacy skills although this is stronger in some countries including Australia.

However, the relationship between literacy skills and employment is complex. Lower literacy skills cannot be interpreted as leading to

unemployment. Other factors such as work experience, education and personal factors must also be taken into account, but when these factors are controlled there is still an association between literacy skills and employment. The lack of opportunity to practice literacy skills in the workplace must also be taken into account. 'Inability to find regular employment, and the opportunity to use and enhance literacy skill that follow from it' (Jones, 1996: 48) plays a role in low literacy skill levels.

The association between literacy skills and employment also varies across countries. For example, in Australia, Belgium (Flanders), Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Finland, New Zealand, Slovenia and the UK, the incidence of unemployment is twice as high among adults with low skills than among adults with medium to high skills. In other countries (Norway, Sweden and the US) adults with low level literacy skills have only a marginally smaller chance of being unemployed than people with medium to high literacy skills.

IALS data showed a relationship between the aggregate number of hours worked by the labour force and a country's literacy skills. Except for the Czech Republic, workers in countries with high mean document literacy skills work fewer hours than those in countries with lower literacy skills. The reasons for this are likely to be complex and require further investigation.

There is also a relationship between GDP per capita and literacy. Countries with higher proportions of people with high literacy skills have higher per capita income and those with higher proportions with low literacy skills have lower per capita income. Countries with higher per capita income can afford to put more resources into literacy development. Higher literacy skills then contribute to economic growth, productivity

and per capita income.

The distribution of literacy skills within a country provides some insight into the distribution of income. Countries which show literacy inequalities tend to also show inequalities in the distribution of income. Higher levels of prose inequality across countries are associated with greater inequality in distribution of income. This doesn't imply a direct causal relationship between the two. However, inequality in income can cause unequal investment in education and literacy skills and inequality in literacy is a factor associated with the unequal distribution of income.

The distribution of literacy skills in Australia, while not as unequal as, for example, the United States, is still characterised by large proportions of the population at levels 1 and 4/5.

Conclusion

The extent of the benefits of high literacy skills to Australia are not clear due to the lack of specific follow up research undertaken on the Australian data.

Policies and strategies to address the literacy levels of Australians must take into account that literacy skills are not developed in context free situations. They are acquired and developed in a range of socio-economic contexts—at home, school, in society and the workplace—which are rife with inequality.

A report titled *Exploring the International Adult Literacy Survey data: implications for Australian research and policy* will be released at a forum in late October. Contact Language Australia (03 9612 2600) to purchase a copy of the report.

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Literacy Link (ISSN 0158-3026) is the newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, a voluntary organisation set up in 1976 to support the development of adult literacy, numeracy and basic education in Australia.

ACAL promotes co-operation among interested organisations and individuals, both government and non-government, by undertaking and encouraging appropriate study, research and action.

Literacy Link is distributed free to ACAL members. Articles are available on-line on the ACAL Web site: <http://www.acal.edu.au>
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Getting Connected

—electronic communication in a workplace literacy program

by Heather Hemming & Lisa Langille

Electronic communication is becoming essential for many workplaces. Those attempting to find employment and prepare for entry into the workforce may find the speed with which these changes are taking place overwhelming, as electronic communication throughout the workforce is surpassing other communications. The definition of workforce literacy is shifting to encompass much more than the traditional interaction with text, as the idea of text itself is continually transforming with the onslaught of new technologies; thus, there remains an essential focus on written communication within the boundaries of workforce literacy.

Writing in electronic contexts often has unique challenges. After examining copies of electronic written communication, three skills were identified as essential for effective communication: to communicate ideas effectively, a strategy for explaining or expressing a viewpoint is important; when requesting information, it is necessary to pose pertinent questions; and when writing a response to others, connections between the initial message sent and the response being written must be made.

In the instructional program we developed at the Annapolis Valley Work Centre (AVWC), electronic discussion groups (EDGs) created an electronic context for instruction designed to teach three strategies for participating in EDGs. The characteristics of writing in EDGs is similar to that utilised in chat groups, ICQ discussions and e-mail.

Twenty-two participants (ages 18-48) enrolled in workforce literacy programs offered at the AVWC took part in this program. All participants were experiencing difficulty finding and/or maintaining employment, due to various obstacles whether they may be academic, emotional, or behavioural.

Nature of the Instruction

Prior to the instructional phase, participants received basic computer instruction using IBM Thinkpads, which were used throughout the program. It was important participants felt comfortable using the laptops before beginning instruction. The instructional phase involved eleven (40 minute) sessions based on a reciprocal model of instruction with the goal of teaching three writing strategies for making entries into electronic discussions: explaining / expressing a viewpoint, asking pertinent questions, and writing effective responses.

Reciprocal teaching provides an interactive link between the learner and instructor that may also involve instructor-led discussion, explanation, and modelling of strategy use. Reciprocal teaching involves instruction over several sessions beginning with the instructor modelling strategic approaches to the tasks. Gradually from session to session, the instructor shifts more responsibility to the learners for strategy use, enabling learners to ask questions, clarify the approach, and receive feedback before completing the task independently.

Additionally, situated learning also provided a strong foundation for instruction. Case studies were developed to reflect real-life situations and to provide context for the electronic writing. Participants were encouraged to explore important issues that may arise in workplace settings, bring prior knowledge and experience to the discussion, and increase their awareness of various perspectives; this may therefore enhance their ability to transfer this new way of thinking to future places of work and other areas of life. Thus, the design of this program was relevant to participants and encouraged the use of already existing knowledge and experience throughout the program.

Participants were introduced to the overall purpose of the program through explicit comments: 'Have you ever heard of e-mail and chat groups? Both of these involve putting your ideas into writing. In the work that we are going to do together the goal is to help you learn strategies that will help you in writing messages using the computer. In many workplaces employees might be asked to write to one another about something that may be happening in the workplace. In our work you will be given a pretend case that will be the focus.' This introduction helped the participants consider the broader context for the strategies' importance.

Three tutorial sessions were designated to each of the three writing strategies. During the first session for each strategy, the instructor provided an overview of the strategy, a rationale for learning the strategy, and a thorough modelling of the strategy. After the introduction, the instructor led an in-depth discussion about the strategy. The instructor then read a case study aloud while the participants followed along on their laptop screens. Next, questions at the end of the case study were posed to create a stimulus for the writing. Each step throughout the strategy was verbalised and dis-

Beyond Training: Locating literacy in social policy



Friday 2 May 2003

(venue t.b.a.) **Launceston, Tasmania**

keynote speaker: Lis De Vries,

Director of Tasmanian Council of Social Service

ACAL's first forum for 2003 will examine the ways adult literacy and numeracy practices are entwined with many aspects of day-to-day life, resulting in the need for literacy policy responses to extend beyond the training sector, into the broader social policy arena.

In the same way that literacy and numeracy cannot be described or understood without reference to social practice, so too responses to people's literacy and numeracy learning needs must be grounded in a wider social policy landscape. Literacy issues need to be explicitly addressed in social policy that covers areas such as housing, employment, physical and mental health, finance, and community participation. Literacy practices embedded in these areas need to be highlighted as a vital part of living, training and lifelong learning. Furthermore, there is an urgency to locate issues of cross-sectoral involvement at the centre of the literacy policy framework.

ACAL will use the forum as an opportunity to gather advice to inform its broadening agenda for the coming years as well as to develop strategies for including adult literacy and numeracy concerns as a written part of social policy.

cussed so the participants became increasingly aware of the various procedures involved.

Strategy Instruction

In modelling the strategy of expressing/explaining a viewpoint a number of key procedures were identified: 1) the need to think about the question asked at the end of the case study, 2) the need to pose the question to oneself, 'What do I think?', 3) looking back over the case to think about one's ideas and how they relate to the case, 4) re-reading sections of the case, 5) asking the question, 'What reasons do I have to support my ideas?' and/or 'Is there evidence to support my position?' As the instructor talked through the steps, a worksheet was completed based on dialogue with participants.

After completing the worksheet, the teacher made an entry into the electronic discussion group with input from participants. Steps involved were verbalized, stressing the need to ask questions like: 1) 'Do I need to go back over the case to clarify anything?', 2) 'Do I need to reread anything?', 3) 'Will others understand what I am saying?' The second session consisted of reviewing the strategy before participants worked through a case study using the strategy with instructor guidance and support. Questions were encouraged throughout the instruction and practice for feedback and suggestions. The third session involved participant practice of the strategy, independent of the instructor; however, participants were able to ask the instructor for assistance at any time throughout the session. These three ses-

sions provided participants with the ability to gradually gain independence in strategy use. This same three-session format briefly outlined was also used with the strategies asking pertinent questions and writing effective responses.

After the participants completed the nine sessions (three per strategy), two final sessions involved the use of all three strategies in response to a case study. The first of these sessions included guidance and support from the instructor while the second session required participants to independently use all three strategies.

Participant Reaction

This program may suggest that a reciprocal model of instruction offers potential for teaching adults how to write in electronic contexts. Participants reported that case study content was important to the program; cases were relevant to participants and allowed the building onto already existing knowledge and experience. Furthermore, participants acknowledged the connection between writing strategies taught in the context of the case studies and their chances of successfully finding and maintaining employment; since finding and maintaining employment is a common goal between participants, this seemed to be a driving force of motivation.

In addition to an increased amount of writing, other noticeable changes in participants throughout instruction were evident. For example, one participant said on the first day

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that he 'never liked writing, did not like writing, and never will like writing.' When asked why he felt that way, he put his head down and muttered, 'cause I'm no good at it.' However, after instruction, this same participant was heard telling another student about the program: 'I get to write lots using a cool computer so everyone else can read my stuff!' In addition to this obvious change in attitude toward writing, he showed a particularly significant increase in the amount of writing he produced over the duration of the program.

In conclusion, all participants found the instruction to be useful and would be interested in participating in a similar program in the future. After instruction, participants' overall writing quality improved when compared with writing done prior to instruction. The case studies were also reviewed positively by participants; one individual stated, 'You never know when something like that could happen to you.' Further, many felt that participating in this

program resulted in increased confidence in their abilities to problem-solve in their future workplaces. A scaffolded approach to reciprocal teaching was also regarded highly by participants, as the gradual transfer of responsibility was reported as effective; for example, one participant added, 'I liked that you didn't just throw us in there and expect us to know what to do right away—it was really straightforward'. This instructional program may provide an example of how electronic communication may be successfully integrated within the context of workforce literacy programs.

This research was funded by the Social Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada. We are very grateful for the support of the students and staff at the Annapolis Valley Work Centre in Nova Scotia, Canada.

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