

A HANDBOOK OF WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACHES
FOR ADULT BASIC EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

MASTER'S PROJECT

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr. Anderson for being my advisor on this project.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family. A special thank you goes to my husband for all of his computer help.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Jonathan Kozol, in his book Illiterate America, states that one third of our nation's adult population is functionally illiterate - reading at a level less than equal to the full survival needs of our society. Without a way to reach these people who are on the lower rungs of the education ladder, functional illiteracy will continue to increase as our society continues to change. As society grows more complex, the literacy requirements of modern living will increase (Jones,1991).

Also, much has been written about the benefits of using a whole language philosophy to create conditions optimal to literacy learning. According to whole language theory, people should be taught to read and write in the same natural, holistic manner as they learned to speak. Students will learn best when the work is meaningful and purposeful to them. Goodman(1986) believes that if the content and interest level are relevant to the learners, whole language activities are appropriate at any age.

However, in spite of the myriad of journal articles, books, conferences, workshops, etc. that deal with whole language, very few of them specifically link whole language and adult learners together. Consequently, not as many Adult Basic Education instructors or tutors are acquainted

with whole language approaches as are teachers of younger students. Therefore, a need exists to fill this gap by providing a handbook of whole language approaches in ABE to those instructors. This could be used as a reference by instructors wishing to incorporate a meaning-centered approach in their ABE classrooms or tutoring sessions.

Interest

This writer's interest in using whole language approaches to adult literacy learning stems from seven years as an Adult Basic Education instructor. Instinctively, the author seemed to feel that an approach which was meaning-centered and made use of real-life experiences would work best with students who had already spent many years in a system with a traditional, skills approach. These were students who were still struggling in their literacy development. Often many class activities chosen were compatible with a whole language philosophy, yet there was not an awareness of the philosophy behind them.

Initially, the writer was brand-new in this field and struggling to find effective ideas. Since returning to school and working on a graduate degree in reading, the writer has done extensive reading in whole language, coupled with an introductory whole language class. This, added to teaching experience, convinced the writer that whole language and adult education are compatible. Thus, was conceived the idea of a handbook which would concisely bring together

certain whole language approaches which could benefit other ABE instructors looking for ways to increase the effectiveness of their programs.

Definitions

Adult Basic Education - Instruction in basic academic subjects for students ages 18 and older who have not received a high school diploma. Also referred to as ABE.

Functional Illiteracy - The inability to read at a level equal to the full survival needs of society.

Whole Language - A philosophy, based on research, which views language learning as whole, real, relevant, and functional. It should be encountered in context and actively involve the learner.

Assumptions

It is assumed that ABE instructors who will use this handbook have an interest in whole language philosophy and activities. They should have either a background in whole language or an interest in increasing their understanding of whole language. It is assumed that this handbook will benefit instructors of ABE who wish to meet the individual needs of their students and incorporate a meaning-centered approach.

Limitations

This handbook does not encompass every whole language approach that might be used in an ABE classroom. It focuses on certain activities which will enhance reading ability. Some of these activities can be adapted for use with math, social studies, and other subject areas. These approaches must be accompanied by a teacher's holistic view of the learning process. The teacher will need to choose the appropriate approaches only after reflecting on the individual needs of each student.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There were several articles reviewed which dealt with whole language and adult learners. The authors of these articles believed that a whole language approach to Adult Basic Education is very effective. Several of the books reviewed put forth whole language theory and techniques. This literature purports that many of the common approaches presently used with adults are fragmented; it presents the frustrations of illiterate adults; it explains the basic elements of a whole language approach, and why it is effective with adults.

Davidson and Wheat(1989) share some of the frustrations of the adult illiterate. Many adults cannot write letters to loved ones who are far away, cannot help their children with their homework, or cannot understand a bank statement. Often adult workers cannot interpret instructional manuals necessary for their jobs. Kozol(1985) adds to this by stating that 60 percent of U.S. prison inmates cannot read above grade school level. While criminal conviction cannot be exclusively related to poor reading ability, Kozol(1985) believes that this high percentage indicates a relation between reading frustration and criminal activity.

Many people try to mask poor reading ability with coping strategies, such as, not having needed reading glasses handy, carrying a newspaper in order to look like an informed

reader, or asking a co-worker to discuss a work-related article with them. These coping abilities show that these adults possess qualities upon which reading success can be built: problem-solving, creativity, insight and determination (Davidson and Wheat, 1989).

However, typical adult literacy instruction does not build on these qualities, but rather uses a sequential skills/decoding approach which is highly structured and has a tightly controlled vocabulary, such as in Laubach Readers (Lehman, Johnson and Lehman, 1992). Reuys(1992) states, "Unfortunately, much current ABE practice remains all-too-mired in sub-skill sequences and hierarchies, fragmented, sterile materials, and mechanistic exercises" (p. 23). A bottom-up instructional approach, using flashcards, reading materials unrelated to the students' lives, and drill of isolated skills, causes many adults to view learning as fragmented, confusing, and meaningless (Davidson and Wheat, 1989).

Shuman(1989) reminds us that these adult students risk a great deal by coming to an ABE class because it exposes their limited literacy abilities. It puts them in a situation where they may initially feel threatened because of past bad experiences with school. They take this risk because they believe that increasing their ability to read (as well as write, do math, etc.) will help them to have more fulfilling lives. The key to helping these students is to respect them and allow them their dignity. Teachers

can pay more attention to students' strengths rather than weaknesses. It is important to build on what adult students already know and on the vast life experiences they bring with them. It is especially important that teachers establish a learning environment in which students are treated as individuals and which provide expectations of success. A whole language approach does these things.

Whole language principles are based on the integration of all the language processes. People learn by reading and writing whole texts, seeing others demonstrate functional uses, and using language in meaningful, purposeful contexts. Students are expected to succeed and receive encouragement and feedback on learning attempts (Lehman, Johnson, and Lehman, 1992). Goodman (1986) summarizes the philosophy of whole language teaching and learning in the following points:

Whole language

- learning builds around whole learners learning whole language in whole situations.
- assumes respect for language, the learner, and the teacher.
- focuses on meaning.
- encourages learners to take risks and use language for their own purposes.
- encourages all the varied functions of oral and written language.

Also, Ross(1989) believes that if language can be learned in relation to student's needs, interests, and goals, they will be more likely to transfer literacy skills to their daily lives. This, in turn, will increase their motivation to persist until their goals are realized.

Cambourne(1988) lists conditions necessary for effective language learning: immersion, demonstraton, expectation, responsibility, use, approximation, response, and engagement. The first seven conditions must be present for engagement to occur. Keefe and Meyer(1991) expand on these conditions to form a basis for a whole language approach to adult literacy instruction.

Adults should be immersed in whole, meaningful written language, such as with language experience stories and use of environmental print. The value of reading and writing as meaningful and functional should be demonstrated as much as possible. The adult learner must perceive the demonstrations as doable, and that emulating the demonstrations will benefit them in a concrete way. Adults are often discouraged learners and are convinced that they are unable to learn. The teacher must work to restore their confidence and express beliefs of expectations of their success. Adult students must be comfortable enough in class to feel free to ask for help and take responsibility for their own learning. In a whole language program student input and responsibility is extremely important.

Adult readers and writers must be allowed

approximations, just as we accept those of children. Rather than giving immediate correction, teachers should encourage adult learners to take risks and make guesses. Teachers need to create a learning environment where adults will have a natural need to read and write. Adult students need to be given materials that they can use successfully. Language experience, assisted readings, and repeated readings are techniques to be used. Response to an adult's reading and writing should always be constructive and focus on strengths.

Engagement will occur when the teacher develops a warm relationship with the learners, erases any fear of unpleasant consequences if they fail, and can make the learners feel that the work is purposeful to their lives. These conditions provide teachers with a meaning-centered approach that fits the needs of adult learners more closely than the isolated skills activities found in many adult programs (Keefe and Meyer, 1991).

Keefe and Meyer (1991) also state that earlier research which they conducted found that adults who were taught with a meaning-centered approach improved three grade levels after three months of regular instruction. Another group of adult students who had the same period of instruction, but were taught with a decontextualized skills program, improved less than one grade level. This points to more rapid growth in a holistic literacy program.

Teachers can use whole language tenets to create an open and dynamic learning environment, with either children or adults. No matter what their ages, students need to be actively engaged in creating meaning and making sense. According to Newman and Church(1990), the principles and conditions which guide whole language instruction are appropriate regardless of the age of the learner. They continue to state that although the majority of teachers implementing a whole language philosophy are elementary teachers, that philosophy applies equally to the teaching of 15-year-old or 35-year-old students.

Lehman, Johnson, and Lehman(1992) feel that whole language principles are basic to all human learning and should form the foundation for adult programs. Reuys(1992) believes that holistic approaches have the potential to re-invigorate and reconstruct the field of Adult Basic Education in the 1990's.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN

Based on past experience, a need for a handbook detailing whole language approaches for use with adults was recognized by this writer. The investigation for this handbook was conducted by researching the available literature on Adult Basic Education and on the whole language approach. The questions answered were: What types of reading instruction incorporate a whole language, meaning-centered approach? Which of these whole language approaches would be compatible with teaching Adult Basic Education?

The Current Index to Journals in Education(CIJE) in the University of Dayton Roesch Library was examined to locate appropriate articles on Adult Basic Education and on whole language approaches for review. The journals which were most beneficial were Journal of Reading and Adult Learning. Also, books recommended in the University of Dayton Whole Language I class, books referenced in Invitations, and other class texts were used. The research was ongoing during the Winter Quarter of 1993 at the University of Dayton.

Once the research was completed, the writer stated the objectives of the appropriate approaches, summarized the approaches, and stated how they fit into an Adult Basic Education classroom. Included are ideas based on personal experience as an ABE teacher. Areas

covered in the handbook are language experience, SSR, assisted reading, written conversation, reading aloud, cloze exercises, DRTA, use of the newspaper, dialogue journals, family history, and portfolio assessment.

CHAPTER IV

A Handbook of Whole Language Approaches
for Adult Basic Education Classrooms

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Introduction

This handbook was designed to give Adult Basic Education teachers and tutors an introduction to some of the holistic approaches which are appropriate for adult instruction. Since much of what is published about whole language is directed to teachers of young children, many ABE instructors are unaware that a whole language philosophy can also be effective in teaching adult students.

Adult remedial students have already completed several years of schooling with a traditional, skills approach which did not work for them. A continuation of methods which concentrate on isolated subskills cause adult students to view learning as fragmented, meaningless, and a continuation of their 'failed' school days. However, adult students bring many qualities to the classroom. They have problem-solving skills and a determination to improve their abilities.

A whole language approach views these qualities as strengths and works to build upon them, rather than concentrating on weaknesses. Whole language respects the learner and encourages learners to use language for their own purposes. It is student-centered and meaning-centered. It uses whole language in whole situations. Students are more likely to transfer their literacy skills to their daily lives if they feel that their needs and interests are being met. A whole language philosophy applied to ABE classrooms

can help to create motivated learners and a program which meets the individual needs of the students.

LEA

Language Experience Approach

Objective - To increase reading fluency and comprehension through student dictation of his/her own experiences. Also, to create awareness that reading combines several language processes - reading, speaking, writing, listening, and thinking.

Technique - A language experience approach begins by encouraging the student to talk about anything of interest. The teacher can help the student to elaborate by asking open-ended questions. If the student is reluctant, a picture or a few magazine or newspaper paragraphs may initiate some conversation. Possibly some interested questions about the student's family or childhood may elicit a response. Then the teacher records the story verbatim and a title is given to the story. The teacher then repeats the words as she types or prints them. The student follows the print as the words are taken down. This demonstrates that writing is written speech. Then the student may read the story himself, either in its entirety or even only one sentence at a time after the teacher reads it, if necessary. The adult

student and teacher then read the story together, with the student following the teacher's voice. Routman(1991) feels that this allows the student to learn how a story should sound in pacing, phrasing, and fluency.

Rationale - The use of language experience stories fits very well with a whole language approach to learning. A student's own oral language, culture, interests, and experiences are used to create a predictable text. A predictable text fosters reading fluency by encouraging students to use their life experiences to respond to print. Also, when a book is predictable the readers can begin to develop word recognition while reading, rather than in isolation before or after. Language experience works especially well with adults because it capitalizes on the many years of life experience that adults possess. There is a lack of materials on the level of adult literacy students but this self-created text can bridge that gap and create high interest in the learner. It provides a base upon which meaningful reading and writing experiences can be built. The adult students can focus on things that matter to them, such as, writing a letter, writing down a problem about which they

are concerned, or writing about something they are trying to understand. Another plus is that the adult learner, rather than merely being on the receiving end of information, can work together with the teacher to create a text and can choose together words and skills to be further studied. A language experience approach is excellent because it is learner-centered, language-based, and integrates reading and writing.

Suggestions- After the story is completed and read, students can point out words in the story that they already know and words that they would like to learn. These can be printed on cards to begin a word bank. Words may be practiced for sight word recognition, used to construct sentences, categorized, or sorted according to topic, parts of speech, similar endings, etc.. Whole sentences written on strips of paper can be cut apart, then reconstructed to make the complete sentence. Another suggestion is for the teacher to recopy a story sentence and leave a blank for one of the words, which the student can fill in. According to Lehman, Johnson and Lehman(1992), language experience stories can be written in

each class. They can be numbered consecutively and sequenced into book form. This reinforces the idea of books and authorship. It is also recommended that these stories can be recorded on tape with the number of the story, so that the student is able to do repeated readings. Another activity that can be done is to have the teacher write new stories for the student, using words from previous stories. As the students become more familiar with the language experience procedure, they can be encouraged to write down their stories themselves.

Family History

- Objective - To create a personal, meaningful context in which adult students can develop literacy skills.
- Technique - This is a specific extension of the language experience approach. The purpose is to create stories about the student's family history. The student talks to the tutor about his/her childhood memories, grandparents, accounts of the family, or other personal recollections of the past. The tutor records these ideas. The student and tutor then work together to organize the ideas and turn them into complete sentences and paragraphs. The written recollections may be shared with the group, and rewritten and revised as necessary. The adult narratives may be collected together, bound, and published.
- Rationale - Adults learn best when they are self-directed learners and have responsibility for their learning. By creating family history narratives, the adult students are able to use their own language to write their own material and direct their own educational experience. They experience ownership of their work. The student is the expert on the

subject. This whole language approach to reading and writing allows the learning of skills to become a natural outcome of the process.

Suggestions- This approach is more thoroughly described by Stasz, Schwartz, and Weeden(1991). They share their experiences in a Head Start/Adult Basic Education program where they promoted literacy through family history narratives.

Written Conversation

Objective - To help students write more fluently by writing a conversation which focuses on student knowledge, provides rapid feedback on effectiveness of the written communication, and models standard writing.

Technique - In written conversation, basically, two people "talk" to each other on paper. The paper is given to the other person for a reply when the individual has completed his/her response. The conversation continues as the student and teacher write to each other as they would speak in an oral conversation. The teacher should include open-ended questions to encourage responses. There should be no talking during this time. However, if the student is unable to read what the teacher has written or if the student's response is unreadable, then they may read the replies, as needed, to each other.

Rationale - Written conversation is another way to integrate reading and writing and to reinforce the idea that writing is speech

written down. It is intended to help adult learners become more fluent in expressing themselves on paper. Both reading and writing fluency increase because the student reads the teacher's response, which becomes a predictable text, more quickly and with more comprehension than a regular textbook. Written conversation allows the literacy student to be immersed in functional, meaningful, written language. The student is engaged in the text since he/she is reading with the purpose of understanding the teacher's response and is writing in order to give a meaningful reply. Written conversation also provides a model, as the teacher is modeling both the writing process as a whole and the standard uses of English.

Suggestions- A plus of this procedure is that it provides immediate feedback to the student on the effectiveness of what he/she has written. If something written is not understood, the teacher can always reply in writing, "Tell me more..." or "Please explain...", etc., just as would

happen in an oral conversation. A variation can be to have the students carry on a written conversation in pairs with each other, once they understand the procedure. Also, they can be encouraged to write to each other in notes and a message board could be placed in the classroom.

Dialogue Journals

- Objective - To develop writing fluency by providing frequent opportunities for writing and practice in committing ideas to paper.
- Technique - This is an extension of written conversation, but it allows more time for further response. The student and teacher respond to each other through a journal. The teacher may start by writing down some thoughts and a related question in order to help the student get started. The student will then respond to the question and add thoughts of his/her own, or possibly write on another area of interest. The teacher will then reply, etc.. The replies can be written once each class period or once a a week, depending on the needs and wishes of the class and teacher. The dialogue journal is not the place to correct spelling, grammar, or punctuation. The focus of the dialogue journal is always on meaning. However, this is a perfect opportunity for the teacher to model spelling and correct usage in the response.
- Rationale - Adult remedial students are generally inexperienced writers and are uncomfortable

with writing. Dialogue journals provide the opportunity to simply get them writing and to do it frequently, without fear of mistakes. The teacher is able to model correct spelling and English usage in a non-threatening manner. Since the topics are self-selected, the student will possess knowledge of the subject and will naturally be more fluent. Students can write about things that matter to them, which lets their writing ability develop in a way which is meaningful to them. The concentration on meaning instead of form lets the student know that the focus is on communication instead of correction. The journal becomes a bridge from oral to written communication. This approach also provides for teacher interaction with students and lets the teacher know what students are thinking. Another advantage is that it allows the teacher to individualize instruction because the student's writing can be seen on an individual level rather than on a class level.

Suggestions- The author has given students time in class to write in their journals, assuring that they will be able to devote time and attention to it, as well as signifying its importance. Topics regarding class content may be used, but

adults often like to write about their hobbies, families, weekend activities, and, sometimes, problems. It may take some time to build relationships with students before open communication is possible. Be sure to let the class know that their journals are private and are only between the teacher and student. Your personal written responses will be appreciated by the students. Some students will reply only briefly but most like the personal contact. Often students feel at a loss for a reply; consequently, the author has found it helpful to end a response with a question to help spur the students' thinking. Try to use any misused or misspelled words from the student's previous reply in your response in order to provide modeling.

Assisted Reading

Objective - To develop silent reading fluency and increase comprehension.

Technique - Assisted reading is similar to the way parents let their children read along. The teacher sits slightly behind the student, directing her voice into the student's ear as they read along in unison. The teacher should read smoothly and evenly, lowering her voice when the student is reading well and slightly raising her voice when the student is having difficulty. The reading should not be interrupted. Beginning readers may point with a finger as they read, but more able readers may track the words with their eyes. The material read should be a text that is predictable. The material used could also be the student's language experience story.

Rationale - Whole language proponents believe that people learn to read by reading. The knowledge of the written language that they learn from reading one text can be transferred to other texts. Assisted reading is a comprehension-centered approach which provides support for less competent readers and helps them to relate oral language to written language. It immerses

the reader in language and print and gives the expectation of success. Anderson(1984) states that assisted reading allows readers to go from print to meaning without excessive decoding. Assisted reading also provides students with a model of fluent reading. However, Rhodes and Dudley-Marling(1988) remind us that fluent oral reading is not the goal, but assisted reading must be done orally so that the student may observe fluent reading. This instruction in oral fluency is intended only to increase silent reading fluency, which is more important.

Suggestions- This writer found it more manageable in a classroom of adult students to pre-record a tape of the text and students who need assisted reading help may wear headphones as they read along with a tape. As students become more comfortable with the procedure they may work in pairs, with a more able reader paired with a less competent reader. Being able to assist another student can also serve to boost the adult student's self-esteem.

Reading Aloud

- Objective - To model fluent reading, develop listening skills, and promote story enjoyment.
- Technique - The teacher will read aloud selected materials at each class session.
- Rationale - Reading aloud is an influential factor in promoting an interest in reading - with adults, as well as children. It shows the value of reading and helps to place reading in a whole context. If the story presented is interesting to the students, they may be hooked into wanting to read it for themselves. Also, coming in contact with quality writing read in a fluent manner, will familiarize students with good reading and writing. The teacher reading is a model of fluency and expressive reading. The reading aloud helps to create a sense of interest and enjoyment in reading. It improves listening skills, builds vocabulary, aids comprehension, and provides a positive impact on attitudes toward reading. Reading aloud is an important part of a reading program at any age.
- Suggestions- Material that is related to students' interests and purposes for learning to read are good

choices for read alouds. Good choices include short stories, excerpts from newspapers or magazines, poems, human interest stories, informational articles, and humor. This writer has often found suitable material from Reader's Digest. Some paperbacks that lend themselves to the ABE classroom are Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story, which relates vignettes about famous people, and David Feldman's Why Do Clocks Run Clockwise?, which gives information on questions that people wonder about. There are other similar books by these authors available. Also, students may bring in materials for the teacher to read. Once the student has been familiarized with it, he/she may wish to reread it later.

The teacher may also wish to acquaint students with high quality, classic literature which deals with universal problems and real life situations. Adult students have many life experiences which will help them relate to great classic literature. Schierloh(1992) details her experiences with using classic novels in ABE classes. Some of the classic novels she recommends are Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island, H.G. Wells' Time Machine, and Charles

Dickens' Great Expectations. Schierloh has incorporated reading aloud short passages from full-length novels with student reading of adapted versions.

Another way to approach reading aloud is through the use of picture books. Adults are motivated to learn when they have a personal reason for learning. Adult students are often parents with a strong concern for their children and they would like to be able to help their children develop reading ability. Using picture books can help fulfill these needs. The picture books would not be presented as reading material for the adult student, but rather as a means by which they can help their own children to learn. A picture book can be read aloud to the adult students, the book can be discussed, the adults can practice reading it, then the book can be taken home for the parent to read aloud to their children. In this way the literacy of both the children and adults can be improved. Sharp(1991) explains this program and lists suitable picture books. Sharp believes that adults are motivated to learn in this way.

SSR

Sustained Silent Reading

Objective - To increase students' silent reading fluency and overall reading ability.

Technique - A student engages in uninterrupted silent reading of a book of choice in Sustained Silent Reading. During regular classtime, students and teacher read silently and independently, material of their own choice. It is important that everyone is reading. A wide variety of reading materials must be readily available from which students may choose. Set a specific time for SSR each class period. Start out with a 5 - 10 minute length and increase to 15 - 20 minutes.

Rationale - Most adult remedial students do little reading on their own and this may be their only opportunity to simply read. Class may be the only place where quiet time to read is available to them since adults are busy with jobs, family, health concerns, and other obligations. Also, the idea that the best way to become a good reader is to read, applies to adults as well as to children. Adults, too, need to practice reading skills in a 'real reading' situation. SSR allows the adult

remedial reader to gain experience in real-life literacy. With time devoted just to reading, without anxiety over answering questions or making mistakes, adults may find the enjoyment in reading which they did not find earlier in their lives.

Suggestions- This writer has generally chosen a fifteen minute period during an ABE class, just before the mid-class break, so that any student who wanted to continue reading could do so during breaktime. Students should be encouraged to bring reading material from home, including job-related print, as well as using the classroom-supplied materials. Collect various magazines and consumer/health pamphlets to add to the reading material table. Adults are often interested in reading materials dealing with health, family, and hobbies. Have a daily newspaper available, if possible, since many adult remedial readers will not have one in their homes. Several companies now publish short, high-interest, low-level books for adult remedial readers. See Appendix for names and addresses.

DRTA

Directed Reading Thinking Activity

- Objective - To promote active comprehension and to develop the students' ability to read critically.
- Technique - This approach involves the basic steps of predicting, reading, and confirming or rejecting the predictions. Each student will receive a copy of a selected story or reading passage. The teacher may introduce the story or may ask the students to share any experiences related to the story. The students then set their own purposes for reading by making predictions about the story. They will use their prior experience and background knowledge to help them. The teacher will act as a facilitator. The teacher will ask the students to read the title of the story and to think about how it might be a clue to the story. In some instances, the name of the story's author may also provide a clue. The students' attention will be directed to any pictures. The teacher asks such questions as, "How might this title help us to guess what the story might be about? Look at the details of the picture and make a

guess about the story. What do you think might happen in this story? What is it that makes you think so?" The predictions are written on the board as they are generated. The teacher will encourage the students to keep these predictions in mind as they read the story. What they read will tell them if the predictions are correct or if they need to be revised as new information comes along. The story is then read. The predictions are again looked at, and proved to be right, wrong, or partially correct based on what was read. The students prove their position by finding lines in the story as evidence to back up their thinking. This format could be varied by having the students read the entire story first, except for the ending, then predict the outcome. Another variation would be to read a segment, predict the rest of the story, then read the remainder and look for proof, in segments of the material.

Rationale - This approach is based on the belief that reading is a thinking process. It focuses on the reader's active participation with the author to get meaning. Adult students are able to make use of their considerable prior experience and background knowledge

in making predictions. By making these predictions and looking for proof, the students are reading for an established purpose. As they make predictions, look for proof, and revise predictions, critical thinking skills develop.

Suggestions- The teacher should think of herself as a moderator and a facilitator. It is important to give much encouragement to the adult students, especially during the prediction phase. Assure them that no prediction is wrong - the purpose is to guide the reading and the predictions will be revised as more information is gained through reading. This writer has read the story selection together with the class, read portions to the class, and had students volunteer to read. This writer has found that reading selections which work well are short and of high interest, possibly involving mystery or adventure. After using DRTA with this type of material, it can be extended for use with content area books/passages. This makes a good transition to learning to study GED materials.

Cloze

Objective - To aid comprehension by developing the use of context clues to anticipate words and meanings.

Technique - The cloze technique can be used for instructional purposes. Select a passage of at least 250 words. Leave the first and last sentences intact. Then delete every nth word in the passage (e.g., every 5th, 8th, etc.). In place of the deleted words, leave blanks all the same length so as not to give any clues about the length of the word. The student fills in the blanks with the words he thinks are missing, using the rest of the sentence and surrounding sentences to help decide what would make sense in the blank space. When using this approach for developing context skills, the teacher can count as correct any word that makes sense. Material chosen should be at the student's independent reading level. The student's own language experience story may be used. More advanced readers may use content area passages.

Rationale - Many adult remedial readers view reading as word pronunciation. This approach helps them to look for meaning. It highlights that

reading is making sense of print. The reader must use several clues to select a suitable word. In order to predict what word should go in the blank space, the student must use knowledge of sentence structure, oral language patterns, word repetition, vocabulary, clues from surrounding words, and the general meaning of the passage. It develops the use of context clues and encourages the learner to look ahead and to use the meaning of the whole passage to figure out unknown words.

Suggestions- When initially using this approach, the teacher may present it to the whole class on an overhead projector. It can be worked through together as a group. Questions, such as, "Why did you choose that word? What does the sentence mean with your word in it?" can be discussed. When the class is comfortable with the procedure, other passages can be completed with small groups or partners. If a teacher is working with a student with low reading ability, the teacher may read the passage, pause at blanks and let the student guess the word. An alternative is to let the student read along with the teacher. The

teacher can also read the words after the blank to encourage the student to read ahead to help figure out unknown words.

Newspapers

Objective - To provide a realistic context for adults to practice academic skills.

Technique - There are countless ways in which to use the newspaper. This section will touch on a handful of them, from those appropriate for limited readers to those for more advanced students. Students may do the following:

The first activity should introduce the student to the newspaper. Note that each section is lettered (A,B,C, etc.). Read the index and find on what page certain topics are located. Draw attention to different sections, such as, ads, comics, horoscope, sports page, TV guide, entertainment page, or coupons. Locate the name of the paper, date, and price. Count columns across the page. Point to headlines and explain their purpose. Discuss vocabulary words, such as, advertising, obituary, and table of contents.

Cut out headlines and place in alphabetical order.

Read a headline and ask, "What will this story be about?" Have students give questions about information they would like to find out from

the story. Then look at the accompanying article. Answer the questions for which information was provided. Make assumptions about questions that aren't answered.

Observation and Inference - Cut out a newspaper picture and have students write an observation, noting details of what is happening. Then students should write an inference - what do they think this is about.

Cut out headlines and paste on paper bag. Place accompanying articles inside the bag. Pull out an article, read the first paragraph and have students guess which headline it goes with.

Compare food prices found in different grocery ads. Which store has the best buy?

Read an article or classified ad and answer the five W's - Who, What, When, Where, Why?

Make a list and define occupational jargon found in help wanted ads, such as, resume, journeyman, trainee, etc.

Choose a cartoon and discuss the main idea. Do you agree or disagree with the message?

Find and circle number words on the sports page. Look for action words, also.

Find the weather map and discuss what the symbols stand for. Find which cities have the highest and lowest temperatures. Graph the average temperature for a group of cities over a one week period. Predict from the map patterns next week's weather.

Look at advertisements, circling facts in red and opinions in blue. Then compare effective and noneffective ads.

Collect some interesting news stories. Cut off the headlines. Mount each story on a sheet of paper. Attach the headline to the other side. Have students write a headline to represent the main idea of the story. Compare that headline with the actual one.

Cut a comic strip apart and sequence it.

Rationale - The newspaper offers holistic applications of academic skills. It can be adapted to various ability levels. It provides a meaningful context and adult learners perceive activities with newspapers to be worthwhile.

Working with newspapers lets students feel like readers and boosts their self-esteem. The newspaper is also a source of information that can be of use to students and its many sections offer something of interest to everyone. The information is contained in a short selection, while this format uses survival words and gives the opportunity to practice life skills. Classroom use of the newspaper will encourage adult students, as their reading skills improve, to become habitual readers of the newspaper.

Suggestions- Call the local newspaper to find if they offer "Newspaper in Education" services. Most newspapers do offer this. They may provide booklets with helpful ideas and techniques, as well as a discount rate for an educational purchase.

Portfolio Assessment

- Objective - To provide a means of assessment whereby students are able to reflect on their growth.
- Technique - The portfolio involves a collection of work samples kept in a large folder. The pieces chosen for the portfolio are representative of the student's work. It is an ongoing and changing process. At first, the teacher may do some choosing and the teacher and student may do some choosing together. Ideally, the student would do the selecting. The person doing the selecting must be able to say why a piece is being selected for the portfolio. Periodically, the student may reflect on his/her growth and write about this reflection. This reflection is not graded or evaluated. The reflection may be guided by questions, such as, "What was the most difficult thing you had to do? How does your work show how you've changed/grown? What do you notice when you look at your earlier and later works?"
- Rationale - Adult Basic Education students do not receive grades beyond Pass/Fail. Sometimes the only way ABE students can move to a higher level class is by receiving a certain score on a

standardized test. Perhaps some programs will come to view portfolios as a means to evaluate ABE students. However, even if they do not, the portfolio can be a visible means of allowing the students to actually see their own progress. It can boost their self-esteem by reflecting on what is a significant piece of work and why. With the student at the center of the assessment process, the portfolio becomes part of their learning experience.

Suggestions- The portfolio should be student-centered and emphasize the student's strengths and growth as a learner. The portfolio should be a part of on-going classwork and help the student develop ownership of learning and develop pride in the work done. ABE students, who generally have low self-esteem and confidence, would need a great deal of modeling and teacher assistance at the beginning when deciding what should be included and why. This writer suggests that in the early part of the semester the teacher would do some choosing with an explanation of why, then move into both student and teacher choice, then, hopefully, the student will be able to self-select with reflection of the growth shown. Try to have the portfolio

include some pieces that reflect reading, writing, and possibly listening, as well as other topics. The following is a list of several possibilities for inclusion. It is not necessary to use all of these initially. Take a look at the needs of the class, start out with a few of the items the first semester, see how it works, then add or delete as seems appropriate and manageable.

Possibilities for Portfolio Inclusion:

Pre and post attitude surveys

Interest inventory

Goal statement for class written at beginning of semester

Self-evaluation written at end of semester

Reading record of books/stories/articles read during the semester

Reading response log to some of the items read

Dialogue journal

Predictions made for stories and the evidence to support them - chosen from beginning, middle, end of semester

Webs for selected writings

Rough drafts of selected paragraphs written throughout semester

Final draft of selected paragraphs

Audio tape of oral reading or story re-telling

Anecdotal record of positive things student has done

Student selection of best all-around piece of work from semester

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Literacy requirements of modern society continue to increase, yet one third of our nation's adult population is functionally illiterate. A whole language philosophy is believed by many to create optimal conditions for literacy learning. Goodman(1986) believes that whole language activities can be appropriate at any age.

Most information on whole language does not specifically link whole language and adult learners together. Consequently, not many Adult Basic Education instructors are acquainted with whole language approaches. This gap gave the writer the idea of a handbook which would concisely bring together whole language approaches with adult learners. This handbook could benefit Adult Basic Education instructors who would like to make their programs more meaning-centered and effective.

Much of the literature on whole language and adult learners purports that many approaches commonly used with adults are fragmented. They cause adults to view learning as meaningless. The key to helping these students is respect for them as learners and paying attention to their strengths rather than concentrate on weaknesses. According to the literature, a whole language approach builds on adult students' life experiences, treats students as individuals, and provides expectations of success.

Recommendations

It is recommended that whole language approaches be used in ABE classrooms. These meaning-centered approaches applied with a whole language philosophy will help to create optimal conditions for increasing the literacy skills of adult remedial readers. The approaches in the handbook must be accompanied by a teacher's holistic view of the learning process. It is recommended that the teacher will choose approaches after reflecting on each student's needs. It is also recommended that the teacher supplement these introductory descriptions with further readings (available from the bibliography) for more detail and deeper understanding where appropriate.

Appendix

The following companies publish reading materials of adult interest for low ability readers. Catalogs are available.

Contemporary
1-800-621-1918

Materials offered include:

Stories for Parents - Reading level 1-3

Six short books which discuss a variety of parenting concerns.

New Readers Press
P.O. Box 888
Syracuse, New York 13210
1-800-448-8878

Materials offered include:

First Impressions: Writings by New Readers
Reading level 1-2

Two volumes of writings by literacy students.

Kaleidoscope: A Collection of Stories
Reading level 2

Sixteen books of short stories which glimpse into the lives of adult characters. Tapes are also available.

Sundown Fiction Collection
Reading level 3

Twenty-two stories dealing with realistic situations.

Tapes are also available.

Stormy Night Stories
Reading Level 3-4

Ten stories which are mysteries adapted from
Ellery Queen and Alfred Hitchcock.

Readers House
Literacy Volunteers of New York City, Inc.
ATTN: Publishing Department
121 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10013
1-212-925-3001

Materials offered include:

Writers' Voices - Reading level 3-6

A series of paperback books containing unsimplified
selections from works by contemporary authors.

Examples include selections from I Know Why the Caged Bird
Sings by Maya Angelou, Jaws by Peter Benchley, Carrie by
Stephen King, and The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan.

New Writer's Voices - Reading Level 1-5

A series of paperback books by adult new writers for adult
new readers and writers. Some books are anthologies of
writing on a common theme; others contain the works of one
or two authors. Stories, essays, poems, photographs,
and informational articles are included.

Steck-Vaughn
P.O. Box 26015
Austin, Texas 78755
1-800-531-5015

Materials offered include:

Short Classics - Reading level 4-6

Twenty-eight literary classics retold in language retaining style and feel of the original. Examples are Great Expectations, Jane Eyre, The Red Badge of Courage, and a Tale of Two Cities.

Great Unsolved Mysteries - Reading level 5-6

Twenty titles in this series. Examples include Atlantis: The Missing Continent, Killer Bees, and Unidentified Flying Objects.

The Great Series - Reading level 2-4

Some books in this series are named Great Adventures, Great Challenges, Great Firsts, and Great Escapes.

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Journals

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