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Adult Learning Network

The Adult Learning Network is a quarterly publication of the AALRC.

The Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center provides equal access to all programs and activities.

October is Learning Disabilities Month

Learning Disabilities Month (October) is a time where people pay special attention to children and adults with learning disabilities. October was originally designated in the United States as LD Month in 1985 through a proclamation by President Ronald Reagan.



During this month, each person is asked to teach someone at least one thing they know about learning disabilities. The Reading Rockets website at <http://www.readingrockets.org/calendar/ld> is the designated LD Month website for information and ideas about information you may want to share with others. They have links to various LD discussion topics, activities, and inspirational stories, as well as additional resources and online links. Even more specific ideas for possible LD Month activities may be seen at <http://www.ldac-taac.ca/LDmonth/suggestedActivities-e.asp>.

ALC and Clinton School for Public Service Partner to Upgrade Tutor Training

When Laubach Literacy Action and Literacy Volunteers of America combined to form ProLiteracy in 2003, the systems used to train volunteers to become adult literacy tutors virtually disappeared. This left adult literacy organizations throughout the country without a structured system for training.

At the same time, adult literacy providers were seeing a decrease in attendance for tutor training workshops, which usually lasted 12 to 18 hours on Friday evenings and Saturdays. With more people working outside the home, this schedule became less attractive.

Looming on the horizon was an initiative that today is truly revolutionizing tutor training by using the Internet to make training more convenient, relevant, and modernized. With help from ProLiteracy, the Verizon Foundation has created the online Thinkfinity Literacy Network. The Web site, "Thinkfinity.org," provides a selection of online courses for both volunteer tutor and teacher training and for children and adult learners.

All courses are free and can be taken at any time and at any place with Internet access. Upon completion of the courses, certificates can be printed.

Literacy programs in Arkansas and elsewhere started looking at incorporating Thinkfinity courses into the tutor training process. However, many questions remained such as what courses should be assigned and which parts of tutor training must still be done

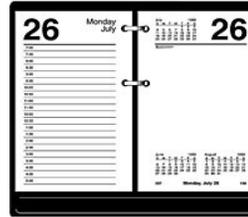
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Calendar
All events are at the AALRC unless otherwise noted.



October

- October 6 – GED Examiners Conference
 – Crowne Plaza Little Rock Session ID: **105050**
- October 14 – Google Docs Session ID: **105054**
- October 15 – Office 2007 Session ID: **105056**



November

- November 3-4 – Teaching With Manipulatives Session ID: **105061**
- November 17 – Inspiration Software Session ID: **105064**
- November 18 – Google Docs Session ID: **105062**

Meetings/Events

- October 1-2 – WAGE Retreat
- October 8 – Technology Committee
- October 22-23 – AACAE – Springdale Holiday Inn & Convention Center
- October 30 – Arkansas Service Commission
- November 13 – ALC Board & MAC Meeting
- November 19-20 – Advisory Council – Valley View Adult Education – Jonesboro
- November 23-27 – AALRC Closed for Thanksgiving
- December 21-January 1, 2010 – AALRC Closed for Holidays
- January 15 – ALC, Inc. Board Meeting

Students' Writing and Getting Published
Kristen McKenna

As a teacher, I seek out meaningful, socially relevant publications to use in my ABE classes. How much more meaningful a magazine is when it includes pieces by other adult learners – spoken from the heart and rooted in real-life experience. And even more meaningful than that: sometimes the pieces are written by my own students!

The Change Agent, a national magazine published by the New England Literacy Resource Center at World Education, includes writing by adult learners. Twice a year, *The Change Agent* sends out a “Call for Articles,” inviting students to submit their essays, poems, illustrations, and reflections.

I always take advantage of the “Call for Articles” because it acts as a writing prompt and it leads to a real-world process: submitting a piece of writing to be evaluated and possibly accepted for publication. Preparing to write a piece for *The Change Agent* is a group activity that fosters community-building among our students. When one of our own

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Mike Beebe

State Board of
Workforce
Education
and Career
Opportunities

Director,
William L. “Bill”
Walker, Jr.

Division of
Rehabilitation
Services
Robert Trevino

Division of
Adult Education
Jim Smith

Division of Career
& Technical
Education
John Davidson

Communications
Deborah Ger-
many, Interim

Human Resources
& Development
Pam Harris

Finance
Charles Brown

*Students' Writing and Getting Published**Continued from page 2*

student's articles is published, all the students seem to take pride in their fellow student's accomplishment.

Knowing someone who got published or knowing that many of your peers in adult education are being published provides a great gateway to more reading and exploring. Students might initially be attracted to the magazine because they recognize the writers, but then they hold on to the magazine and browse through the other stories. They enjoy being able to hold something in their hands that is fully accessible, engaging, and relevant to their everyday lives.

Many students in our program receive a copy of *The Change Agent* as if it were a textbook. (Except that it is a lot cheaper – only about a dollar per copy when you buy in bulk.) The articles are written at a variety of levels so teachers can make adjustments to their lessons to suit the right audience. A new and value-added feature is the online lessons that accompany and extend the articles. These “Extras,” along with the current issue and all the back issues of *The Change Agent* can be found at www.nelrc.org/changeagent. To order, call 617-482-9485 or visit the web site. The current issue of *The Change Agent* focuses on the economic crisis. The forthcoming issue (find the “Call for Articles” on the web site) is called “Coming Home from War”; it addresses the issues and challenges facing veterans.

Kristen McKenna is an ABE teacher at Bristol Community College in Attleboro, MA.

Arkansas Hosts the 9th Annual Adult Education ESL Summer Institute

Dr. Gail Weinstein (right) and ESL Summer Institute participant Gail Untenehr (left)
Photos provided by Danny Sheffield

The 9th Annual Adult Education ESL Summer Institute was held at the AALRC from July 20 to 22, 2009. Fifty participants from 28 different adult education and literacy programs attended the intensive three days of teacher training. This year's trainer was Dr. Gail Weinstein, professor of English at San Francisco State University and director of the Center for Immigrant & Refugee Community Literacy Education. Gail's textbooks, professional books, and training (both locally and internationally) reflect her commitment to strengthening families and communities through learner-centered practice.

This year's Summer ESL Institute was aimed at teachers who want to bring learner-centered principles into the fabric of their teaching, curriculum, and program design. A framework was provided for using learner narratives to teach language while addressing themes in immigrant life through project-based work. Specifically, the role of immigrant adults as parents, workers, citizens and managers of their own and their families' health was the focus of these narratives. Gail was an inspiration to all of the teachers who attended the Institute and motivated everyone to continue to tell their stories and to listen to their students' stories.



News from the Disabilities Project Manager

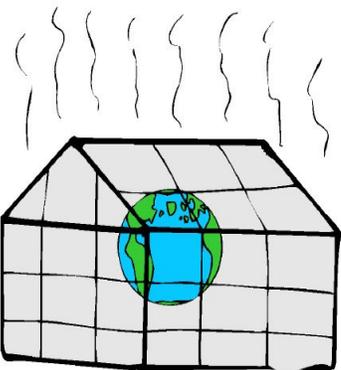
WordSift Visualizing What You Read and Write

There's a great website at <http://www.wordsift.com/> that is designed to help students visualize what they're reading or writing – perfect for your students with learning disabilities who benefit from the opportunity to think in pictures instead of words, the choice of most people with reading disabilities.

Consider what the developers of the site, Kenji Hakuta and Greg Wientjes, wrote about this site: *Think of a word much like a soccer ball or hackysack. Think of a classroom as a kind of playground in which words can be kicked around for fun and for learning - not drill and kill. WordSift enables teachers to create an environment where language is "talked about" as richly as possible. Much of language cannot be taught directly, but much of language is learned through active talk, so why not have a way of talking about language? Try pasting some text into WordSift, display it to your class, and talk about what you see. Be spontaneous and generative -- that is the stuff that forms the basis of strong language acquisition.*

WordSift is a combination of searching for images on Google Images, videos on YouTube, and the Visual Thesaurus software. You just type in your text (or cut and paste it from another application), then click on the green box that says "Sift." The program searches the text and then gives you a ton of images, videos, and a word web that match the text you entered.

The most frequent word is entered into the Visual Thesaurus and the result is displayed as a word web. It displays the word, plus related words including antonyms and synonyms. The Visual Thesaurus display is interactive: the definition of each word on the display pops up when the cursor is scrolled over it, and a click on any word on the web re-configures the display to bring that word to the center. This display is just a sampler taken from the Visual Thesaurus website, and after several clicks, it will ask you if you want to subscribe, but if you click "remind me later" it will continue to function without much annoyance.



The results of Google searches are also displayed, using the two most frequent words as the search terms. The images search frequently results in photos that closely relate to the topic of the text. Even results that seem to be somewhat off-base can be used as a way of talking about why the program might have chosen it. For example, entering an article on "climate change" from MSN Encarta produced an image cloud with "warm" and "greenhouse" as the top two words, and pictures of warm greenhouses. The teacher can use this to offer an explanation about climate change being caused by greenhouse gases, and why greenhouses stay warm. The YouTube videos resulting from the Google Video search are much more random, but can still provide the basis for a lot of unforeseen learning opportunities.

Sample sentences are also provided. Examples from the source text containing the most frequent word in the text are displayed under the word web. The key word is marked in green. All relevant examples from the input text are listed. One intended use of this feature is to organize the text to preview key vocabulary. This feature can also quickly show different meanings of the same word.

News from the Disabilities Project Manager

Students who have difficulty with their reading comprehension will benefit greatly from this opportunity to view the text in a graphic, interactive manner. Not only will it help them sift through the text to determine important information vs. “fluffy stuff;” but also, it will give them images to use for better relating to, storing, and later retrieving the concepts and facts in the text they are reading or writing.

Screening Students for Learning Disabilities

I’ve been getting a lot of questions about learning disabilities (LD) screening lately from various programs around the state, especially the use of the Washington State 13-Question Learning Inventory. In a nutshell, here’s a sample of what I’ve been trying to emphasize.



The most important thing to remember is this: **Screening for learning disabilities is a process, not a tool.** The 13-question screener is a great start, but it is not a panacea and it does not tell you whether or not the person has a learning disability. It can, however, give you an initial heads-up that the student MAY have some special learning needs that will need to be addressed so they may complete their educational goals most

effectively and efficiently. But if you’re administering this screening tool without any previous LD training, you probably have no idea what the heads-up is or what it means.

One problem is that some programs only have the one page with the 13 questions. There are other pages, including directions for administering the interview and what to do with the final score. If you’d like a copy of those pages, plus a large-print student copy of the questions, please email me at prwhite@madisoncounty.net and I’ll be happy to send you the .pdf file.

The big heads-up moment can happen at any time during the interview. For example, if I start asking the student about their educational background, and the student discloses that they were in Special Ed. or Resource classes, then I know there is a prior diagnosis of SOME kind of disability. At that point, I’d probably stop asking the screening questions and move right to questions like, “How long ago was your last diagnosis?” and “Can you get a copy of your IEP (Individual Education Plan) or diagnostic report?” (if the testing were completed within the last five years). I would

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News from the Disabilities Project Manager

also ask, at that point, if the student requires any testing or classroom accommodations. If their documentation is out-of-date, we have a process for getting it updated. Details of that process are at <http://aalrc.org/resources/ld/referralProcess.aspx>



If the student scores 12 or more without any prior Special Ed. attendance disclosure, I'd probably ask some follow-up questions like, "So, were you in Special Ed? If so, why? Do you have a copy of your IEP?" Or I might ask them if they ever took their tests orally in school, or if they were a Resource student. Their answers to those kinds of questions would tell me whether or not I should jump right to getting a copy of their school records, or maybe try the TABE over again with accommodations, OR maybe just have them start classes and ask the teacher to keep a close eye on them for potential red flags and/or progress vs. no progress.

Red flags might be any of the behaviors/characteristics typically associated with adults with learning disabilities. This is where it's helpful to have completed some LD training so you're familiar with what to look for. If I'm working with a student and start seeing red flags – even if they scored below 12 on the initial screening interview – then I might try the accommodated TABE and have another discussion with the student about what they do well and what's hardest for them. If the accommodated TABE scores are significantly higher than the unaccommodated scores, I'd probably talk to the student about the possibility of a learning disability and/or AD/HD and see if they're interested in getting the documentation needed to request accommodations on the GED.

The biggest confusion I hear about with the process of screening is that it rolls out differently for different students. Everyone is unique; everyone has different areas of strengths/weaknesses even if they've got the same diagnosis, so you can't just hand out a prescription for screening, strategies, and accommodations. You've got to rely on teachers, administrators, and intake staff who (1) understand the basics of LD, (2) understand the process and possible components of LD screening, and (3) can apply common sense to a broad framework of suggested procedures and tools.

If you have questions regarding anything about the process of screening students for learning disabilities or training for learning disabilities-related information, please contact me at prwhite@madisoncounty.net or 800.569.3539.

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Note: To link to any web address (URL) in this newsletter, go the AALRC's home page at <http://aalrc.org>, look up this newsletter, and then just click on the appropriate link.

Flashcards

Flashcards are a great way to practice problems and retain information. Here are some sites that have ready-made flashcards and some that even let you make your own.

Flashcard exchange.com - free flashcards for use for a variety of categories. Math, English, Science, Social Studies just to name a few.

<http://www.flashcardexchange.com/>

PDictionary.com – Great for ESL students, it has pictures that you can mouse over and it will display the word in English

<http://www.pdictionary.com/english/flashcards.php>

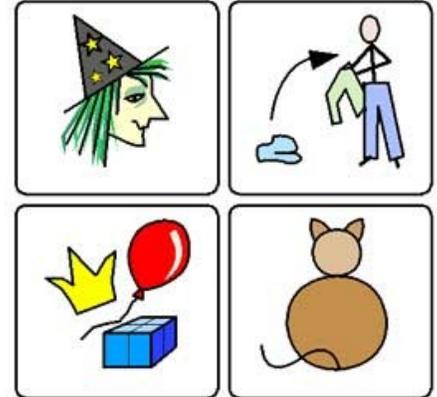
Great site for math flash cards:

<http://www.factmonster.com/math/flashcards.html>

Another good math flash card site:

<http://www.aplusmath.com/Flashcards/index.html>

<http://www.webmath.com/>



Webmath – This is a handy-to-use web program that many will find very helpful, especially when there is not a teacher around to explain how to work a problem. Webmath is a math-help web site that generates answers to specific math questions and problems, as entered by a user, at any particular moment. The math answers are generated and displayed real-time, at the moment a web user types in their math problem and clicks "solve." In addition to the answers, Webmath also shows the student how to arrive at the answer. Webmath is free and you do not have to register.

Setting System Time Over the Internet

Tired of never having the correct time on your computer? You can set your system clock to a time server on the Internet that will synchronize with an atomic clock so you will always be on time.

1. Double-click the time on your taskbar (bottom right-hand corner of your screen).
2. Click the Internet Time tab
3. Check Automatically synchronize with an Internet time server
4. Click on the Update Now button
5. If for some reason the update fails, try a different server

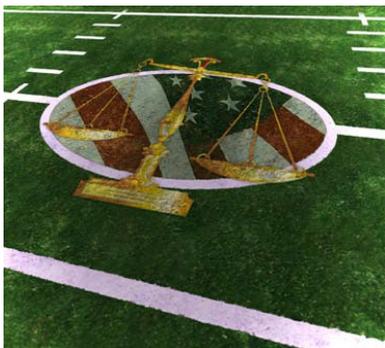
Tip - If your minutes are correct but the hour is wrong, click on the Time Zone tab and make sure that there is a check next to "Automatically adjust clock for daylight saving changes", and make sure you have the Central Time zone selected.

*Tutor Training Upgrade**Continued from page 1*

face-to-face" (that cannot be replaced by video or Internet). A larger question was how to fit the assigned courses into the tutor training process - before or after a volunteer's first meeting with the literacy council? Are there more courses assigned after tutor training? Which ones?

Guidance to councils on tutor training is a continuing need for ALC, which is aware that several councils have successfully integrated Thinkfinity courses into their tutor training. Because of limited time and staff, ALC wrote a proposal to the Clinton School for Public Service in Little Rock for a practicum project - to use students in the field to see how their selection of Thinkfinity.org courses fit in to their tutor training. An online guidebook would be developed to guide any council into creating quality tutor training. The proposal was accepted.

On September 1, Clinton School students Mark Leinhart (from North Little Rock), Julie Myer (from St. Louis, Mo.), and Jeerawat Na Thalung (from Bangkok, Thailand) met with ALC staff and members of the ALC Board Council Advisory Committee for a project orientation. The Clinton School student team will be traveling this fall to councils in Benton, Conway, Fort Smith, Leslie, Russellville, and Stuttgart and will begin work before the end of the year in composing the tutor training guidebook. ALC has received a grant of leadership funds from the Adult Education Division of the Department of Career Education to assist the students with travel expenses. The goal is to have the guidebook complete and councils trained before the students graduate in the spring.

AALRC Library New Item Suggestion

A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD:
**WHY THE AMERICAN
LEGAL SYSTEM MATTERS
TO YOU**
DVD and Instructor's Guide

The Arkansas Bar Association has produced **A Level Playing Field: Why the American Legal System Matters to You**, which includes a DVD and Instructor's Guide covering four core principles of the American Judicial System. The material is intended for use in secondary education classes throughout the state of Arkansas. The materials are ideal for Civics, American Government or History, Pre-Law, and other Social Studies courses. The Bar Association is looking for volunteer attorneys and judges to go to local classrooms to present the 20 minute DVD and present a short program to the students.

The fast-paced DVD includes sports references and was produced with an eye toward keeping students' attention and interest. It contains excerpts from interviews with prominent Arkansas elected officials, judges and attorneys, including Governor Mike Beebe, Senator Dale Bumpers, Chief Justice Jim Hannah, Honorable Lavenski Smith, Bobby McDaniel, as well as several others. The production is hosted by a young Little Rock attorney, Nick Rogers, and NFL Referee Walt Coleman. The DVD discusses the Constitutional basis of the American judicial system and the four fundamental principles of the judicial system--the Rule of Law; Equal Justice Under the Law; Fair, Impartial and Independent Judiciary and the Jury System.

A short excerpt from the DVD can be seen on You-Tube at the following site:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDvzw4Qfl_g

Make plans to present **A Level Playing Field: Why the American Legal System Matters to You** at your local school. Please contact the Arkansas Bar Association (501) 375-4606. They will add your name to a list and contact you regarding your availability when they receive a request from a school. If you would like to preview the DVD or need further information, please contact AALRC's media coordinator Klaus Neu at 501-907-2490 or via email at klaus@aalrc.org.