**John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development**
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

heldrich

# Helping Job Seekers Who Have Limited Basic Skills

## A Guide for Workforce Development Professionals

Prepared by:
John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Created with support from the J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation

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# INTRODUCTION

## *I. Why a Guide?*

Today, career centers are increasingly challenged to provide a wider range of services to all of their customers to help them meet emerging workplace skill requirements. Public One-Stop Career Centers are tasked with offering a broad selection of services on-site or through electronic linkages. Many states have also consolidated their public workforce development and adult education systems in hopes of offering more integrated services.

**DID YOU KNOW?**
**A lack of basic skills is an important barrier to the employability of the poor or near poor who are not active in the labor force. Integrating education programs with job placement, job search training, and job training programs may provide the means for encouraging more disadvantaged citizens to enter the workforce as well as raise the long-term earning potential of future labor force participants.**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

However, many career centers lack key information about how to connect with or create appropriate services for job seeking customers who have limited basic skills. Often, practitioners and administrators have questions such as:

- What are the specific challenges job seekers with limited basic skills face in the labor market?
- How can our career center make employment services more accessible to people with limited basic skills?
- Should our center offer a basic literacy, ESL or another type of class?
- Is computer-based instruction an effective way to teach basic skills?
- What types of content should a basic skills education curriculum include?
- Besides referring customers to adult education courses or offering them on-site, how else can we assist customers who have limited basic skills?
- What support services do these customers need?
- How can we make sure that we are "covering all our bases" in terms of providing access to the right mix of services for our customers?
- How can our career center start, sustain and improve its basic skills-related services?

**DID YOU KNOW?**
**The National Institute for Literacy estimates that over 50% of those who are unemployed have difficulty reading and writing.**

This guide addresses these questions and more. It provides *program planners and front-line staff at public and private career centers* with an introduction to the steps involved in planning, implementing and improving a system of services that helps job seekers who have limited basic skills to meet workplace skill requirements and get and keep rewarding, financially sustaining jobs. This guide may also be useful for workforce development and adult education policy makers, employers, union representatives, and adult educators.

## *II. Breaking It Down: How to Use this Guide*

This guide has four parts:

**Part I** describes the *characteristics of customers who lack the basic skills needed for many of today's jobs.* It summarizes how a lack of basic skills can block these customers from achieving employment goals and provides an overview of their service needs.

**Part II** stresses the importance of careful and comprehensive *planning of services*. It explains how career centers can think holistically about customers' needs and plan appropriate, comprehensive responses.

**Part III** introduces *steps you should take and strategies you can use to help individuals who have limited basic skills*. Since career centers vary in terms of their focus and resources, this section identifies various service strategies career centers can use to implement the steps. These strategies, which may require further research and/or training to implement correctly, range from those that require few resources to those that can be implemented only when additional staff, facilities, and other resources are available.

**Part IV** provides an overview of *steps necessary to sustain and improve your career center's system for serving customers who have limited basic skills*. It briefly discusses evaluation and staff training practices.

While examples and strategies are provided to demonstrate concepts, this guide is not a comprehensive "how-to" manual (This would take several volumes!). Further research on most topics is strongly encouraged. To help you, the authors have included additional sources of relevant information in Appendices B and C. In addition, Appendix A provides examples of effective instructional activities.

## III. Sources of Information: Where Did the Information in this Guide Originate?

This guide is based on research in the fields of adult education and workforce development. In particular, the authors focus on principles and practices developed by Equipped for the Future (EFF). Created by the National Institute for Literacy, EFF is a standards-based reform model for adult education programs that promotes the use of research-based practices to help adults build a broad set of basic skills needed for work, family and community roles.

The authors also convened a statewide group of adult education experts in New Jersey to provide input on instructional practices and the use of technology in adult education. In addition, the authors visited several One-Stops and adult education and career center staff from around the country responded to phone calls and e-mails requesting examples of how they help job seekers who have limited basic skills. Finally, several national adult education experts provided input into the content of the guide.

Jennifer Cleary, project director at the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development and Paul Jurmo, Ed. D., consultant, are the primary authors of this guide. Ms. Cleary has evaluated several workplace literacy programs offered through One-Stop Career Centers. She has worked at the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development since 2000 and has over 10 years of experience in social service provision, planning and management. Ms. Cleary is pursuing a Master's degree in public policy at Rutgers University with a special emphasis on labor and education policy.

Dr. Jurmo is an adult literacy specialist with special interest in work-related basic skills. He is an adjunct professor at New York University. His consulting work includes helping the Transport Workers Union and the Transit Authority in New York City design test preparation and mathematics instruction for transit workers and assisting the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission implement Equipped for the Future standards in adult basic skills instructional programs.

## *IV. Explanation of Terms Used*

Many of the terms in this guide are used in various ways in the adult education and workforce development fields. The authors wish to clarify how we use these terms, in particular:

**Career centers:** This term refers to One-Stop Career Centers as well as other non-profit and for-profit employment service agencies.

**Basic skills:** Refers to the wide range of reading, writing, math, English language listening and speaking, and other pre-college level skills that workers need to succeed in today's complex workplaces. These skills are defined by EFF as follows:

## Equipped for the Future "Skills Wheel"

Source: National Institute for Literacy, Equipped for the Future Skill Standards.

# Part I
# Understanding the Customer: The Characteristics, Challenges and Service Needs of Career Center Customers Who Have Limited Basic Skills

***This section describes the unique qualities, challenges and service needs of job seekers who have limited basic skills. Understanding the information that follows is key to creating an appropriate system of services to help these customers.***

This section discusses the following topics:

- **Who Is the Customer?** Characteristics and Career Choices of Career Center Customers Who Have Limited Basic Skills.
- **Navigating a Sometimes Stormy Labor Market:** Challenges These Customers Face in the World of Work.
- **How Career Centers Can Help:** Customers' General Service Needs.

## *I. Who Is the Customer? Characteristics and Career Choices of Career Center Customers Who Have Limited Basic Skills*

### General Characteristics

As skill requirements in today's workplace change, growing numbers of unemployed and under-employed adults lack the literacy, math, English-language and/or other essential skills to succeed on the job. This diverse range of job seekers includes:

**The growing number of immigrants**

Immigrants account for a large and expanding portion of the American workforce. Many of these newcomers lack English-language skills and some may have received limited education in their home countries. In some cases, immigrants speak and understand English, but they may have a heavy accent or use a non-standard-American-English dialect that may make communication with Americans difficult. In addition, cultural differences can present obstacles to communication with employers.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**In the past decade, immigrants have accounted for half of all growth in the American workforce.** Source: Sum et al., 2002.

**In 2000, 28.4 million foreign-born people resided in the United States, representing 10.4% of the total U.S. population. Among the foreign-born in 2000:**

- **33.0% of the foreign-born population were not high school graduates, compared to 13.4% of the native population;**
- **25.0% were high school graduates, compared to 34.4% of the native population; and,**
- **16.2% had some college education (less than a bachelor's degree), compared to 26.7% of the native population.**

Source: International Adult Literacy Survey.

**Out-of-school youth and adults who never earned a high school diploma or equivalent**

Many employers now require job candidates to have a high school diploma or equivalent. Even if a person has strong basic skills, the lack of a secondary school credential can still be a barrier. In addition, lack of such a credential is often associated with real deficits in basic skills, which can also prevent workers from getting and keeping good jobs.

**High school graduates**

Some high school graduates may have been out of school and/or the labor market for many years. As a result, they may lack key basic skills important in today's workplace.

**Individuals with learning disabilities**

Learning disabilities can present serious barriers to employment and other aspects of life for adults. There are several types of learning disabilities and many adults who lack basic skills may have some form of diagnosed or undiagnosed learning disability. Individuals with learning disabilities may also face other challenges, such as the lack of a secondary school credential.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**The National Institute for Literacy estimates that:**

- **Between 5 million and 30 million adults in the U.S. (5-20% of the population) have some type of learning disability; and**
- **Between 50-80% of adult basic education students may have a learning disability.**

**Prisoners or ex-offenders**

Persons who have been incarcerated are disproportionately more likely to lack a high school diploma or have a learning disability, both of which limit employment prospects.

## Career Choices

While some job seekers with limited basic skills are seeking entry-level jobs that match their current skill sets, many want to advance to more highly skilled positions. Input the authors received from One-Stop Career Centers revealed that job seekers with limited basic skills can have diverse job goals. Some that were mentioned to us include:

**Entry-level jobs**

These jobs generally require lower levels of basic skills and little or no formal training. They include:

- Food-service jobs (e.g., preparing and serving food in restaurants, schools, healthcare institutions)
- Building trades (e.g., laborer)
- Pickers and packers, light assemblers
- Landscaping (e.g., laborers on landscaping crews and in nurseries)
- Security guards
- Custodians
- Hotel housekeepers

**Mid-level jobs**

These positions generally require higher levels of basic skills and some formal training and/or experience. They include:

- Health-care jobs such as home health aide and certified nursing assistant
- Clerical workers (e.g., data-entry, word processing, billing codes)
- Healthcare technicians (e.g., in labs, radiology units, sonogram units)
- Customer service (e.g., retail sales, phone sales);
- Skilled building trades (e.g., carpenter, construction supervisor)

**Highly-skilled jobs**

These jobs typically require two- or four-year post-secondary degrees. They include:

- Nurses and medical assistants
- Computer technicians
- Real estate agents

While these findings may not be representative of the goals of all job seekers with limited basic skills, they suggest that the career goals of this population are not limited to the lowest rungs of the job ladder, nor are they confined to any one industry. Career center staff must thus clarify what jobs their customers are seeking and then develop services (or referral networks) that are customized to those customers' unique needs and interests.

**Reminder!**
**Career Center staff should: carefully assess customer service needs; remember that unique customers require unique services.**

## *II. Navigating a Sometimes Stormy Labor Market: Challenges These Customers Face in the World of Work*

Whether people get, keep, and succeed in jobs depends on many factors. A lack of basic skills and/or a high school credential can limit the employability of job seekers in several ways:

### Challenge #1

***As workplace skill requirements change, a lack of strong basic skills increasingly limits access to better paying and more secure jobs.***

The traditional view of basic skills as beginning-level reading, writing, and math skills no longer reflects what employees need for the emerging U.S. workplace. Instead, we are now challenged to recognize that workers are being asked to have many skills—and fairly high levels of those skills—if they are to hold jobs beyond the lowest level on the career ladder.

Even many entry-level jobs, such as light assembly positions and hotel housekeepers, require broad basic skills. These often include fluency in English and the ability to communicate with customers and coworkers to solve problems, record data, and understand and follow safety and health guidelines. Individuals who lack basic skills may have trouble filling out job applications and demonstrating important job skills during interviews. Therefore, even many low-level jobs may be out of reach for these customers. Workers who lack basic skills and/or a high school credential are also often unable to meet entry requirements for college or advanced technical training programs that might help them access better-paying jobs.

According to employers and workplace basic skills experts, many jobs now require the ability to:

- Read technical documents;
- Record data;
- Think critically;
- Make decisions independently;
- Work in teams to solve problems; and
- Perform job-related math and research.

Job seekers also need strong basic skills to search for jobs effectively. Immigrants and adults with limited basic skills who are new to the job market may not understand the basics of searching for a job, including studying job listings, networking, applying for jobs, interviewing, negotiating salary and other important skills. Immigrants may face the added challenge of overcoming cultural differences with employers, coworkers and employment service providers.

### Challenge #2

***A lack of basic skills can make managing personal responsibilities difficult, which can impact employability and job performance.***

To perform well on the job, workers must be able to efficiently manage tasks in their personal lives. In today's busy world, all of us seem to have more responsibilities to manage and less time and money available to handle these tasks well. However, for individuals with limited basic skills, the challenge of managing personal responsibilities can be overwhelming.

A lack of basic skills can make it difficult to access information and make calculations needed to manage personal finances, deal with childcare and health needs, find suitable housing, and arrange needed transportation. Not managing these responsibilities well can, in turn, make it difficult to get a job, keep it, and perform it well. For example, a parent who has difficulty reading and understanding the operating schedule or rules of his or her childcare provider, may lose childcare and be unable to go to work. Similarly, an inability to understand a payment notice may lead to a delay in paying car insurance, which can cause an individual to lose his or her transportation to work.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**In 1959, only 20% of jobs held by workers ages 30 to 59 required some postsecondary education. Today, about 56% of jobs for these workers require some postsecondary training. Between 1996 and 2006, jobs requiring a bachelor's degree are projected to increase by 25%.**

Source: National Institute for Literacy

## Challenge #3

***Limited basic skills can affect a worker's ability to understand and advocate for his or her rights as a worker.***

To understand workplace issues and participate in unions and other organizations designed to protect workers' rights, a worker needs basic skills to do research, read relevant documents, and participate actively in meetings. From managing vacation and pension plans to understanding their rights as employees, individuals with limited basic skills can lack the tools to make informed decisions regarding their work, pay, or benefits. Basic skills are thus important tools for individuals to use to advocate for their rights as workers and to maximize the benefits of employment.

## Challenge #4

***Basic skill limitations can make accessing and using career center services difficult.***

Many job seekers with limited basic skills may be reluctant to access a career center because they feel their lack of basic skills will prevent them from succeeding or feeling comfortable at the center. If these customers do visit a career center, it is often with anxiety and an eye toward the door. Since many career centers do not have a system in place to address the needs of customers with limited basic skills, these customers must not only overcome their fear of entering the center, but they must also find the courage to ask staff for assistance. This can be embarrassing for adults who have difficulty with oral or written language. For undocumented job seekers, the knowledge that they will be required to produce a Social Security number is also often daunting.

## Challenge #5

***Job seekers who have limited basic skills may face employment discrimination.***

Some immigrants and others with limited proficiency in English or other basic skills may experience discrimination in hiring or on the job. This experience can compound other challenges individuals may be facing as a result of their limited basic skills and limit job opportunities. In addition, customers who have limited skills may not understand their rights or how to defend them in cases where they have experienced discrimination.

## Challenge #6

***Customers who lack basic skills often face multiple barriers to employment.***

Some job seekers have criminal records or substance abuse problems that make it difficult or impossible to qualify for certain jobs. Some lack technical credentials (e.g., licenses) or the required legal residency. When combined with a lack of basic skills, these challenges can make it very difficult for customers to reach their job-related goals.

# *III. How Career Centers Can Help: Customers' General Service Needs*

Services that career center customers who have limited basic skills may need fall into four broad categories, including:

- Basic skills assessment;
- Basic skills instruction;
- Support services such as childcare and transportation; and
- Help accessing these and other career center services.

Customers' specific service needs vary significantly based on the particular types of skills they lack and other factors. For example, individuals who need English as a Second Language skills may need different types of services than an individual who is a native English speaker with sound reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills but who lacks the basic math skills to get a desired job. In the end, services must be customized to the needs of the customers you plan to serve.

The following sections of the guide provide an overview of the planning and implementation strategies that you can use to better serve a wide range of customers who have limited basic skills.

# Part II
# Laying the Foundation: The Basics of Planning a Comprehensive System of Services for Job Seekers Who Have Limited Basic Skills

Workforce development and adult education agencies too often create poorly coordinated patchworks of services that do not work together efficiently to serve customer needs. As a result, many customers' needs go unmet and job seekers may have difficulty meeting employment goals due to a lack of comprehensive supports.

Creating a system of well-linked services and referral options in your geographic service area is key to helping your customers, especially those who lack basic skills, to achieve economic self-sufficiency. This section is designed to help your career center plan an effective set of services for customers who have limited basic skills, whether that system involves improving existing services, strengthening referral networks, creating new services at your career center, or some combination of these approaches.

This part of the guide contains both steps and strategies. *The steps are fundamental components of a system of services for job seekers who have limited basic skills. The strategies present practical activities you can use to apply the steps.* These strategies are listed in order from those that require few resources to those that can be implemented only when additional staff, facilities, and other resources are available.

**REMINDER!**
**Taking a "Systems" Approach**
**Job seekers with limited basic skills often require a number of different services. Career centers should develop a systematic approach to support that includes a range of well-coordinated services and referral options. Such a system of services will ensure that customers have all of their relevant service needs met and increase their chances of getting and keeping a rewarding job.**

***This section describes the following components of planning an effective basic skills system:***

- **Map It Out:** Inventory Customer Needs and Existing Resources.
- **Stake Your Claim:** Identify Your Goals and Target Service Group(s), Build Community Support and Find Resources.
- **Get It Together:** Create a Plan to Coordinate, Evaluate and Improve Services.

## I. Map It Out: Inventory Customer Needs and Existing Resources

Before developing your system of services for job seekers who have limited basic skills, you should take the following steps:

### STEP 1: Think comprehensively about customers' service needs.

The first step in planning any type of service strategy is to fully understand what your customers need. While the general service needs of customers with limited basic skills were discussed in Part I, your career center should perform a more thorough analysis of what your particular customers require.

To understand your customers' needs, take a closer look at the information already available to you. Specific service needs tend to vary by the type of population you are serving. Review program records and talk with front-line staff to determine the following types of information about your customers:

- What are the most common types of basic skill limitations you see among your customers? (i.e., Do they have problems with English language fluency, reading, writing, math, decision-making, or other basic skills needed in the workplace? Do many lack a high school credential, as well?)
- If you serve many immigrants, what are the most common languages these customers speak?
- What is the average age of your customers with limited basic skills?
- Do most of your customers with limited basic skills have children?
- Do customers miss appointments and job interviews due to difficulties handling transportation, housing, childcare, or other responsibilities?

This information should help you to better understand the specific needs that your customers have, which will allow you to better identify appropriate service solutions.

### STEP 2: Inventory existing services.

To avoid duplication, you should determine which services are already available in the community before creating any new programs. Do this by performing an inventory of local government and community-based organizations providing basic skills education and support services. These can include adult programs offered by public schools, libraries, community colleges, volunteer groups, non-profit agencies, disability specialist organizations and other types of agencies that provide social services.

Organizations such as the United Way and county health and human services agencies often keep detailed inventories of social services available in local communities. Such an inventory, often called a "continuum of care," can help you to understand the web of services that are locally available for your customers with limited basic skills.

By mail, phone or in-person, contact the agencies that might provide basic skills services and ask them what types of services they offer for adults who have limited basic skills, to whom they provide these services and whether and how they would prefer to take referrals from your career center. Compile relevant documents from those agencies and store them in your own directory of service providers that specialize in serving adults with basic skills limitations.

**TIPS TOOLBOX**

**To obtain a directory of adult education and social services available in your community, contact the following organizations:**

- **Your state's adult education office**
- **Your local United Way**
- **Your county's Health and Human Services Department**
- **Local community colleges or state universities**

**Another source for this information is America's Literacy Directory: http://www.literacydirectory.org/.**

### STEP 3: Identify service gaps.

To identify the areas where services for customers with limited basic skills are not able to meet demand, review the information you collected in STEP 1 and consider:

- What adult basic education programs already exist in your community?
- Which types of learners are these programs set up to serve? (People with very low literacy and ESL levels? Persons with learning disabilities? Persons seeking a GED?)
- Do these programs have long waiting lists or routinely turn away new customers?
- Which of the local adult education services you identified are willing and able to provide services to your career center's customers?
- Do your customers report being satisfied with available services when they speak about them?
- Do available services appear to help your customers achieve their goals (based on available program evaluations or, more likely, on the observations of your own staff)?
- Can your customers access support services such as budget counseling, transportation, housing,

childcare, and other types of assistance through your career center or elsewhere?

- In general, where does there appear to be a lack of the kinds of services that your customers with limited basic skills may need?

These types of questions should help you to pinpoint the areas where your customers needs are not being adequately met by existing community services. Most areas experience more demand for adult basic education and related services than local service providers can meet.

### STEP 4: Consider your options.

Creating new programs at your career center can be complex and costly. However, there are relatively simple changes that most career centers can make to improve customers' access to existing services, both on-site and off. Before creating new services at your career center, you should consider whether improved collaboration with other agencies would improve service gaps. Also, determine if you have the resources and expertise to create the basic skills-related assistance your customers need.

## II. Stake Your Claim: Identify Your Goals and Target Service Group(s), Build Community Support and Find Resources

You should take the following basic steps to clarify your objectives and build the community and financial support you need to create your system of services for helping jobseekers who have limited basic skills:

### STEP 1: Set clear goals.

Clear goals help keep your efforts focused. *Try to identify a set of specific, attainable, and measurable objectives* for your career center's system of services for customers with limited basic skills or for specific new programs you plan to create. Also, ensure that these goals are *relevant to customers' needs*. For example, if you want to improve access to your career center's core employment services for persons with limited basic skills, you might state that your goal is to increase these customers' use of commonly-needed services, such as resume-building assistance, by 10% over the next year. If you are creating an adult work-based ESL instructional program, you could state that 70% of participants will demonstrate the ability to use particular forms of workplace English after a given number of instructional hours.

### STEP 2: Select a target service group.

Setting goals for your services and programs and choosing who you want to serve are highly interrelated steps. Just as you should keep in mind who you plan to serve when forming goals for your services and programs, *the selection of a target service group (sometimes called a target audience) should be tied to the goals you have established*. For example, if the goal of a new program is to help customers obtain a GED, your target audience should include learners who have moderate to high levels of basic academic skills. However, if you plan, as part of your overall system for serving customers with limited basic skills, to improve access

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, adults who function at Adult Literacy Level 1 (lowest level of proficiency) usually can:**

- **Sign their names;**
- **Total a bank deposit slip;**
- **Identify a country in a short article;**
- **Locate a piece of information in a sports article; and**
- **Locate the expiration date on their driver's license.**

**However, they usually cannot:**

- **Locate eligibility from a table of employee benefits;**
- **Total costs from an order;**
- **Locate an intersection on a street map;**
- **Fill out a government benefits application;**
- **Locate two pieces of information in a sports article;**
- **Understand an appliance warranty.**

Source: National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992.

to your career center's services, your target service group may be all customers with limited basic skills. `

In general, *various types of customers require different types of supports.* Individuals with very low literacy levels or significant ESL needs have different service needs than people with higher skill levels and people with learning disabilities require specialized services. Therefore, administrators should customize programs as much as possible to the needs of their target service group, as opposed to creating "one size fits all" solutions, which rarely accomplish their objectives.

In general, individuals with lower levels of literacy and ESL will need more intensive and specialized services than those who only need to brush up on particular skills. Therefore, be mindful of the resources that you have available when deciding which types of customers you plan to serve.

## STEP 3: Engage stakeholders.

Employers, customers (past, present, and potential), adult education providers, labor unions, and representatives of government and community organizations may all have an interest in the services your center provides to customers with limited basic skills. As you plan how you will better support these customers, involving stakeholders can build community support for your services. These stakeholders can provide the input you need to create a basic skills system and/or design specific programs (e.g., an instructional program) that meets the needs of both your customers and the community as a whole. Working with service provider stakeholders, in particular, can also promote coordinated service delivery in your community and avoid unnecessary duplication of services.

The following are some potential strategies for communicating your objectives to stakeholders and getting their feedback:

***Strategy 1: Participate in local coordinating councils.***
Most communities have local social service coordinating council meetings, where service providers come together to discuss customer needs and better integrate services. Representatives from career centers should attend these meetings, when possible. Participating in a coordinating council can allow you to communicate your plans for serving customers with limited basic skills to other agencies serving similar customers. These providers can also give you valuable input and a better understanding of how you and they can work together to meet customers' needs. County Departments of Human Services often have information about when and where such groups meet.

***Strategy 2: Set up an advisory group.***
The most complete way to involve stakeholders in the service planning and implementation process is to invite them to join an advisory group that provides guidance throughout the life of your project. Group members from social service agencies can talk about the services they can provide to your target service group or share effective service strategies. An advisory group may also be helpful for fundraising. For example, group members from corporations can solicit funding for your services from their companies.

To be effective, you should set clear objectives for the group and choose a chairperson to keep it organized. The group should meet regularly and meetings should be more frequent during the planning stages of your project. Provide members with updates whenever new developments occur in your system to serve customers with limited basic skills.

***Strategy 3: Create volunteer opportunities.***
Community volunteers can play an important role in your basic skills-related services. Besides helping you to offer more service for less money, creating volunteer opportunities can help existing stakeholders feel that they have an active, meaningful role to play in your project. In addition, recruiting volunteers is a great way to get more stakeholders involved in the service planning process.

Try inviting business leaders, retirees or others to serve as mentors, guest speakers, or tutoring assistants at your program site. Volunteers can also perform duties as part of an advisory group, assist with basic

skills assessments, manage paperwork, raise funds, and perform a number of other duties.

However, volunteers may need specialized training if they are working directly with your customers. In addition, they require careful screening, placement, management, and support for their efforts to be useful and rewarding for all involved. So, start small and, if you have the resources, consider hiring a person to coordinate volunteer activities.

***Strategy 4: Survey stakeholders.***
Consider creating a questionnaire for stakeholders or hosting a series of focus groups with individuals who might be interested in the services you wish to provide to customers who have limited basic skills. Such a survey of stakeholders' opinions may help you to get a sense of what services others in the community feel are most needed. It can also help identify groups and individuals who may be willing to play a more substantial role in your service efforts.

A formal mail or telephone survey can be costly and difficult to manage. However, if you have established contacts with stakeholders through other means, you may gain important feedback from sending informal questionnaires through e-mail or mail, or simply by calling individuals or organizations on the phone to inform them of your activities and invite their input.

***Strategy 5: Host special events.***
Try hosting a breakfast presentation or similar event for interested stakeholders to share information about your efforts to improve or build services for customers with limited basic skills. Such an event can help build awareness and support for your project and may be a good way to recruit more permanent advisory group members.

***Strategy 6: Develop partnerships.***
A partnership between your program and local businesses may help you to develop employment, and/or internship opportunities for your customers and educate local employers about how they can get involved in your basic skills-related activities. Remember, programs that include work and education are more effective at improving employment outcomes for adults who have limited basic skills than programs that provide education alone.

### STEP 4: Find the money!

Depending on what you choose to do, establishing new programs or expanding existing services to create a system for serving customers who have limited basic skills can involve significant resources. Most career centers operate using restricted state and federal funds. However, you may be able to obtain additional funds to start up or expand a program through other government, foundation, or corporate grants, as well as through individual donations. The scope of this guide does not allow for a lengthy discussion of fundraising, but the resources in Appendix B should provide the advice you need to get started.

### STEP 5: Recruit qualified staff.

Because career centers tend to focus on job placement, not adult education, existing employment service staff may not have the background to address the educational needs of customers who have limited basic skills. If your career center plans to use existing staff to provide instruction or other intensive services (like basic skills testing) to these customers, you will need to ensure that they get appropriate training and supports. You may also need to hire new staff with specialized expertise.

Your staff is the heart of your basic skills system. If you are not careful in how you recruit and support the staff who will be providing services to customers with limited basic skills, the quality of those services will suffer. The specific skills staff need to be an adult basic skills instructor are discussed in Part III.

To attract and retain qualified basic skills staff you will need to:

- Offer competitive pay and benefits (additional fundraising may be necessary – see Step 4 above);
- Provide staff with the time and authority they need

to do their jobs effectively (This includes time to pursue professional development activities.);

- Involve all staff in program planning and improvement (See Part IV for more information.); and
- Create a variety of opportunities for staff development (See Part IV for more information.).

## III. Get It Together: Create a Plan to Coordinate, Evaluate and Improve Services

To be successful, your system of services for customers who have limited basic skills must be well coordinated. You must also decide how you will measure and evaluate the progress of your services and make needed improvements over time. The following steps will help you to do this:

### STEP 1: Create a plan to coordinate services.

Job seekers with basic skills limitations might need a number of services to help them meet their employment goals. To be effective, these services must support one another and be well coordinated.

Wherever possible, career centers should assign a person to be in charge of coordinating services for customers who have limited basic skills. This person can supervise your center's basic skills staff and coordinate communication and referrals with outside agencies.

Establishing a strong referral system requires good communication among all the agencies involved. Strategies for getting a referral network started include:

***Strategy 1: Participate in local coordinating councils.***
As discussed earlier, many communities have established coordinating councils or similar groups to foster communication and collaboration among workforce, adult education and other service providers. These meetings, usually held monthly on a county-wide basis, can allow local service providers to easily identify gaps in services, become more familiar with a range of community resources, and create referral networks that ensure customers have access to all of the services they may need. Contact your county or State Department of Human Services for more information about coordinating councils in your area.

***Strategy 2: Contact local adult education and support service providers.***
As discussed in Section I, Step 2, you should contact local service providers to collect information about what they do. To better coordinate services, ask them about:

- The types and numbers of customers they are able to serve;
- What services they can provide;
- Their hours and location; and
- Their procedures for receiving referrals of potential customers.

The information you collect should be updated regularly and stored in a place that is accessible, preferably in a computer database. You might also summarize this information in a directory that can be handed out to customers, staff and others.

To ensure back and forth connections between your center and other agencies are established, you should be prepared to provide these agencies with similar information about your career center. When you contact other service providers, tell them what kind of customer information you would like to share between your organizations. For example, you may wish to know whether persons you refer to other agencies show up, what if any basic skills services customers received, and what the results of those services were. Keep in mind that agencies wishing to share personal information about customers must each ask the customer to sign a release of information form that specifies the information to be shared and the timeframe for sharing. However, you are able to share information in the aggregate (number of referrals, how many customers use particular types of services, etc.), which does not compromise customer confidentiality.

You should also encourage customers to stay in touch with your staff and report on their experiences with providers to which you refer them. Through such feedback, the career center's basic skills services coor-

**REMINDER!**
**By designating a person in charge of your basic skills system, you have someone who can:**

- **Coordinate customer referrals with other agencies and maintain information about the range of services available in the community;**
- **Research and disseminate effective techniques for helping customers;**
- **Offer staff training;**
- **Monitor program processes and outcomes; and**
- **Oversee implementation of needed program improvements.**

dinator can have a clearer idea of whether to continue referring customers to those agencies and what to tell customers to expect there. The career center can, in turn, provide job placement services to participants in local adult education programs.

In addition to managing a referral network, the coordinator for your system of basic skills services can research and share effective ways to serve customers who have limited basic skills at your career center. The coordinator can also provide training to employment service staff, monitor program processes and outcomes, and oversee implementation of needed service improvements.

Like other staff, the person responsible for coordinating these services must be given the time, resources and authority necessary to do the job well. Ideally, a basic skills services coordinator should not be an extra assignment tacked on to the job description of someone who is already doing another full-time job. If this is not possible, be sure to provide clear direction and oversight of the person who is in charge of coordinating your basic skills system.

### STEP 2: Develop a program evaluation plan.

To monitor its progress, your career center should develop a plan to evaluate your system of services for customers who have limited basic skills. Whether you are creating new programs as part of your system or simply making improvements to existing services, you should develop a plan to evaluate your services as early as possible. Starting early will allow you to collect valuable information about your basic skills system from its beginning stages in order to monitor its progress, make improvements and publicize program successes. Put another way, evaluation can be a great way to keep your basic skills-related services on track.

To perform an evaluation, you must decide for whom you are collecting information, what information you want to collect and how to collect it. Therefore, you should not wait until the end of your funding cycle to plan an evaluation. Making these decisions early can help you ensure that your program is set up to let you collect the information you need easily and efficiently. For example, if you decide early that you want to collect information about how much customers improved their literacy levels in an instructional program, you can build room to store pre- and post-basic skills assessment test results in your program database for easy retrieval.

Keep in mind that creating an evaluation plan that meets your information needs involves more than providing pre- and post-tests to customers or mailing out a customer satisfaction questionnaire. It can be a complex process, but with some additional research you should be able to create simple evaluations that can help you identify areas of strength and need in your system of services for customer with limited basic skills.

The following basic steps are involved in creating an evaluation plan:

***STEP 2a: Promote a culture of continuous improvement.***

It is important to perform some preliminary steps before you begin to evaluate your program. To get the evaluation process off to a good start, managers should present evaluation as a positive tool to improve program performance and generate additional resources. In addition to the built-in fears many people have about the evaluation process, some staff also have trouble coping with the changes that result from an evaluation. To put staff at ease, try the following:

- Reassure staff that the purpose of program evaluation is NOT to punish employees, but to improve the program's overall performance.
- Discuss the advantages of continuous evaluation such as improved participant outcomes, and eliminating inefficiencies in work processes (which may save some staff time and headaches).
- Stress that information revealed by employees will be held in confidence.

***STEP 2b: Give all staff a meaningful role.***

While some evaluation-related tasks (e.g. recording test scores and attendance figures) can be less than exciting, staff should be given opportunities to give feedback in focus groups, compile evidence of customer successes, and otherwise get actively involved in generating information for the evaluation. While anecdotes from customers and staff do not, in and of themselves, tell the whole story about a program, they can help produce a comprehensive picture of what is going on in a program when they are combined with quantitative data. Getting staff involved in both giving and collecting information for a program evaluation can also help staff think critically about how to improve services while building communication channels among staff.

***STEP 2c: Identify a broad framework for your evaluation.***

In general, an evaluation should help you to determine whether your program is meeting its objectives. *Your evaluation plan should be tied directly to your program goals*. When planning an evaluation a useful place to start is by asking, "Who wants what information for what purpose?" With input from your program staff and other stakeholders, identify the various audiences who want or need information about your system of services for customers with limited basic skills, what kinds of questions they would likely have about your program or programs and what they would use the information for.

Typically, the audiences for a basic skills program evaluation include program staff, funders, government agencies, other service providers and customers (past, present and potential). Staff might want to know whether what they are doing is producing desired results. Funders and government oversight agencies might want to know if the program is delivering what it promised, what the results have been so far and how the program plans to improve services. Customers may be interested to see how well the program helps participants to meet their goals and partner agencies may want information to decide whether your program can effectively meet the needs of their customers. Remember that an evaluation designed to show funders how a program is performing may focus on different areas than one designed solely to help staff improve services, though many evaluations can serve both purposes.

There are two basic types of evaluations—formative and summative studies. Formative studies are designed to inform you about program processes and are often most useful for new programs that are still evolving. Summative evaluations focus on program outcomes and are generally used to determine whether or not services are meeting their goals.

***STEP 2d: Develop specific research questions.***

While identifying broad questions is an important first step, a question such as: "How do participants benefit from our basic skills-related services?" is a very expansive one that might produce information that is hard to summarize succinctly. Instead you must work with program staff to develop specific research questions that produce measurable and observable answers.

For example, to answer the broad question, "How do participants benefit from our basic skills services?" you need to develop more specific questions about

individual services. If your center has created a math class for jobseekers pursuing jobs in the building trades, some of your research questions might include, "What evidence is there that participants mastered the objectives of the course?" or "Are participants obtaining the types of jobs for which they prepared?"

***STEP 2e: Identify appropriate data and collection methods.***

To answer your research questions, you will need to identify where to obtain the data you need and how to collect that information. Some answers may be readily available in program records, such as customer demographic data. For example, to answer the question, "What is the age breakdown of program participants in our basic skills instructional program?" you would analyze the date-of-birth and program start date information in those program records.

However, you may need to develop methods to collect additional information that is not readily available. For example, to answer the question, "What improvements would most participants like to see in the program?" you will need to ask participants about their opinions. Depending on the information you need, there are a number of ways to collect additional data. Some of the most common include:

- *Structured interviews*
  Generally a one-on-one interviews between a researcher and a subject.
- *Administration of pre- and post-assessment tests*
  Using either standardized or customized tests, student skill levels are tested prior to instruction and then at regular intervals throughout the program, including a test at the end of program participation.[1]
- *Focus groups*
  Guided discussions among 8-10 participants led by a facilitator/researcher.
- *Questionnaires/surveys*
  Questions posed in writing or over the telephone to a subject by a researcher.
- *Direct observation*
  Researchers observe behavior and record instances of particular occurrences.
- *Document reviews*
  Researchers examine documents that contain information by or about participants or other aspects of your program.

***STEP 2f: Create a realistic timeframe and budget.***

An overly ambitious evaluation can drain your budget and leave you feeling like you have done a lot of work with few results to show for it. Therefore, remain mindful of timeframes and budgets as you develop an evaluation plan. While some evaluation activities may occur on an ongoing basis (such as regularly monitoring certain outcome measures in order to keep tabs on your program's progress), some will be carried out at periodic intervals to answer questions about your program as it proceeds through various stages of development. A reasonable budget should allow necessary data to be collected, but may limit some collection options. (For example, telephone and mail surveys can be quite expensive.)

[1] Check with your state's adult education office for guidelines on when to administer standardized tests.

# Part III Implementing Your Plan: Meeting the Unique Service Needs of Job Seekers Who Have Limited Basic Skills

A system of high quality services is key to addressing the unique needs of job seekers who have limited basic skills. This section provides an overview of service strategies that practitioners and researchers have found to be effective. Although examples are provided, you are encouraged to consult other sources for more in-depth guidance. See the appendices in this guide to find more information on these topics.

This part of the guide contains both steps and strategies. *The steps are fundamental components of a system of services for job seekers who have limited basic skills. The strategies present practical activities you can use to apply the steps.* These strategies are listed in order from those that require few resources to those that can be implemented only when additional staff, facilities, and other resources are available.

***This section discusses the following components of a comprehensive system of services for customers who have limited basic skills:***

- **Make It Universal:** Support Access to Career Center Services.
- **Size Up the Issue:** Provide Initial Assessment of Customers' Interests, Needs and Strengths.
- **Build Skills:** Meet Customers' Training and Education Needs.
- **Support Success:** Ensure Customers Have Access to Support Services.

## *I. Make It Universal: Support Access to Career Center Services*

Career centers should be user-friendly for all customers. Nonetheless, a lack of basic skills can make it difficult for some customers to benefit from the services at most career centers.

There are several steps you can take to improve access for customers who have limited basic skills to your career center's services. While implementing all of the strategies discussed here would be ideal, even implementing a few of them well can greatly improve the ability of these customers to feel comfortable and competent when using services at your facility.

### STEP 1: Provide a welcoming environment.

The general atmosphere of the center should be welcoming. Customers with limited basic skills are likely to have a history of being blocked from career advancement by those limitations. They may lack the self-esteem needed to advocate for their needs, especially in a stressful environment. Career center staff must help these individuals to believe they can take on new employment-related challenges and that they will receive the support they need to be successful. Some ways to create a welcoming environment include assigning staff to act as greeters near the entrance to your career center, hanging clearly-written signs in your waiting area that describe how to access key services, and taking steps to reduce noise and confusion in waiting and meeting areas.

### STEP 2: Promote clear, effective communication.

Staff must pay special attention to how they communicate with customers. While this may seem elementary, communicating with customers who have special literacy and language needs presents special challenges. Here are some ways to facilitate effective communication:

***Strategy 1: Speak clearly.***

Customers with limited English proficiency, a limited educational background, or a learning disability may not understand all of what a counselor is saying unless

the counselor makes an effort to speak clearly. While staff should be careful not to shout or appear condescending, simply speaking more slowly, using simpler language and enunciating more clearly can help many customers. Staff should also be patient if problems develop. For example, re-phrase, do not simply repeat, questions and answers if an individual has trouble understanding you or does not follow through on what you discuss. To ensure that you have been understood, try asking the customer to repeat what you have said in his or her own words.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Effective communication is both a tool and a goal. As we enter the 21st century, a structural shift in the American economy from goods producing to service producing industries puts most new jobs in management, sales and service. According to the National Institute for Literacy, by 2006 nearly half of all U.S. workers will be employed in industries that produce or intensively use information technology products and services. In order to stay competitive in the global economy, employers need workers who can read, write, compute, solve problems, and communicate well. Career center customers can benefit when career center staff demonstrate, encourage and support effective communication skills.**

***Strategy 2: Listen actively.***

Both cultural and language differences can cause communication problems. Staff should use active listening skills to be sure that they understand the customers' needs and interests. Active listening is a way of listening and reacting to others that improves mutual understanding. The approach avoids misunderstandings by allowing the listener to confirm that they do really understand what the speaker has said. To listen well, and actively, you do not have to agree with the speaker, only to understand what she is saying. Active listening encourages people to say more and further improves communication. To listen actively, center staff should:

- Maintain eye contact with customers;
- Keep an open, attentive posture (keep arms uncrossed, lean forward);
- Repeat back what the speaker has said in your own words to make sure you understand correctly; and
- If you are unclear about something the person has said, ask questions or ask for examples to clarify.

**REMINDER!**

**You can help career center customers get the most benefit from your services when you:**

- **Speak clearly;**
- **Listen actively;**
- **Create materials written in plain language; and**
- **Use interpreters, when possible.**

***Strategy 3: Create user-friendly written materials.***

Career centers should use clear English (or other languages customers use) in their written materials. Use a simple layout and avoid dense text, jargon, acronyms, long sentences and complex words. These guidelines also apply to Websites and any other electronic communications that the center provides to customers.

If possible, translate as many documents as possible into languages commonly encountered among your customers to accommodate those for whom English is not a first language.

***Strategy 4: Use interpreters.***

Consider using interpreters to ensure that limited-English-proficient customers understand and can respond to what is being discussed in counseling, classrooms, and other situations. Interpreters can also help staff to clarify customers' needs and concerns, as well as help them navigate career center service options. These interpreters can be paid professionals or volunteers.

### STEP 3: Understand the skill requirements of the local job market.

Employment counselors must know not only which jobs are in demand, but also which skills are needed to perform well in those jobs. While this type of information is important to have in order to effectively serve all career center customers, it can be especially helpful in working with customers who have limited basic skills.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**The National Association of Manufacturers 2001 members' survey asked employers about the most serious skill deficiencies of current hourly production employees. They found that:**

- **59.1% of employers cited poor basic employability skills (attendance, timeliness, work ethic, etc.);**
- **32.4% cited poor reading/writing skills;**
- **26.2% cited inadequate math skills;**
- **25.5% cited an inability to communicate;**
- **23.7% cited poor English language skills;**
- **22.1% cited an inability to read and translate drawings/diagrams/flow charts;**
- **22.0% cited an inability to work in a team environment; and**
- **12.3% cited poor computer/technical skills.**

Customers with strong basic skills can more easily conduct their own research into the skills required by jobs that are in demand. Individuals who lack English language or literacy skills must rely more heavily on career center staff, family members, or others to gather and explain this information. Job seekers need to understand not only what educational requirements a particular job has, but also how an employer defines "basic skills." Some local employers may demand a higher level of basic skills than others, and some may require workers to have strong competencies in particular areas. To identify skill requirements for jobs in demand in your area, try the following:

***Strategy 1: Consult national resources.***

Free, national sources, such as the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, may be the easiest way to get basic information on the skills needed for particular jobs, but they may not reflect more specific skill needs of local employers. Ideally, if your center has the resources, these sources should be supplemented by some form of locally-gathered information, as suggested below. See Appendix B for a list of national resources in this area.

***Strategy 2: Contact state and local agencies concerned with workforce development.***

Contact your local Workforce Investment Board, Chamber of Commerce, and key industry associations and labor unions to request reports that detail the skill and employment trends in local industries. These groups, along with state and local government agencies and academic institutions, sometimes conduct employer surveys or other types of skill-based research that may be helpful to you.

***Strategy 3: Survey local employers.***

If you cannot find existing information about skill requirements in your local economy, but you have resources available, consider surveying local employers on your own. Employers and employer organizations are often willing to participate in focus groups, interviews, written surveys or other activities that will help you to understand the skill requirements of jobs in your area.

## *II. Size Up the Issue: Provide Initial Assessment of Customers' Interests, Needs and Strengths*

Assessing customers' basic skills needs is not always easy. Adults who have limited basic skills are often sensitive about their limitations and do not readily volunteer information about their skill deficiencies. In addition, accurate assessment of skills can be made more difficult by some staff members' misperceptions. For example, some staff might make inaccurate assumptions about a job seeker's capabilities based on

the customer's limited ability to speak English or as a result of an isolated observed behavior, such as a reluctance to fill out a form.

In reality, individuals with limited literacy skills or English fluency, including those who "speak with an accent," often have a variety of needs and strengths. For example, one person may have trouble speaking English, but have tremendous math skills, while another may have low literacy skills in her native language, but have a long history of solid employment or community involvement. Therefore, a deficit in one skill does not necessarily mean that an individual is uniformly deficient across all of the skills that are required of adults.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Deli owners aren't the only ones with "Swiss cheese knowledge." This phrase refers to the fact that adults can show limited basic skills in one area but be quite proficient in another skill. Remember the Swiss cheese during assessment and don't get caught in the trap of assuming one area of limitation equals many, or that one area of strength equals proficiency in all subjects.**

To fully understand customers' basic skills-related interests, strengths, and needs, career center staff must consider a variety of assessment strategies. Often, an individual may need several types of assessment, from broad assessments to more specialized approaches. Depending on your resources, well-prepared career center staff may perform some forms of assessment, while other assessments may be obtained through referral to a local adult education agency. Career centers can take the following steps to begin the initial assessment process:

### STEP 1: Conduct carefully-constructed intake interviews.

When new customers come to a career center, career counselors or intake specialists generally perform interviews or ask individuals to fill out forms. This initial contact with the customer is vital, because it (a) sets the tone for all subsequent interactions and (b) provides information needed to understand the customer's needs and interests.

To help customers with basic skill needs feel comfortable and open to discussing their needs, your staff should keep in mind the following interviewing tips:

**REMINDER!**

**Rule No. 1 for assessing customers' basic skill needs is to check your own assumptions at the door. Career center staff should listen before they leap, waiting until they have more information before figuring out how best to help a client. Here are tips for effective interviews:**

- **Respect customers' confidentiality;**
- **Observe nonverbal behavior;**
- **Choose the appropriate words to make the client feel at ease; and**
- **Ask targeted questions.**

***STEP 1a: Respect customers' confidentiality.***

When talking with customers about basic skills issues, avoid speaking to them in public places where others might hear what you are saying. Also avoid publicly posting lists of students enrolled in basic skills programs. In interactions with employers, avoid revealing a customer's basic skills limitations without the customer's permission.

***STEP 1b: Observe nonverbal behavior.***

If you hand the customer a brochure, does she read it, or does she ask you about it? Does she have difficulty filling out forms or responding to letters sent to her home? These can all be clues that an individual may have limited basic skills.

Yet it is important not to infer too much from such observations. As skill acquisition in adults can occur unevenly, a weakness in one skill does not necessarily indicate deficits in other skills. In some cases, a client might appear to have trouble dealing with paperwork not due to a lack of reading or writing skills but simply because she is nervous or never had to deal with unem-

ployment issues before. Therefore, nonverbal behaviors should be seen as only one possible source of information about a job seeker's basic skills.

The absence of behaviors that indicate limited basic skills does not necessarily mean that an individual has strong basic skills. Many adults with limited literacy have developed coping mechanisms to disguise their limited skills. Also, the types of skills that are now considered "basic" by many employers encompass a number of complex skills, some of which cannot easily be assessed by observation alone.

***STEP 1c: Watch your language.***

Talking to customers about their basic skill needs can be awkward. Many individuals with limited basic skills are embarrassed by their limitations. The terms that career center staff use to talk about skill deficiencies should not intimidate customers. For example, rather than asking a customer if he or she needs help with "literacy skills," try asking less direct questions, such as "Are there any skills you would like to improve to help you get the kind of job you would like?" Staff can then probe further, asking about particular skills such as, " Which skills do you feel you need to focus on the most to get this job? Reading? Writing? Math?"

Career center staff can ease customers' anxieties about basic skills by reminding them that:

- All job seekers must continually upgrade their skills to stay competitive;
- Reading, writing, oral communications, and math are valuable skills for all job candidates;
- Several options are available for job seekers who want to upgrade their basic skills; and
- Staff are available to support them throughout the learning process.

***STEP 1d: Ask targeted questions.***

When conducting an initial assessment, it is helpful to ask a variety of questions that may provide clues about an individual's basic skills needs. During interviews, remember to ask about the following:

- **Educational history:** Clarify how far the customer went in school, which subjects the customer particularly enjoyed and which she might have had less success with.
- **Language background:** If English is not the customer's native language, clarify the extent to which he has trouble understanding or speaking English and ask which language(s) he feels most comfortable using.
- **Skill strengths and weaknesses:** Ask the customer which work-related tasks she is particularly "good" at and which tasks she feels less comfortable performing. Also inquire whether the customer feels particular skills are difficult for her and blocking her from getting the kind of job she wants.
- **Job, education, and training goals**: Clarify the customer's employment goals and ask which skills, including basic and technical skills, the customer feels he needs to improve to achieve these goals. Remember that it can be very awkward for a person with limited literacy or language skills to talk about their skill limitations, especially to a stranger, so focus on getting the customer to talk about the skills he needs to develop to succeed in the future rather than dwelling on how he has "failed" in the past.

### STEP 2: Introduce the idea of testing in a non-threatening manner.

When people think about assessment, most people think about tests. Standardized pen-and-paper tests do have some advantages and sometimes they are required by training providers, funders and others. However, career center staff should understand that:

a. Standardized tests should not be seen as the only way to assess customers' basic skills;
b. Tests can come in a number of forms;
c. It is important to use the right kind of test; and
d. Only trained staff should administer tests.

If in the course of the intake interview it becomes clear that the customer is concerned about his reading, writing, oral English, and/or math skills, then career center staff should consider using tests to better understand the areas in which the customer needs help.

Before introducing the idea of testing to a customer remember that:

a. Individuals who have low literacy skills may be embarrassed about their limited basic skills; and
b. Tests can sometimes intimidate and even scare away customers if not introduced sensitively.

To introduce the idea of basic skills testing to your customers, try the following:

- Ask the customer if he wants to take a confidential test to clarify his strengths and limitations in the areas of reading, writing, oral communications, math or other areas (This means that the results will not be shared with staff outside of the career center without the customer's permission.);
- Reassure the customer that most workers need to improve some skills and testing just helps counselors and educators to understand an individual's particular skill needs;
- If appropriate explain that tests are required by some training providers before the customer can begin;
- Do your best to explain the assessment strategy you have developed (See Step 3); and
- Listen actively to customers' fears about taking tests and help them to understand that they will not be judged or punished in any way based on the results.

## STEP 3: Choose an assessment strategy.

If the customer agrees to take a basic skills test, you must decide how the test will be administered. You have two primary options:

***Strategy 1: Refer customers to specialized agencies for basic skills assessment.***

Adult education providers and many occupational training facilities routinely perform basic skills testing for adults. Their staff is generally trained to administer and interpret several types of tests and to identify the warning signs for learning disabilities and other basic skills-related problems.

Even if your staff develops the expertise (through specialized training and practice) to administer one type of test, say the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), they may not be qualified to administer other types of tests. In addition, some customers may need more specialized assessments to uncover learning disabilities and other potential barriers to learning that your staff may not be qualified to administer.

If staff at your career center do not have the training to administer all of the tests that your customers may require, consider referring your customers to agencies in your community that have the necessary expertise to assess customers appropriately. More information on collaborating with other agencies to obtain needed support services is provided in Section IV.

***Strategy 2: Choose and administer tests at your career center.***

If you do decide to perform basic skills testing at your career center using well-trained, qualified staff, consider the following basic information about choosing the right test for your particular customer. (Remember, test administration and development are complex subjects. Consult the Appendix B for sources for further research.) You have a number of general choices:

**Standardized tests vs. customized tests:**

*Standardized tests* are commonly used to assess the basic skills of adults (especially reading and math skills). These commercially available tests have various *advantages*, including:

- They produce data that can be compared to results from other populations;
- They have often been deemed reliable by testing experts;
- They do not require your staff to have expertise in test development;
- Funders often require the data from these tests to assess program performance; and
- Even where they are not required, these types of tests can provide funders with valuable quantitative information about program quality and thus increase your program's chances of obtaining and maintaining financial support.

Standardized tests also have certain *disadvantages*, including:

- Some practitioners feel these tests are "artificial" or "sterile";
- Some believe that standardized tests do not fully measure how adults actually use literacy and language in their day-to-day lives; and
- These tests cannot be administered too often due to their length and other factors. (Experts recommend waiting until an individual has received between 50-90 hours of instruction before retesting. Your state may have its own testing requirements, as well.)

If you choose to administer standardized tests in-house, be sure the test administrator has been properly trained and that all required testing procedures are followed. Otherwise you may have misleading results. Also, if possible, show a sample of the test to the participant well before administering it and ask if he feels that this is something he can read and understand. If not, consider using a different assessment or a different level of the same assessment.

Some commonly used standardized assessment tests include:

- Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)–A commonly used test to assess a learner's grade level in various academic skills, including math, reading and language arts skills;
- The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) – A more workforce oriented test; and
- The Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Plus–A commonly used test to assess English language skills of limited-English-proficient adults.

As an alternative to standardized tests, some adult basic skills programs develop their own customized tests. *Customized tests* generally focus on specific skills needed to perform particular tasks. These tests have various *advantages*, including:

- They are geared more specifically to capturing how well customers use literacy or language for purposes that are particularly relevant to the customers. For example, if non-native-English-speaking customers need to use English to interact with patients and staff in a nursing home, they might be given scenarios in which they respond to requests from patients or directions from a supervisor.
- Some educators view these forms of assessment as more authentic and reflective of how well customers are able to handle relevant, real-world literacy and language tasks.

Customized tests also have certain *disadvantages*, including:

- The data they produce for particular learners cannot be easily compared to results from other populations;
- They are often untested with regard to their ability to reliably capture the information you are looking for;
- They require specific expertise in test development to develop effectively; and
- The data they produce are sometimes more useful for customers and staff than for outside funders, who may prefer standardized assessment results.

Standardized and customized assessment tests can complement one another. Where possible, career centers should use a combination of these types of tests to assess customers' learning needs. However, remember that other agencies may be available to do some of this testing, especially where your own staff lacks the necessary training and expertise.

**"Literacy" tests vs. "ESL" (or "ESOL") tests:**

If your customers are fluent in English, they should be given tests geared to those for whom English language fluency is not a question. If on the other hand your customers grew up speaking another language and have not yet mastered English, then an "ESL" (English as a Second Language) (sometimes called "ESOL," for "English for Speakers of Other Languages") test is more appropriate. Some common ESL tests include:

- Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and the new BEST Plus computerized assessment
- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

**Assessments for learning disabilities:**

Some adults experience difficulties with literacy and

language tasks due to various kinds of learning disabilities. A person with a learning disability may have above average intelligence but have difficulty carrying out reading, writing, math or oral communication tasks.

If you suspect that an individual may have a learning disability, you should refer the customer to learning disabilities specialist who can conduct appropriate assessments and recommend appropriate learning strategies for the particular type of disability your customer may have. Note that these formal assessments, administered by a psychologist, are often expensive, ranging up to $2,000, but that there may also be vocational rehabilitation funds available for clients who are eligible and persistent.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**It has been estimated that 50-80% of the students in adult basic education and literacy programs are affected by learning disabilities. The Public Libraries Learning Disabilities Initiative lists the following common learning disabilities:**

**Dyslexia** is a reading disability typified by problems in expressive or receptive, oral or language. Problems may emerge in reading, spelling, writing, speaking, or listening. People with dyslexia often show talent in areas that require visual, spatial, and motor integration.

**Dyscalculia** causes people to have problems doing arithmetic and grasping mathematical concepts. While many people have problems with math, a person with dyscalculia has a more difficult time solving basic math problems than his or her peers.

**Dysgraphia** is a writing disorder that causes people to have difficulty forming letters or writing within a defined space. People with this disorder need extra time and effort to write neatly. Despite their efforts, their handwriting may be almost illegible.

**Dyspraxia** is a problem with the body's system of motion that interferes with a person's ability to make a controlled or coordinated physical response in a given situation.

## *III. Build Skills: Meet Customers' Training and Education Needs*

High quality basic skills instruction is an important strategy for addressing the needs of individuals who have low literacy levels, who lack proficiency in English or who lack a secondary school credential. Well-planned, job-related adult education programs can:

- Respond directly to learners' employment needs;
- Help participants develop an interest in learning, an understanding of what they need to do to succeed in work, and hope for self-improvement;
- Help students develop regular attendance and other good work habits;
- Provide links to employers and jobs;
- Give participants on-the-job experience along with personal counseling and mentoring to ensure they succeed; and
- Help learners deal with childcare and other issues which are potential obstacles to steady employment.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**"[Adult education] remains the welfare- to- work strategy most clearly linked to long-term employment impacts. Moreover, even for individuals who succeed at getting jobs, education remains central to the ability to advance on the job and to lift oneself above the ranks of the working poor." (D'Amico, August 1997, p. iv)**

Career centers have two options for making sure that their customers receive the skills training they need: (1) refer customers to programs that already exist in the community, or (2) create instructional programs at the career center itself.

In almost all cases, *referring customers to appropriate existing adult education programs in your area is preferable*. Not only will this option save your staff time and money, but also you will be making the best use of the resources already available in your community. These agencies are specialists in providing

instruction to adults and are more likely to have access to the trained staff needed to effectively plan and implement such programs.

***This section of the guide is designed primarily for those career centers that have, through careful planning (See Part II), determined that they have the need, resources and expertise to create new instructional programs. This is not a comprehensive how-to guide. Rather, it is an overview of the basic steps needed to create high quality programs. Refer to the resources in Appendix B to obtain more guidance on how to set up an effective instructional program.***

After carrying out the initial planning described in Part II, your career center should take the following steps to create an in-house adult education program:

### STEP 1: Choose an instructional format that fits customers' needs.

Adult basic education programs can take many forms. You should choose an instructional format that fits your resources, as well as the needs and skill levels of your learners. Programs tend to follow one type of format or another. However, it is possible to combine the use of several instructional formats to obtain the benefits that each delivery mode provides. See Appendix A for examples of effective instructional practices in a variety of instructional formats.

Following are strategies that incorporate common instructional formats:

***Strategy 1: Set up classrooms at the career center.***
Classroom settings may be the easiest to achieve for career centers with limited resources. Students generally meet on-site at the career center or other central location to receive instruction. When used creatively, classroom settings can allow for a variety of teaching methods, including those that involve large and small groups, peer-to-peer support, and computer-assisted instruction or other technology-based activities.

One drawback to using classroom settings is that it is sometimes difficult for customers to find reliable transportation to a central location. A classroom setting may also make it more difficult to provide hands-on exposure to job-specific learning opportunities. Also, working clients may not be able to find a class time available when they are not at work.

***Strategy 2: Use distance learning.***
Distance learning can help learners to participate in basic skills instruction from home or other places where learning may be more convenient than a classroom. In some cases, distance learning involves customers using home-based computers, which the program may provide. However, some distance learning is available by television broadcast, and videos of these broadcasts can be purchased by career centers, libraries, or adult education programs and loaned to customers.

Establishing the infrastructure for a successful distance learning program can be complex and expensive and this approach may not work well for individuals with very low literacy, computer or ESL skills, or for those who lack the needed motivation and self-management skills needed for this kind of learning. However, distance learning can give participants more time to practice than they might get in a class that only meets for a few hours each week. Distance learning can also make instruction more accessible to those who have trouble getting to a classroom location. In addition, some learners may be very motivated by the ability to control the time and place of their learning. See Appendix B for resources on creating an adult basic skills program that uses distance learning.

**DID YOU KNOW?**
**Distance education has long dealt with the dilemma of too many students for a single, physical space. How to better educate the masses? It all started when, in 1840, Sir Isaac Pitman, an English inventor of shorthand, came up with an idea for delivering instruction to a limitless audience: correspondence courses by mail. By the 1900s, the University of Chicago had established the first department of correspondence. Computers have catapulted distance learning to a whole new level.**

Source: The Journal: Technological Horizons in Education, Sept. 1999

***Strategy 3: Teach skills on a jobsite or in other relevant community settings.***

Some adult education programs place learners into community or workplace settings to learn skills within a real-world environment. This can help learners learn and directly apply work-related basic skills in a workplace context. This integrated, contextualized approach can help learners build work-related skills and knowledge through direct application to real-life literacy tasks. Workplace learning can be reinforced by classroom or computerized instruction. Learning at the worksite can be especially useful for workers who have been—or are about to be—dislocated, and who need to learn particular skills needed for a new job. However, this approach requires greater resources to implement than other program formats, especially if you plan to serve a large number of participants with diverse job interests.

## STEP 2: Hire qualified staff.

Adults who lack basic skills have learning needs that are different from children and also from adults in higher education. This requires instructors with knowledge of adult learning theory, and the expertise required to teach your target service group.

Instructors should have the following skills:

- A solid understanding of adult learning theory;
- Demonstrated experience in teaching adults basic skills using learner-centered methods;
- The ability to customize learning activities to the needs of various types of learners;
- Familiarity with the work tasks associated with jobs that individuals are training to achieve (This allows instructors to develop curricula in which learners practice skills within job-specific contexts.);
- The ability to develop multiple methods of teaching the same skills (to accommodate different learning styles, draw upon a range of intelligences, and allow learners to broaden their fluency with a particular skill); and
- The ability to develop, implement and interpret a variety of standardized and non-standardized tests.

Adult basic skills instructors must be able to make learning purposeful and clear for learners, assess and build on what learners already know, and build skills through application to real-world uses of literacy, language, and numeracy. To get this expertise, educators need specialized training and experience teaching basic skills to adults. *Experience teaching children or assisting adults with other types of services (e.g., employment counseling) is not, by itself, sufficient preparation for the demanding work of providing adult basic education.*

When choosing staff to provide basic skills instruction, remember that different types of learners have different types of instructional needs. Staff who work with learners who have low literacy skills or who need English as a Second Language (ESL) training need specialized skills in addition to those noted above. For example, teachers of beginning level learners need training in how to help learners learn the Roman alphabet, as well as an understanding of how to build phonological awareness (the ability to differentiate and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes, in words) and to develop word analysis, sight word recognition, and oral reading skills.

Instructors should also have some training in counseling to help learners deal effectively with the self-esteem problems that often accompany basic skills limitations. Teachers can develop these skills through specialized training, experience and support from peers and supervisors.

Some customers with low literacy skills may have one or more learning disabilities. Unless you have staff who are trained to address these learning disabilities, you should arrange with an outside learning disabilities specialist to provide assessment and other appropriate counseling and instructional services. However, having on your staff at least one teacher with training to identify potential learning disabilities is recommended.

### STEP 3: Limit program size.

To allow instructors to effectively meet the needs of their learners, *instructional programs should ideally be kept to no more than twenty students*. This may be challenging in the face of pressure from funders to serve large numbers of customers. However, doing all that you can to limit program size is important.

In larger classes, participants must often announce to the teacher (and their peers) that they need extra assistance, something that may be hard for many adults to do. Small class sizes can allow instructors to monitor the work of their students and identify who may be having trouble. Programs with limited enrollment also promote an intimate learning environment where adults can feel less intimidated about expressing their needs or working collaboratively with their peers.

To satisfy funders and keep programs small, consider establishing a larger overall program that contains multiple "strands" of instruction. With enough staff, instruction can be customized for smaller groups of learners with similar needs and goals. This approach requires more staff resources and planning, but may provide the solution you need.

### STEP 4: Make program hours as convenient as possible.

If some of your customers work during the day or must attend other types of programs, your career center may need to consider offering classes at night or on the weekends. If this is not possible, try coordinating with a local adult education provider, who may have classes available during those times that they could make available to your customers on a supplementary basis.

### STEP 5: Develop a curriculum.

A customized curriculum is key to helping adult learners develop the job-related basic skills they need. Take the following steps to develop learning activities that respond to your learners' interests, strengths, and needs:

#### *STEP 5a: Establish a content framework.*

While instruction must ultimately be tailored to the particular needs of each customer, developing a framework that lays out the kinds of skills that you will focus on in your program will provide your staff and learners with a common set of skills they can refer to when developing specific lesson plans.

Equipped for the Future has received extensive input from employers, social service providers, adult educators, adult learners, and researchers to define the basic skills adults need to succeed at work, in the family, and in the community. These skills are organized in four categories, as follows:

- Communication skills (read with understanding, convey ideas in writing, speak so others can understand, listen actively, observe critically);
- Decision-making skills (use math to solve problems and communicate, solve problems and make decisions, plan);
- Interpersonal skills (cooperate with others, advocate and influence, resolve conflict and negotiate, guide others);
- Lifelong learning skills (take responsibility for learning, reflect and evaluate, learn through research, use information and communications technology).

Source: National Institute for Literacy, Equipped for the Future Content Standards.

#### *STEP 5b: Set goals with learners.*

Most adults come to adult basic education programs with particular real-world literacy and/or language needs in mind. Staff should work closely with customers to involve them in establishing medium and long-range employment-related, educational, and other goals, as well as specific short-term goals for their performance in the program.

> *Example:* A customer who wishes to become a welder might set short-term goals to improve math and reading skills while in the program, a medium-range goal of gaining entry into a post-secondary training program, and a long-range goal of getting and keeping a job as a welder. In addition, the

customer may wish to achieve personal goals, such as reading more to his children.

***STEP 5c: Customize curricula to the needs and goals of the learner.***

Adults learn best when instruction builds on what they already know and when they can see clear connections between what they are learning and what they want to do in their lives. Therefore, instructors should review all available learner assessments and goal statements and create customized learning activities that address each learner's unique skill needs and goals.

*Example:* A learner may have strong listening and speaking skills and weaker reading skills, but would like to become a nurse's aide. In this case, the instructor should ensure that learning activities planned for this student emphasize reading and any other skills the learner needs to get and succeed in a nurse's aide position. The curriculum might include study skills and computer skills to enable the learner to participate in technical training programs required for certification.

Customizing lessons to the needs of individual learners can be difficult in a program that serves customers with widely varying needs. If attendance is mixed, separating the group into "strands" to serve customers with similar needs and goals can help you to address learners' particular needs.

***STEP 5d: Contextualize, contextualize, contextualize!***

Instruction should *give learners opportunities and encouragement to develop vocabulary, spelling, and other sub-skills taken directly from the language used on the job.* Research shows that adults who learn basic skills within the context of jobs that they wish to obtain have better educational and employment outcomes than those who learn basic skills in a more generic way. Such a contextualized approach to teaching skills also helps learners to stay focused on the purpose of their education and remain motivated to participate actively in your program.

*Example:* An individual who would like to become a carpenter might be provided with math-related problems that a carpenter would likely encounter on the job. The learner would use carpentry tools (e.g., tape measure, calculator) to practice applying math skills in a relevant job context.

To contextualize instruction, education staff need to understand how basic skills are used in the jobs for which their learners are preparing. They also need training in how to use that information to customize basic skills lessons to fit those jobs.

***STEP 5e: Build on what learners already know.***

Relating instruction to what learners already know helps them to understand new concepts. Instructors should create lessons that challenge customers to stretch what they know to the next level. Teachers must pay close attention to assessment results when planning curricula in order to identify appropriate starting points for instruction. Instructors should use their knowledge of the individual to present information in terms to which the customer can relate.

*Example*: To help a learner develop the language and math skills needed to become a home health aide, an instructor might have the learners talk about the tasks they already perform in their homes that are similar to tasks they might encounter on the job (i.e., cooking, cleaning, etc.) This approach uses a familiar context – the learner's home — to help learners develop vocabulary, writing of lists, problem-solving, and other skills. From there, it is a short step for learners to learn how to carry out tasks the customer is likely to encounter on the job as a home health aide.

## STEP 6: Consider your options for delivering instruction.

Basic skills educators should consider the options open to them for teaching adults. These include both familiar face-to-face methods and technology-based tools. Common examples are listed below:

- Teacher-led activities/direct instruction
- Smaller study groups
- Self-directed learning (organized around workbooks, computer-assisted instruction, audio- and videotapes, research projects, etc.)
- Private tutorials

There are no secret formulas to choosing the right mix of teaching methods for your program. Learners not only vary in their interests, but in how they learn best For example, some adults can listen to and learn from a tape-recording, while others thrive on reading, group discussions, or hands-on projects. Each program should select the activities that fit the goals, strengths, and constraints of their learners. This means including a mix of learning activities (e.g., reading, writing, discussing, active physical movement and "hands-on" activities) in a single lesson to encourage learners to explore new ways of learning, while ensuring that each learner is likely to have an activity that fits his or her own learning style.

### STEP 7: Integrate technology effectively.

The extent to which your program employs technology as a teaching tool will depend on several factors, including:

- the resources you have available to purchase and maintain the equipment;
- your customers' computer skills;
- whether instructional technology is available that meets your learners' particular learning needs;
- your capacity to train staff to properly use these tools in the classroom; and
- the ability of your target audience to work independently.

The use of computers in adult literacy programs, coupled with support from adult educators, has great potential. Supported use of computers and other learning technologies can help learners to:

- Control the pace of their own learning;
- Independently and frequently practice important skills;
- Develop computer-related skills such as how to use word processing, spreadsheets, e-mail, and Web-browsers.

Despite the positive potential of instructional technologies, *career centers should avoid the temptation to rely too heavily on the use of computer-based instruction*. Some learners, such as those with low levels of literacy and ESL skills, need intensive, teacher-led instruction and should only use self-paced, computer-based learning to complement face-to-face instruction. *Whether you use computers or other forms of instruction, it is vital to have well-prepared instructors and other staff who can ensure that learners get what they need.*

Even learners with relatively high levels of basic skills, who may be the most appropriate group for using instructional software and other technology tools, need qualified instructors. Well-prepared teachers can help learners deal with questions that arise and otherwise ensure that learners can transfer knowledge to real-world environments like the workplace. Instructors can also use e-mail or distance learning technologies to provide feedback to learners.

Career centers that incorporate computers into the adult basic skills classroom should consider the growing array of tools they can use. Besides commercially-available instructional software programs that focus on math, reading, writing and other academic skills, educators can also use software that customers would likely encounter in the workplace. By practicing the use of word processing, spreadsheets, databases, the Internet, and e-mail, learners can develop reading, writing, math, research, and other basic skills while also mastering computer skills they can use on the job. The Internet has also produced a large collection of learning resources (e.g., sources of information for research projects, homework helper websites), many of which are free, for adult learners to use inside and outside the classroom. (See Appendix C for an extensive list of resources.)

### STEP 8: Customize your learning activities.

Workbooks, computerized instructional programs, videotapes, audiotapes and other pre-packaged teaching tools can be useful when they are matched to the needs of your particular learners. However, instructors should develop individualized lessons geared toward learners' particular needs and use these tools only to supplement customized instruction.

### STEP 9: Continually connect the dots between learning and goals.

While adults may be motivated to follow their learning plan at the beginning of a basic skills program, many gradually lose that motivation over time. Adult basic skills programs tend to have irregular learner attendance and high drop-out rates. While adults have many reasons for not persevering with their education, one reason is that learners lose their sense of purpose for participating. They lose track of how learning activities, which may sometimes feel tedious or bring up unpleasant memories of past learning experiences, are connected to their goals. Instructors must find ways throughout the learner's time in the program to reinforce the connection between learning activities and the individual's job-related goals. They can do this by focusing instruction on skills and knowledge that their learners need to perform tasks that are important to them. Also, teachers should regularly discuss these connections with learners during class sessions and in one-on-one counseling sessions.

> *Example:* An instructor can explain to a learner who wishes to become an assembly worker how learning a new skill, such as how to read instructions for assembling a child's toy, can also be relevant to her job goals.

### STEP 10: Encourage out-of-class practice.

"If you don't use it, you lose it." And in some cases you may never acquire it at all. This adage applies to most skills, including basic literacy and language skills. Put another way, if you go to the trouble of helping your customers improve their basic skills but they then do not actually reinforce those skills through day-to-day practice, then the customers are liable to forget what they learned or they may never absorb a lesson fully. Ways to encourage learners to practice skills outside of the classroom include:

***Strategy 1: Partner with employers.***

Work with local employers to develop work-based learning opportunities for students, including internships, job shadowing, and other activities.

***Strategy 2: Encourage learners to do meaningful homework.***

Instructors should encourage learners to "do their homework." Have learners practice their basic skills by doing research about a topic of interest, interacting with coworkers and neighbors, and using their skills in natural, interesting ways.

> *Example:* Instructors might assign homework that requires ESL students to interview their English-speaking neighbors, interact with a sales clerk in an English-speaking store, or ask a stranger on the street for directions. The students can rehearse for these encounters in class and then report back in the next class what actually happened when they attempted to use English in the real world.

***Strategy 3: Create a guidebook.***

Career centers might create a clearly written guidebook to show participants how they can use basic skills to deal with workplace, family, or other tasks. These guides can be given to any career center customer who is challenged by limited literacy, math, or English language skills.

By providing customers with ideas about how they can use the skills they do have, as well as new skills they may be learning in your program, you provide tools and encouragement to customers to practice using their skills rather than avoid using them. These guides can be put on the career center's Website, so customers can access them easily from home, work, or the local library.

*Examples:* A guide on "How to Communicate with Your Employer" might contain tips on how to ask questions of or give information to a supervisor, call in sick, or request vacation days. A guide on "How to Help Your Children Succeed in School" could explain how to ask questions of schoolteachers and how to help one's children with schoolwork.

***Strategy 4: Use other media.***

Career centers with adequate resources should consider creating a library that provides copies of videotapes, audiotapes, educational software, reading materials, and lists of educational Websites suitable for basic skills students. These materials might be made available to career center customers regardless of whether they are enrolled in formal classes. Customers can use these resources to get in extra practice to strengthen their basic skills.

*Example:* A career center could create a partnership with a local public library. Library staff could set up and manage a resource collection for career center customers at the local public library or at the career center itself.

## STEP 11: Consider using tutors.

Tutors can allow you to give special attention to the learning needs of individual customers. Tutors can provide encouragement and individualized instruction to adult learners. Two strategies for using tutors are:

***Strategy 1: Use volunteers.***

Many communities have volunteer tutoring programs, such as ProLiteracy Worldwide (the merger of Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy Action), that connect individuals and small groups of adult learners with trained basic skills tutors. Career centers can set up partnerships with volunteer groups and then refer job seekers to local tutoring sites or have tutors come in to tutor at the center. A volunteer program might also send in trainers to train a career center's staff in how to better serve job seekers who have basic skills limitations.

***Strategy 2: Hire a professional tutor.***

If you have the resources, you might also consider hiring a professional tutor to provide basic skills help to your clients on an as-needed basis. You could develop a database of these trained professionals to call on to come in and run specialized tutoring sessions or classes as you identify particular learning needs among your customers.

## STEP 12: Allow sufficient time for learners to show progress.

A too-common mistake planners make when creating new basic skills programs is to set time limits on participation that are too short for learners to show real progress. While the amount will vary depending on the skill level of learners, the skill they are trying to achieve, their motivation, and their skills, it is important for all learners to commit adequate time to learn and practice new skills. It is therefore important for basic skills program planners to carefully gauge the length of time participants are expected to participate in the program, based on the individual's learning goals and literacy needs.

## STEP 13: Provide ongoing assessment.

The assessment of participants' interests, skills, and needs should be a continuous process while they are enrolled in an adult basic education program. Standardized and/or customized tests should be administered at the beginning and end of the program (as well as in the middle if of the instructional cycle (consult your state's office of adult education for guidelines on when to retest learners). See Part III, Section II of this primer for more information on tests.

**REMINDER!**
**Assessment should be a continuous process during which career center staff use tests and other means to monitor changes in customers' basic skills-related interests, strengths, and needs. Remember that standardized tests need to be administered properly (to the appropriate clients, at set intervals, etc.) and should be seen as just one of several ways to track participants' progress.**

In addition to tests, there are other ways to monitor learners' progress in the program. These include:

***Strategy 1: Hold regular teacher-student meetings.***

Regularly scheduled, one-on-one meetings between instructors and participants can allow instructors to better understand learners and the factors that impact their progress. Encouraging learners to reflect on and discuss their progress helps them to assume greater ownership for and control over the learning process. These meetings provide a forum for learners to discuss areas where they are having trouble progressing, any changes in their goals, and any new barriers the customer may face with regard to obtaining employment or participating in educational activities. In these meetings, teachers and learners can decide what they need to do to ensure that learners continue to build their skills and otherwise meet their goals.

***Strategy 2: Use portfolios.***

Portfolios provide a way to organize information about learners' goals, interests, needs and progress. They capture highlights of a participants' performance in samples of their written work, attendance records, test scores, and teacher comments.

When teachers review the work stored in a learner's portfolio, they can better judge the student's progress in a variety of areas. Similarly, by keeping evidence of their progress organized in a portfolio, learners have a clearer picture of what they are accomplishing and what they need to work on more. This can be very motivating for a learner. Use of portfolios can also help learners develop teamwork, research, writing, and project-based learning skills.

Learners can keep these portfolios after they leave the program, as well as show them to prospective employers and training providers. Portfolios can complement other credentials and provide potential employers and education institutions with evidence of a customer's achievements. When developing a portfolio to show to an employer, the learner and teacher should be selective and not overwhelm the employer with too much information. In this case, the learner can create a "presentation" portfolio that highlights key skills for which an employer or training provider may be searching.

## STEP 14: Provide follow-up support to learners.

Once a customer has left your basic skills program and is out seeking a job (or perhaps back at work in a new job), he or she can benefit from participating in an ongoing support network. Shown below are some ways that career centers can further support customers' learning after an adult education course has ended.

***Strategy 1: Set up an "alumni group."***

Program graduates can be invited to return to the career center for regular discussions on topics of interest (e.g., "how to buy a home computer," "helping your kids succeed in school," "how to communicate with supervisors," "understanding your paycheck and benefits"). The group might also be the home base for a "book club" or an ESL discussion group. These groups allow job seekers to continue practicing their basic skills, to stay connected to the center's services, and to be part of a peer support network.

**TIPS TOOLBOX**

**Discussion topics for an alumni group of former basic skills students can include:**

- **How to buy a home computer;**
- **Helping your kids succeed in school;**
- **How to communicate with supervisors; and**
- **Understanding your paycheck and benefits.**

***Strategy 2: Get computers into learners' homes.***

If you have the resources, make getting computers into customers' homes a special focus of your career center. Customers who are trying to improve their basic skills can get in extra practice at home by using software available on disk or via the Internet. Learners can practice reading, writing, listening, speaking, math, problem-solving, research, and other transferable basic skills. "Learning computers" also tends to have less stigma than "improving my literacy skills," and many learners will feel they are joining the computer age by getting a computer into their homes and learning how to use it, even if they are using it for "literacy" activities.

By getting computers into the homes of families who might not otherwise have access to such technology, a career center can also help to break down the "digital divide" between socio-economic groups which have computers and technology skills and those who don't.

***Strategy 3: Refer customers to the local library.***

Public libraries are tremendous resources for adults who need ongoing practice in their basic skills. Most libraries can refer people with limited reading or English skills to appropriate reading materials. If adults realistically are to make significant improvements in their reading skills and vocabulary, it is important for them to get in the habit of reading materials which are of interest to them and written at the appropriate level. These can be on topics like hobbies, local history, entertainment news, romance novels, current events, sports, and humor. Many libraries also host volunteer literacy and/or ESL tutoring services and/or computer rooms for use by the public. A career center should develop a strong relationship with local libraries, to enable career center customers to use these important —and FREE—lifelong learning resources.

## *IV. Support Success: Ensure Customers Have Access to Support Services.*

Job seekers often need various kinds of support services to overcome barriers that prevent them from finding and keeping a job. These can include childcare, transportation, income assistance, and housing. While all customers may need some of these services, individuals with basic skills limitations can require special help to make use of these support services. To ensure your customers can effectively use the support services available at your center, follow the steps outlined in Part II, Section I. In addition, your basic skills services coordinator (Part II, Section V) can maintain current information on community services that provide these services and establish a strong referral network.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**The National Household Education Survey, 1994-95, found that 58.8% of adults, aged 16 or over, were prevented from participating in ESL classes by the following:**

- **40.1% time**
- **26.0% money/cost**
- **23.4% childcare or transportation, and**
- **10.6% other barriers**

**Male adults reported that time was the greatest barrier to participation, while the greatest barriers for the female population were childcare and transportation.**

# Part IV
# Keeping It Going! An Introduction to Supporting Your System of Services for Customers Who Have Limited Basic Skills

Maintaining effective basic skills services requires well-supported staff, evaluation tied to continuous improvement, and good community relations. This section outlines key steps needed to carry out these activities. See Appendix B for resources for further research in these areas.

***This section discusses the following topics:***

- **Support Your People:** Provide Training Opportunities for Your Basic Skills Staff.
- **Follow the Plan:** Perform the Evaluation You Designed.
- **Facilitate Change:** Support Organizational Development.
- **Get the Word Out:** Publicize the Success of Your Program.

## *I. Support Your People: Provide Training Opportunities for Your Basic Skills Staff*

Instructors and other basic skills staff must *continuously* upgrade the skills and knowledge they need for their jobs in order to be effective. Career centers should develop a *systematic* approach to staff training that is based on a careful assessment of the staff's learning needs, involves staff in planning and implementing of training activities, and uses a number of vehicles for delivering the training. Staff training should also be seen as a way to improve the quality of your basic skills services while also providing opportunities for professional growth to your staff.

In a high-quality staff training system, staff are:

- Involved in planning and implementing staff training activities;
- Rewarded for their contributions; and
- Provided with sufficient time to pursue professional training opportunities.

When planning training opportunities for your basic skills staff, take the following steps:

### STEP 1: Assess staff's training needs and create individualized professional development plans.

All good instruction begins with good assessment. This is as true for staff training as it is for basic skills instruction. Employees are likely to come to your organization with a range of expertise in basic skills education and related areas. To know what training your staff need, take the time to carefully assess:

- What skills and knowledge they need to carry out their current and future roles in your basic skills program;
- The expertise they already have in these areas;
- The skills and knowledge they feel they need to improve;
- How they prefer to learn; and
- Their suggestions for staff training activities.

This input can be obtained through interviews, questionnaires, or focus groups.

Supervisors can combine the input they get from staff with their own knowledge about their staff's learning needs, drawing on performance evaluations, observation, and other sources. This information should be used to create and update individualized professional development plans for each of your basic skills staff.

### STEP 2: Offer pre-service training.

It is important to introduce the goals, norms, and operating procedures of your career center to new employees. It is especially important for adult basic skills instructors and support staff to understand the basic skills system you have developed at your center, as well as your plans for helping this system to grow and improve.

A well-designed orientation will help new staff to build a sense of ownership in the program and foster a workplace community that is committed to ongoing quality improvement. Pre-service training is also essential to help adult educators who may not have had experience working in a job-focused environment to better understand the goals and operations of your career center. Similarly, some staff members who have worked in employment services for many years may not understand the complexities of working closely with customers who have limited basic skills.

If your center already provides an orientation to all of your staff, then you may only need to add a few elements to it. While the training you create should reflect learners' needs as identified in the individualized professional development plan, some important topics to cover include:

- The career center's goals;
- The workplace culture in your career center – what do you expect of staff in terms of contribution to the growth of the system, your center in general;
- The goals, philosophy, and components of your system of services for customers with limited basic skills (This guide describes many possible components you might include in a system of services your basic skills system.);
- Procedures related to program management and program accountability (i.e., data entry, recording procedures);
- Other basic skills resources in the local community (possibly invite guest speakers); and
- Additional staff development resources employees can access.

Your career center may also use the orientation to get a better understanding of the individual learning needs of particular staff. In this way, the orientation serves as a starting point for training your basic skills staff.

### STEP 3: Create opportunities for learning and reflection in your workplace.

Staff need a range of options for improving their professional knowledge and skills. Consider the following strategies:

***Strategy 1: Start a professional development workgroup.***

Instructors and support staff in basic skills programs need not look solely to outside sources to develop their expertise. Given that many basic skills staff bring valuable experience with them, you should build in time for staff to share what they know, work together on projects, and build positive collaborative relationships. This collaborative approach to building staff expertise can improve their job performance while increasing job satisfaction.

To be effective, staff work groups must be facilitated well and not run simply as a free-for-all information sharing session. Tips for running a good work group include:

- Designate a qualified leader (facilitator) for the group.
- Develop a well-organized agenda for each session, focusing on a relevant topic (e.g., how to develop appropriate assessments).
- Use a "problem-posing" approach to have staff develop strategies for dealing with challenges they face in their work: Ask them to:
  - identify challenges or questions they are facing in their basic skills work;
  - suggest steps that might be taken to deal with the challenges.
- Incorporate information from research into discussions.
- In role plays and group projects, practice developing solutions using the ideas discussed in the group.
- Record the key information discussed and disseminate to participants and other interested staff members.
- Keep an ongoing collection of effective practices in a staff resource manual for all to access when needed. This can be helpful for new and current staff.

***Strategy 2: Offer teacher reflection time.***

Career centers should build in reflection time for their basic skills staff. On a regular basis, teachers should review program performance data and reflect on their

teaching experiences. This process helps teachers to be more aware of their instructional process and identify areas to improve. This can be done in regular staff meetings built into program schedules.

***Strategy 3: Create a professional resource library.***

Your career center might create a resource library in a room accessible to basic skills staff. If this is not possible, consider establishing a "virtual library" which can be as simple as creating a directory on your career center's computer network that contains links to research on instructional techniques, assessment procedures, and other relevant topics. Your basic skills coordinator could be in charge of identifying resources for your library.

***Strategy 4: Find ways to connect staff with the larger professional community.***

Staff can learn from other adult education and employment service practitioners, as well as from research in the fields of adult education and workforce development. Career centers should create a formal plan to help their staff connect to the larger professional community on local, state and national levels. Such a plan could include:

- Disseminating information on relevant research, conferences, and professional development opportunities to all staff on a regular basis;
- Providing the time and funding necessary to allow staff to participate in local, state, and national conferences and other professional development opportunities;
- Encouraging staff to register for and participate in relevant on-line listservs and newsgroups; and
- Subscribing to relevant practitioner journals.

## *II. Follow the Plan: Perform the Evaluation You Designed*

As discussed in Part II, ongoing evaluation is an important way to keep your basic skills services on track. You should also consider evaluating your staff training system to ensure that it is functioning well.

Program evaluation is a large subject that cannot be fully addressed here. However, outlined below are some steps you can take to implement the evaluation of your basic skills system that you designed in Part II, Section III. See Appendix B for additional resources on performing evaluations.

### STEP 1: Gather needed data.

First, organize the data that you already collect in your program that are needed to answer the research questions you identified in your evaluation plans (Part II, Section III). For example, if you know you will need information on birth dates and test scores, pull that information together into a single database file to make it easy to find and manage.

Using the methods you articulated in your plan, you can now proceed to gather any additional data you may need to answer your research questions.

### STEP 2: Analyze the results.

Once you have all of your data in one place, you must find ways to present the information that will make it easy to analyze. For example, patterns in participant demographics are sometimes more easily identified when the data are presented in a pie chart or bar chart than they would be imbedded in a text or spread out in a long list. Creating easy-to-interpret charts and tables can make it easier for administrators, practitioners, and funders to understand the implications of the data. When analyzing data, look for patterns and differences that might highlight an area of concern. Then think about what those patterns are telling you about program performance.

**REMINDER!**

- **The clearer the presentation, the easier the analysis.**
- **Creating easy-to-interpret charts and tables can make it easier for administrators, practitioners, and funders to discuss the implications of the data.**
- **When analyzing data, look for patterns and differences that might highlight an area of concern.**

### STEP 3: Recommend program improvements.

Your data analysis should inform you about both the shortcomings and strengths of your program. To support continuous improvement, it is important that you include recommendations for program improvement in your evaluation report.

To increase the chances that your recommendations will be implemented, make sure that you:

- Clearly state your suggestions;
- Identify who is responsible for making particular changes;
- Identify resources needed to implement changes; and
- Specify a timeline for carrying out the steps.

## *III. Facilitate Change: Support Organizational Development*

Change can be difficult. Staff must learn new ways of doing their jobs, which can make many people uncomfortable.

However, if you have done a good job of promoting a culture of continuous improvement and have involved your staff in the evaluation's planning and implementation, you should not encounter significant resistance to making needed improvements. To ensure that your evaluation's recommendations are listened to and acted on, take the following steps:

### STEP 1: Provide strong leadership.

Steering an organization through a process of growth and change requires strong leadership. The management team at your career center must be committed to improving program performance and guiding their employees through the process. The change leaders in your organization must have the authority to allocate staff and resources to ensure that program improvements are well supported. Well-informed, committed leaders can allay staff's fears about change by showing them that the improvements will benefit them as well as program participants. Leaders can also provide the vision necessary to overcome disagreements and uncertainty and maintain staff's commitment to implementing changes.

### STEP 2: Build staff ownership.

Just as you have been doing throughout the evaluation process, it is important to involve staff in discussions about making program changes. Staff feel more in control, and are less likely to resist your suggestions, when they understand why changes are being made and have a voice in how to implement them. Be sure to set aside time to discuss the conclusions of your evaluation with staff as well as your reasoning for recommending particular improvements. Then allow staff to provide you with feedback on these issues and provide suggestions for implementing changes.

**REMINDER!**

**Staff feel more in control, and are less likely to resist your suggestions, when they understand why changes are being made and they have a voice in how to implement them.**

## STEP 3: Sustain efforts.

Because change can be difficult, staff tend to revert to old ways of doing things when implementing new policies becomes difficult or seems to be less of a priority to the organization. To ensure that your changes are implemented effectively over time, you should take the following steps:

***STEP 3a: Continue to communicate with staff about implementation.***

By regularly making the implementation of program improvements a topic for discussion with staff, your career center can send the message that the process of change remains important to the organization.

***STEP 3b: Monitor implementation.***

Use interviews with staff, report monitoring, and direct observation to determine whether staff are implementing changes in the ways that your evaluation recommended.

***STEP 3c: Reward positive behavior.***

Some staff may discover new and better ways to implement needed program improvements, while others may simply be dedicated to making sure that planned improvements are applied consistently in their work. Both of these types of employees should be visibly rewarded. Not only will this encourage those employees to continue their efforts, but it may also encourage other staff to follow their lead. Rewarding staff's efforts can also be a painless way for you to communicate with your staff about the type of work you expect from them.

## STEP 4: Evaluate changes.

This is where we began, isn't it? You evaluated your work, recommended some changes, and carried out those improvements. Now it's time to evaluate the changes you have made. That's the idea behind continuous quality improvement. Evaluation should be an ongoing process that constantly provides you with the information you need to assess your program's successes and areas for improvement. Therefore, just as it was important to evaluate whether the initial program you established was meeting its original goals, it is also important to evaluate whether the changes you made have been effective. The good news is that, while program evaluation can seem difficult when you are already busy with so many other things, the more you do it, the more it will become a natural part of your administrative process.

**REMINDER!**

**Just as it was important to evaluate whether the initial program you established was meeting its original goals, it is also important to evaluate whether the changes you have made have been effective.**

## *IV. Get the Word Out: Publicize the Success of Your Program*

Now that you have built, sustained, evaluated, and improved (and evaluated again!) your system for serving career center customers with limited basic skills, your center should celebrate its successes. Publicizing your program's accomplishments can convince funders and other institutions about your program's potential. By demonstrating how your career center clients have benefited from basic skills activities, you can attract more funding

**REMINDER!**
**Publicizing your program's accomplishments can convince funders and other institutions about your program's potential.**

You should also publicize your basic skills activities to other agencies and groups in your community (including employers, unions, social service providers, and adult education programs) that might be concerned about the basic skills of the local workforce. Educate them about the needs and potential of job seekers who are challenged by limited basic skills and show them what a well-run adult basic skills program can do for those job seekers, their families, their empoyers, and their communities. Tell stakeholders in your community how they can get involved in providing educational opportunities that help fellow community members participate fully as workers, family members, and citizens.

You have taken the time to plan, organize, implement, evaluate, and support your career center's system for helping jobseekers who have limted basic skills. If you have followed the steps in this guide and have done some additional research, you should be well on your way to greatly improving the career-related services available to this group. Now is the time for you to celebrate your success and share your good news with the larger community.

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# Appendix A

# Examples of Job-Related Basic Skills Curricula

Described below are examples of promising methods for helping adults develop the basic skills they need for the world of work. These teaching ideas have been developed by adult educators working in community and workplace education programs.

Go to *slincs.coe.utk.edu/gtelab/* for additional examples of practices that are tied to the Equipped for the Future skill standards. And visit nelrc.org/changeagent for more details about *The Change Agent* journal for adult educators, whose September 1998 issue provided many of the examples described below.

These examples are separated into curricula that focus on helping jobseekers to develop clearer occupational goals and those that focus more directly on helping individuals to prepare for specific jobs.

## *Career Exploration*

In the examples below, adult educators integrate basic skills education with training in job search skills.

**Personal reflection, research, and practice:** *Getting There* is a curriculum that helps job seekers develop career plans and basic skills at the same time. It "combines activities of personal reflection with research into local job and training opportunities and practice of job search skills. Participants practice basic academic skills and have the opportunity to develop underlying skills such as self-awareness, self-confidence, and critical thinking."

**SNAPSHOT**
**Participants in the *Getting There* program combine activities of personal reflection with research into local job and training opportunities and practice of job search skills.**

Learners, for example, think, read, write, and talk about "where we come from," "what I'm good at," personal work experiences, available jobs and training, barriers to employment, and how to secure a job. The reading, writing, speaking, and other activities help learners develop job-related basic skills and produce written documents (e.g., essays, personal check-lists, resumes, job application forms, letters to employers, etc.) which learners store in personal portfolios (Colette, Woliver, Bingman, Merrifield, 1996).

**Reaching into the past:** Foundations is an adult education program for women in Lowell, Massachusetts. Participants develop basic skills and explore career options through a variety of activities. In one project, the learners visited a museum that re-created conditions of the mills that were once the center of the Lowell economy. The women played the roles of women mill workers and learned about the many issues (e.g., poor housing, difficult working conditions, whether to unionize) those workers faced (Quinones, 1998).

**Family work histories:** To help adult learners think analytically about the roles that work has played in their lives and in the lives of their family members, they can do a series of activities around the theme of "work histories." Learners might first fill in the blanks on a worksheet that has them write about the work done by their grandparents, parents, selves, spouses and partners, siblings, and children. They can then discuss and write about questions such as how work has changed over generations, the differences between men's work and women's work, how work outside the U.S. differs from work in the U.S., the occupational expectations that the students' parents had for them, and what they like or dislike about jobs they've had (Nash, September 1998).

**SNAPSHOT**

**One adult education program in Lowell, Massachusetts teaches women about the past struggles of the Lowell economy by having them slip into the historic roles of women mill workers. Another adult education approach encourages learners to do a series of activities around the theme of work histories. They consider how work and employment expectations have changed over generations.**

**Capturing learners' skills and knowledge in a resume:** Teachers can help learners to develop a resume by interviewing one class member in front of the class, asking him to identify various skills and knowledge he has developed in various life contexts, including "one's childhood home," "school," "work," "military," "hobbies," "community service," and so on. These skills and knowledge can be recorded on separate flipcharts and then transcribed by the teacher or learner onto a floppy disk. These lists can become the substance of a resume. After demonstrating this process with one student, it can be repeated by other students—on their own or in front of the class. This process helps students to get to know each other and to identify common interests. It also affirms that most learners have developed significant skills and knowledge in many areas of their lives, even if these are not always obvious or recognized in the job market.

**Practice job search skills:** Learners in the Brooklyn Public Library's GED program have practiced writing resumes, doing job searches on the Internet, and writing letters to prospective employers. They also visit the local career center to learn about the services there and get to know the center's staff. These activities help them prepare both to pass the GED exam and to improve their employment prospects after earning their diploma.

**Helping ex-offenders re-connect to the world of work:** The Fortune Society in New York City provides education and other services to ex-offenders and at-risk youth to break the cycle of crime and incarceration. Its education program provides instruction in ESOL, reading and writing, math, GED preparation, and computer skills. Those classes include work-related skills such as resume writing and conducting job searches on the Web. Most students actively searching for employment participate in Fortune's Career Development Program, a two-week workshop in which participants practice job interview skills, prepare resumes, and discuss how their criminal justice backgrounds can affect their employability. The Career Development Program develops relationships with employers in order to help participants connect to jobs.

**Learning and writing about job options via e-mail:** Adult education students in Franklin County, Maine have participated in a community e-mail network that allows them to share writings and ideas about topics like "solutions to the problem of local unemployment." Many of the learners were former workers in a local shoe factory that closed and moved to the Caribbean. For them "organizing and managing the (e-mail network) has been an introduction to technology and an exercise in civic participation. They edit and combine the ideas submitted over the (network), then pass them on to state officials and community leaders via the Internet in an attempt to stimulate constructive dialogue toward successful solutions to the area's economic decline." (Kreworuka, September 1998).

**Reading and thinking about factors that impact employability:** In the literacy and pre-GED program at the Hudson Guild in Brooklyn, learners use newspaper articles and other sources to better understand the job market and other issues, such as budgets for public-sector jobs, that affect their role in the economy. The purpose is to arm learners with critical thinking skills so they can proactively plan their careers and find rewarding jobs rather than just being "plugged into" whatever is available.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**The education and training requirements of the projected total job openings for 2000 to 2010 are:**

- **69.8% of jobs will require work-related training;**
- **20.9% will require a bachelor's degree or higher;**
- **9.3% will require an associate's degree or postsecondary vocational award.**

Source: Office of Vocational and Adult Education

**Writing about worker lives:** Learners in the Workers Education Program run for healthcare workers by SEIU Local 285 in Boston produce articles, essays, and other writings on topics like "my dream vacation" and "a diary of my work day." These writings can generate much information about learners' work-related experience and aspirations. From a typical diary entry can come questions, data, and issues that can be discussed, debated, and researched by students. In this case, the text and the information come from the students themselves, not an expert or textbook (*The Change Agent*, September 1998).

**Debates:** Job seekers can identify issues they are facing in their job search and those can become topics for reading, writing, and debate. For example, current welfare regulations—who is eligible, how long they can receive benefits, and how much they can receive—are all topics that can be read about and written about. Learners can—individually or in "debate teams" —take sides in a debate about the pro's and con's of various aspects. Observers can comment on the arguments presented by the debaters. In the process, learners develop understanding of issues that are important to them, as well as reading, writing, speaking, listening, teamwork, and research skills (adapted from *The Change Agent,* September 1998).

**Researching corporate and union leaders:** Adult learners can get a better understanding of how industries and unions have developed by doing research about particular leaders from the corporate and labor union worlds. On their own or as members of a research team, participants can get their information through Web searches, visits to the library, and visits to local museums. Learners can then present their findings to the class orally or in writing, or perhaps in a PowerPoint presentation (adapted from The Change Agent, September 1998).

**Interviewing workers, employers and union representatives:** Adult learners can learn about particular jobs by interviewing a worker who already holds that job, an employer whose company hires those kinds of workers, or a union official who represents those kinds of workers. Before the interview, learners can develop the questions they will ask. They can then record what they learn in the interview and prepare a report which can serves as a "job description" about the particular job (adapted from *The Change Agent*, September 1998).

**Researching obstacles to getting a job and staying employed:** Job seekers face many obstacles to getting a job and keeping that job once they are hired. These include finding affordable and reliable transportation; caring for children, elders, sick family members, or family members with disabilities; maintaining one's own health; finding a safe and affordable home; and dealing with sexual or racial discrimination in the workplace. By making these topics the focus of learning activities, adult learners can develop reading, writing, speaking, listening, research, and teamwork skills as well as an understanding of these issues and strategies for dealing with them (adapted from *The Change Agent,* September 1998).

**Job-search role plays:** Adult learners can do role plays about various job-search and workplace scenarios and then pause at critical points to open the floor for discussion. Observers can be asked to interpret what is going on, what the various characters are thinking and doing, and options for the characters as they move ahead in the action. For example, a woman job seeker

might read a want ad for a job traditionally performed by a man. When she meets with the employer, she is told the company is not taking any more applications. This can trigger a discussion about what in fact is happening in this situation. Did the woman job seeker not present herself well? Was the employer discriminating against her because she is a woman? Did she not have the right qualifications? Was the job already filled? (adapted from *The Change Agent*, September 1998).

**Researching safety and health on the job:** Job seekers should understand the physical demands and hazards of the jobs they are considering. They can do research—through reading, interviewing people (including fellow learners) knowledgeable about particular jobs—and produce summaries of stresses, hazards, and safety equipment they might find in those jobs. This process might help them make informed decisions about whether to pursue particular jobs. Learners can also thereby develop useful reading, writing, listening, speaking, analyzing, and research skills (adapted from *The Change Agent*, September 1998).

## Basic Skills for Specific Jobs

If, through a career-exploration process, a job seeker identifies a particular job that he or she wants to pursue, a career center can then provide that customer with opportunities to develop the particular basic skills needed for that job or for related training. Presented below are a number of examples of job-specific curricula, some taken from programs for unemployed job seekers and some from workplace basic skills programs for incumbent (employed) workers. These might be adapted by career centers to the particular job interests of their customers.

**Transferable skills for home health aides and hotel housekeepers:**
STEP (Skills Training for Employment Program) was a program for limited-English-proficient garment workers who were laid off after the 9/11 attacks in New York City. It helped participants prepare for jobs as home health aides and hotel housekeepers by taking participants on field trips to local supermarkets where they did research on food prices and wrote up reports on their findings on the computer. Participants also used a healthcare training room in the building to practice serving bed-ridden people. They even took an "internal field trip" as a group to the rest room, where they learned how to use the English terminology required to clean the room and help a patient use it. These learning projects used relevant real-world tasks and vocabulary to help participants build English fluency, technical knowledge, and computer skills.

**Combining technology and internships to teach job-specific skills:**
In Elizabeth, NJ, Project Learn employs instructional software programs that teach life skills (including banking, customer service, using the library, parenting), basic academic skills (reading writing, math), and job-specific skills to customers. Software is also available that teaches skills for jobs like home health aide, security guard, and building maintenance. Participants who are pursuing office-related jobs also use keyboarding software to practice typing skills. Participants also have access to a library of job-preparation videos on topics like job interviews, dressing appropriately, and using want ads. Finally, participants do twenty hours a week of volunteer work in a local non-profit organization (e.g., a hospital or the YMCA) to get on-the-job training and experience.

**SNAPSHOT**
**In Elizabeth, NJ, Project Learn employs instructional software programs that teach life skills (including banking, customer service, using the library, parenting), basic academic skills (reading writing, math) and job-specific skills to customers. Software is also available that teaches skills for jobs like home health aide, security guard, and building maintenance.**

**Test-prep programs:**
A number of labor unions have established "test-prep" programs that prepare their members for civil service and other kinds of exams required for job advancement. Some of these exams focus on determining how well a candidate is prepared to handle reading and/or math tasks found on a particular job. An exam might, for example, present the test-taker with passages from a procedures manual and then ask the test-taker to read the passage and answer multiple-choice questions about that passage. Or the test-taker might be presented with the kinds of math problems performed in that job. A test-prep course would expose learners to the kinds of questions they would likely face, help them develop strategies for responding to them in a timely way, and also help them learn how to use their time wisely during the exam and generally go into the exam in a relaxed, well-prepared frame of mind.

**ESOL for entrepreneurs:**
In Maine, the Casco Bay Partnership worked with refugee resettlement agencies to create a work-related ESL program for refugees from Middle Eastern countries who wanted to get the English skills and certification they needed to run businesses for members of their community. Butchers learned the English, business math, and technical skills they needed to set up butcher shops for observant Muslims. Women daycare providers got the skills and credentials they needed to establish daycare centers culturally appropriate for families from their part of the world.

The next several examples of curriculla were derived from workplace-based education programs. However, by reaching out to local employers, career centers can understand the skill needs for particular jobs and create activities that are similar to the ones presented below. Armed with this information, and perhaps sample documents from employers, instructors can develop a range of job-specific activities.

**DID YOU KNOW?**
**There is a need for expanded literacy training of the nation's workers at their workplaces. The National Adult Literacy Survey data indicate that nearly all subgroups of employees, including front-line workers, receive positive economic payoffs from higher literacy proficiencies. Improving the quantity and quality of on-the-job literacy training is important in maintaining and improving the country's labor productivity, real wages, and economic competitiveness.**

Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

**Managing paperwork:**
Collaborative Learning for Continuous Improvement (CLCI) was a federally- funded workplace basic skills program located in a half-dozen workplaces in upstate New York. Each site developed curricula geared to the particular employee basic skills needs identified through a collaborative curriculum development process involving workers, managers, and union representatives. In one manufacturing site, "managing paperwork" was identified as a need. An adult education teacher toured the plant with supervisors and identified fourteen documents that workers needed to be able to complete accurately, clearly, and in a timely way. As a form of initial assessment, each worker was given a set of those documents and asked to complete them. Those who had trouble doing so were paired up with the instructor, who gave individual tutoring to help the participants master each document. When participants were able to successfully complete each of the forms of paperwork, they completed the course.

**Team problem solving:**
In other CLCI sites, workers identified various workplace problems and then, through a problem-solving process that involved discussion, researching, and writing, came up with written and oral presentations that summarized the problem, possible causes, and recom-

mended solutions. In one site, participants drew diagrams that symbolically showed the workplace issues that were blocking or supporting progress toward production goals. Managers and union representatives served as the audience for those recommendations and responded to them.

**Managing benefits:**
The education team in one CLCI site found that too many workers didn't understand the company's new benefits package. The company had developed this package at great expense and employees now had greater power to decide how their retirement funds would be used. The company was also concerned that many employees didn't understand their medical benefits and were frequently calling the human resources office with unnecessary questions.

The education team put a course in place that helped employees develop the math, reading, writing, research, and decision-making skills they needed to manage this new benefits program in ways that benefited the employees and the company.

**Analyzing workplace issues while learning English:**
A community-based adult education program in California provided ESL training in local workplaces that combined use of English skills with analysis of workplace issues. Participants developed oral, reading, writing, analytical, and teamwork skills through active study of issues of direct concern to them. In the planning stage, the educator toured the plant with a photographer to take pictures of equipment, signs, and workers. In the classroom, participants interpreted those photos and identified issues and questions that became focal points for language and literacy activities. Learners analyzed issues of discrimination, labor laws, wages and salaries, union contracts, maternity leave, and promotion.

# Appendix B

# Resources for Further Research

This appendix contains Websites, books, and other resources that you can use to further your knowledge on many of the subjects covered throughout this guide. The first section contains general resources on adult education. These consist mainly of Websites that cover many related topics in the areas of adult education and improving services for job seekers who have limited basic skills. The second section of the appendix provides resources on specific topics covered throughout the four parts of this guide. The third section contains resources that are specific to special populations. Appendix C contains a wide variety of on-line instructional resources compiled by David Rosen, Ed.D.

## *I. General Resources for Program Planners, Instructors and Policy Makers*

### Websites

The National Institute for Literacy Website includes the Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards, which focus on preparing adults for work, family, and citizenship roles.

Equipped for the Future is the National Institute for Literacy's research-based initiative to improve the quality and results of the adult basic education system in the U.S. To learn more about EFF and tap into useful resources for building basic skills programs, visit: *http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/collections/eff/eff.*

The National Institute of Literacy's LINCS online resource system is dedicated to providing resources for adult educators and others interested in serving adults with limited basic skills. It contains a series of Special Collections and discussion groups related to special topics of interest to instructors. Go to: *http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/.*

The Website of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Continuing, and Vocational Education contains archives of research reports and articles on many topics of interest to adult educators. Go to: *http://www.cete.org/acve/*.

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education contains useful links and resources for educators and administrators. Go to: *http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/index.html*.

The Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) publishes policy reports on issues facing the adult education field. A number of reports (e.g., issues on the Equipped for the Future Systems Reform Initiative, correctional education, community colleges, and how state policy can support adult basic education) are informative for those trying to create work-related basic skills systems at the community level. Visit: *http://www.caalusa.org*.

The National Adult Literacy Database is a Canadian Website that contains many documents on work-related basic skills. Search for "workplace." Go to: *http://www.nald.ea.*

The Pennsylvania Workforce Improvement Network provides technical assistance to adult educators, employers, union representatives, and others interested in improving the workplace basic skills of the state's workforce. Go to: *http://www.pawin.org* for information.

The Massachusetts Department of Education created the System for Adult Basic Education Support Website. It includes a number of publications from the Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative, a national model for a statewide workplace education effort. Search for "workplace" to find those documents. Go to: *http://www.sabes.org*.

The Virginia Workforce Improvement Network was founded at James Madison University in 1996. It provides educators, business and industry and government with research, training, e-learning and evaluation to enhance workforce performance, particularly for non-

supervisory employees. WIN service areas include basic skills education, ESOL in the workplace, instructional design, performance improvement, e-learning design and Return on Investment measurement practices. Go to: *http://www.vawin.jmu.edu/index.php*.

### On-line journals and newsletters

*Focus on Basics* is a journal of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Each issue deals with a special topic of interest to adult basic education teachers and administrators. Articles focus on showing the link between research and practice. Go to: *http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/* .

*The Change Agent* is a journal for adult educators that focuses on enabling teachers and learners to integrate civic participation and social justice issues into their teaching and learning. Issue 7 focused on "The Changing World of Work" and was the source for a number of the curriculum examples in Appendix A. The journal can be accessed at: *http://nelrc.org/changeagen* .

*Field Notes* is a quarterly newsletter for the adult education community published by the Massachusetts Department of Education. Go to: *http://www.sabes.org/resources/fieldnotes/index.htm.*

### Books

Comings, John; Sum, Andrew; Uvin, Johan. (2000) *New Skills for a New Economy: Adult Education's Key Role in Sustaining Economic Growth and Expanding Opportunity.* Boston: The Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth.

Spangenberg, Gail and Watson, Sarah (2003). *Equipped for the Future: Tools & Standards for Building & Assessing Quality Adult Literacy Programs.* New York: Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy.

## *II. Additional Resources for Specific Topics Covered in this Guide*

## *Part 1*

***Basic skills for the 21st century workplace***

The National Institute for Literacy's Special Collection on Equipped for the Future contains Web pages and documents that describe the basic skills all adults need to succeed. Go to: *http://eff.cls.utk.edu/resources/eff_standards.html#four.*

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, a commission appointed in 1990 by the U.S. Secretary of Labor to determine the skills people need to succeed at work. While the commission no longer exists, their reports can be accessed at: *http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS/.*

A Website created by the University of Hawaii summarizes the basic academic and workplace skills that the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills identified for adults. Go to: *http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/scans.htm.*

Carnevale, Anthony P. et al (1990). *Workplace Basics: The Essential Skills Employers Want.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Stein, Sondra (January 2000) *Equipped for the Future Content Standards: What Adults Need to Know and Be Able to Do in the 21st Century.* Washington, D.C.: National Institute for Literacy.

*See Section III of this appendix regarding resources on special populations of job seekers who have limited basic skills.*

## Part II

***Conducting an inventory of community services***

Workforce Learning Strategies (August 2000) *Assessing the Workforce Development Needs and Resources of Your Community: Conducting A Community Audit.* This publication provides the tools to complete a successful community audit to determine labor trends in a certain area. It contains a section on how to inventory available community resources. The document can be accessed at: *http://www.workforceatm.org/sections/pdf/2003/condanaudit.pdf* .

Davis, D.C. (2001) *Adult Education At Work: A Collaborative Resource Addressing the Changing World of Work and Learning.* Division of Adult and Community Education, Tennessee Department of Education: TN. While the document addresses how to create workplace-based adult education programs, Steps 1 and 2 in the handbook contains useful tools for profiling your own program and identifying other programs in the community. The handbook can be accessed at: *http://slincs.coe.utk.edu/pdf/adulted.pdf* .

***Setting goals and choosing a target service group***

Davis, D.C. (2001) *Adult Education At Work: A Collaborative Resource Addressing the Changing World of Work and Learning.* Division of Adult and Community Education, Tennessee Department of Education: TN. Step 1 in the handbook contains useful tools for creating program goals and identifying a target audience. The handbook can be accessed at: *http://slincs.coe.utk.edu/pdf/adulted.pdf* .

***Engaging stakeholders***

ABC CANADA is a Canadian organization that pioneered a collaborative approach to workplace education which involved stakeholders - including learners - in defining how basic skills fit into the larger mission and culture of the workplace. Click on "Workplace Education" and "Our Publications." Go to: *http://www.abc-canada.org*.

***Fundraising***

The Foundation Center provides an on-line, fee-based directory of foundation grantmakers. Also offers courses and tips on obtaining grants. Go to: *http://www.fdncenter.org.*

SPIN is a Website that allows users to search for federal and other types of grants. Go to: *http://spin2000.infoed.org/new_spin/spinmain.asp* .

Grants.gov provides access to grant opportunities in over 900 federal programs. Go to: *http://www.grants.gov/* .

Go to the LINCS section of the National Institute for Literacy Website and (a) do a search for "fundraising" and (b) look at "Grants and Funding" under "Literacy Resources." Go to: *http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/*

The Internet Nonprofit Center offers information on using the Internet for fundraising and provides other relevant guidance for non-profits. Go to: *http://www.nonprofits.org* .

***Program evaluation***

Adventures in Assessment is an on-line newsletter dedicated to learner-centered approaches to assessment and evaluation. Go to: *http://www.sabes.org/resources/adventuresIndex.htm*

The United Way program evaluation model is effective and easy to use. Go to: *http:// www.mapnp.org/library/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm*

ProLiteracy Worldwide has an on-line course titled "Making Evaluation Work for Your Program." Go to: *http://www.proliteracy.org* .

Condelli, L. (1996) *Evaluation Systems in the Adult Education Program: The Role of Quality Indicators.* Division of Adult Education and Literacy Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education: Washington D.C. Go to: *http://www.nrsweb.org/reports/EvSys.pdf* .

Lynch, B.K. (1990). A context-adaptive model for program evaluation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 24(1), 23-42.

Swiderski, M. (2002) "By the Numbers: Using Data for Program Improvement" *Literacy Update* October 2002 issue. The Literacy Assistance Center: New York, New York. Go to: *http://www.lacnyc.org/publications/uparchives.htm* .

## Part III

***Promoting clear, effective communication***

Visit the National Adult Literacy Database. In "Full Text Documents," search for "clear language" and "plain language" for resources on how to create written materials that are easy to read and understand. Go to: *http://www.nald.ca* .

***Understanding the skill requirements of the local job market***

Visit the National Adult Literacy Database. In "Full Text Documents," search for "needs assessment." Go to: *http://www.nald.ca*

Visit the Website of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Continuing, and Vocational Education and do a search for ERIC Digest No. 220 (2000) "Employability Skills: An Update" by Christine Overtoom. Go to: *http://www.cete.org/acve/*

Go to the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS special collection on workforce education (*http://worklink.coe.utk.edu/*)and do a search for "Conducting a Community Audit: Assessing the Workforce Development Needs and Resources of your Community," a 2000 report by Workforce Learning Strategies.

The U.S. Department of Labor has developed the free O*NET system which profiles the detailed skills, knowledge, abilities and educational credentials needed for most jobs. Go to: *http://online.onetcenter.org/*.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes the Occupational Outlook Guide, which provides a detailed overview of job requirements and working conditions. Go to: *http://stats.bls.gov/search/ooh.asp?ct=OOH.*

Some private organizations assess the skills needed for certain jobs, though there is usually a fee to access this information. ACT, a not-for-profit based in Iowa, offers free job profile information (WorkKeys) on their website at: *http://www.act.org/workkeys/profiles/occuprof/wwmprof/index.html* .

***Assessment***

Visit the National Institute for Literacy's collection on "assessment" (*http://literacy.kent.edu/Midwest/assessment/*).

Benz, Joan (2001) "Active, Purposeful, and Contextual: Assessment in the EFF Classroom" *Field Notes* Vol. 10 no. 3 Winter 2001. Go to: *http://www.sabes.org/resources/fieldnotes/vol10/f03benz.htm*.

Burt, M. & Keenan, F. (1995). "Adult ESL Learner Assessment: Purposes and Tools." *ERIC Digest*. Washington, DC: National Center for ESL Literacy Education. (EDRS No. ED 386 962)

Condelli L. and Baker H. (2002) *Developing Performance Assessments*. Division of Adult Education and Literacy Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education: Washington D.C. Go to: *http://www.nrsweb.org/reports/PerformanceAssessments.pdf/*.

Meyer, Jane (1999) "Articulating Learning with EFF Standards," *Focus on Basics*. September 1999 issue. Go to: *http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/1999/fobv3ic.htm.*

See the *Focus on Basics* June 1999 issue on "Accountability". Go to: *http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/1999/fobv3ib.htm*.

Read the *Adventures in Assessment* journal on learner-centered assessment. Go to: *www.sabes.org/resources/adventures/.*

***Program format***

The National Institute for Literacy's Special Collection on Equipped for the Future contains resources on implementing standards in various program formats. Go to: *http://eff.cls.utk.edu/resources/eff.html*.

The National Institute for Literacy's Special Collection on Workforce Education contains resources for operating a workplace-based adult education program. It can be accessed at: *http://worklink.coe.utk.edu/*. The discussion group for workforce education can be accessed at: *http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-workplace/workplace.html*.

In 2000, The National Institute for Literacy published a policy paper on how states are implementing distance learning in adult education. Go to: *http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/policy/distance.htm*.

***Curriculum development and implementation***

The National Institute for Literacy's Special Collection on Equipped for the Future contains a wealth of resources related to curriculum development and instruction. Go to: *http://eff.cls.utk.edu/resources/eff.html.*

The Workforce Learning Lab *http://slincs.coe.utk.edu/gte-lab/* collects and distributes learning activities that focus on the basic skills and knowledge adults need to be effective in the workplace. Activities are tied to Equipped for the Future skills standards.


Carver, Mary Lynn. (September 2003). "Not by Curriculum Alone." *Focus on Basics*. Vol. 6, Issue C.

Colette, Marian; Woliver, Beverly; Bingman, Mary Beth; Merrifield, Juliet. (1996) *Getting There: A Curriculum for People Moving into Employment*. Knoxville, TN: The Center for Literacy Studies.

Giddens, B.,and Stasz, C. *Context Matters: Teaching and Learning Skills for Work*. Berkeley: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California, 1999. (ED 434 270)

Grubb, W. Norton (1996). *Learning to Work: The Case for Integrating Job Training and Education*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Meyer, Jane J. (September 1999). "Articulating Learning with EFF Standards." *Focus on Basics,* Volume 3, Issue C. (*http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fob/1999/janemeyer.html*)

Sticht, Thomas. (December 1997). "The Theory Behind Content-Based Instruction." *Focus on Basics,* Vol. 1, Issue D.


**Reading curricula resources**


Hager, Ashley, (August 2001). "Techniques for Teaching Beginning Level Reading to Adults." *Focus on Basics,* Vol. 5, Issue A.

Krudenier, John. (October 2002). *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation


**Math curricula resources**

The September 2000 issue of *Focus on Basics* focuses on "Mathematics Instruction." Go to: *http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/2000/fobv4ib.htm*.


Hager, Ashley (August 2001). "Techniques for Teaching Beginning Level Reading to Adults." *Focus on Basics,* Vol. 5, Issue A.

Krudenier, John. (October 2002). *Research-Based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation


*Resources on instructional tools and Websites that provide access to learning activites, see Appendix C.*

***Integrating technology into adult education programs effectively***

Go to the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS Special Collection (*http://www.altn.org/techtraining/*) and discussion group (*http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-technology/technology_literacy.html*) on educational technology for adult literacy.

Visit the National Adult Literacy Database. In "Full Text Documents," search for "computers," "technology," and other relevant words. Go to: *http://www.nald.ca* .

The Website of the *ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Continuing, and Vocational Education* (*http://www.cete.org/acve/*) contains archives of research reports and articles on integrating technology into adult education. Seach for "computers" and related topics.

Rosen, David (updated August 2004) *Harnessing Technology to Serve Adult Literacy: Integrating Technology in Adult Literacy Education*. Go to *www.alri.org* and search under "Publications."

***Choosing instructional tools***

This Website by the Adult Literacy Resource Center in Boston contains a list of Websites that provide advice on selecting software for your adult education program. Go to: *http://alri.org/litlist/software.html*.

The National Institute for Literacy's Special Collection on Equipped for the Future contains Web pages and documents that will help you design lessons and choose instructional materials. Go to: *http://eff.cls.utk.edu/*.

***Creating homework***

The Workforce Learning Lab *http://slincs.coe.utk.edu/gtelab/* collects and distributes learning activities that focus on the basic skills and knowledge adults need to be effective in the workplace. Presents learning activities that are tied to Equipped for the Future skills standards.

***Volunteers and literacy tutors***

For the Website of ProLiteracy Worldwide, go to: *http://www.proliteracy.org/*.

Visit the National Adult Literacy Database. In "Full Text Documents," search for "volunteers." Go to: *http://www.nald.ca*.

Go to the Website of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Continuing, and Vocational Education and do a search for *ERIC Digest* No. 202 (1998) "Volunteering and Adult Learning" by Sandra Kerka. Go to: *http://www.cete.org/acve/*.

***Providing ongoing assessment of learner progress***

See assessment resources above.

***Referral networks***

Grubb, W.N., Brown, C., Kaufman, P., and Lederer, J. (1990). *Order amidst complexity: The status of coordination among vocational education, job training partnership act, and welfare-to-work programs.* Berkeley, CA: National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

## Part IV

***Staff training and development***

Go to the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS Special Collection on Program Leadership and Improvement (*http://pli.cls.utk.edu/comp_models.htm*) and the Adult Literacy Professional Developers List discussion group (*http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-aalpd/aalpd.html* ).

Visit the Website of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (*http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/*) for the report, *How Teachers Change: A Study of Professional Development in Adult Education*.

See the June 2002 issue of *Focus on Basics*, which focuses on the theme of "Staff Development": *http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/2002/fobv5id.htm*.

ProLiteracy Worldwide has on-line courses for managers and teachers in adult literacy programs. Go to *http://www.proliteracy.org/*.

Kutner. M. and Tibbetts, J. (1997) *Looking to the Future: Components of a Comprehensive Professional Development System for Adult Educators.* Building Professional Development Partnerships for Adult Educators Project. Go to: *http://www.nrsweb.org/reports/Component.pdf/*.

Kutner, M. Sherman, R. Tibbetts, J. and Condelli, L. (1997) *Evaluating Professional Development: A Framework for Adult Education*. Building Professional Development Partnerships for Adult Educators Project. Go to: *http://www.nrsweb.org/reports/evalmon.pdf*.

Hawk, William (2000) *Online Professional Development for Adult ESL Educators*. National Center for ESL Literacy Education. Go to: *http://www.cal.org/ncle/digests/pdQA.htm*.

***Carrying your program evaluation plan***

See program evaluation resources above.

***Marketing your programs and services***

Smith, Barbara (1999) *Marketing Your Adult Literacy Program: A "How To" Manual*. Go to: *http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/hudson/market/cover.htm*.

## III. Resources Relevant to Special Populations of Job Seekers Who May Have Limited Basic Skills

***People with learning disabilities***

The National Institute for Literacy's Special Collection on Literacy and Learning Disabilities can be accessed at: *http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/frame_link.cgi?control=http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/close_window.html&link=http%3A%2F%2Fldlink.coe.utk.edu%2F*.

See the National Institute for Literacy Website's "Bridges to Practice" section, which presents information from a national project to help adult educators better serve adults with learning disabilities. It can be accessed at: *www.nifl.gov/nifl/ld/bridges/bridges.html*.

Follow the discussion of issues and links to publications related to adults with learning disabilities: *http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/adult/index.html*.

See the *Focus on Basics* August 2001 issue on "First-Level Learners" *http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/2001/fobv5ia.htm* . Look in particular for: Shaywitz, Sally E. and Shaywitz,

Bennett A. (August 2001) "The Neurobiology of Reading and Dyslexia." *Focus on Basics*. Volume 5, Issue A.

Bridges to Practice, a national project to help adult educators better serve adults with learning disabilities. For a discussion of issues and links to publications related to adults with learning disabilities, go to *http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/adult/index.html*.

***Immigrants/ ESL***

The Center for Applied Linguistics site has many useful resources for working with ESL customers: *www.cal.org/store*.

Visit the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS Special Collection (*http://literacynet.org/esl/*) and discussion group (*http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-esl/english_second_language.html*) on English as a Second Language.

Sum, A., Fogg, N., Harrington, P., with Khatiwada, I., Trubb'sky, M. and Palma, S. (August 2002). *Immigrant Workers and the Great American Job Machine: The Contributions of New Foreign Immigration to National and Regional Labor Force Growth in the 1990s*. Boston, MA; Northeastern University.

Tondre-El Zorkani, Barbara. (No date). *Planning Literacy and Language Services for Texas' Limited English Proficient Workers: The Devil Is in the Details: A Guide for Program Design, Planning, Implementing, and Sustaining Workforce-Related Education Programs*. Austin: Texas Workforce Commission.

Wrigley, Heide (September 2003). "What Work with Adult ESL Students" *Focus on Basics*, Vol. 6, Issue c. Go to: *http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/2003/wrigley.html* .

Wrigley, H.S., Richer, E., Martinson, K., Kubo, H., Strawn, J. (August 2003) *The Language of Opportunity: Expanding the Employment Opportunities for Adults with Limited English Skills*. Washington D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, National Institute for Literacy and the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, Policy Brief No. 2. Go to: *http://www.clasp.org/DMS/Documents/1062102188.74/LEP_report.pdf*.

***Correctional Education***

Visit the National Institute for Literacy's "correctional education" collection. Go to: *http://www.nwlincs.org/correctional_education/home.ht*

Spangenberg, Gail (2004) *Current Issues in Correctional Education: A Compilation and Discussion*. Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy: New York, New York. Go to: *http://www.caalusa.org/correct_ed_paper.pdf*.

Project Metamorphosis is an online curriculum for persons in correctional settings develops basic academic skills, cognitive skills, and job skills. Go to: *http://www.doe.state.la.us/slrc/proj_meta/index.html*.

# Appendix C

# Recommendations on Computer-based Resources for Adult Educators

*Prepared by David J. Rosen, Ed.D.*

*July 1, 2004*

## I. General Guidelines

Every adult education computer lab should have the following kinds of (commercial or free) generic software:

1) a word-processing program with a spelling checker;

2) an Internet browser, such as Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer (free, but the use of these may need to be regulated through a program's Acceptable Use Policy)

3) free e-mail accounts (such as Yahoo) and free Instant Messenger software which allows for real-time discussion (the use of these may also need to be regulated through an Acceptable Use Policy)

4) CD-ROM references, including encyclopedias and dictionaries (a Web page which has a lot of free references is *http://www.refdesk.com/*

5) A basic typing program (e.g. Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing, Typing Tutor, etc.)

6) A simple graphics program

7) A hypermedia authoring program tool such as Storyspace™, HyperStudio™, or HyperCard™,

8) A free text reader such as *Readplease* (Windows only): *http://readplease.com/*
Or a commercial text reader such as CAST's E-reader: *http://www.cast.org/udl/index.cfm?i=211* or the Kurzweil 3000: *http://www.sightandsound.co.uk/pages/Kurzweil_3000.htm*

9) Word prediction software such as the free WordCue *http://elr.com.au/wordcue/*.
Also see: *http://e-bility.com/articles/literacy.shtml*

10) Productivity tools online training such as the free one at: *http://www.baycongroup.com/wlessono.htm*

11) Computer new user free tutorials such as those found at:*http://northville.lib.mi.us/tech/tutor/welcome.htm or http://www.jegsworks.com/Lessons/* or the computers and technology section at *http://firstfind.info*

12) Virus Protection Software such as
Norton AntiVirus *http://www.symantec.com/nav/*
Or free antivirus software (for Windows), *http://www.free-av.com/*

13) Internet new user free tutorials such as those found at:
*http://firstfind.info/help/internethelp.html*
*http://learningladder.org/basics/index.htm*
*http://www.dclibrary.org/dclearns/learner/howtouse/basics.html*
*http://www.northernwebs.com/bc/*

13) Guidelines for Web content evaluation for low-literacy adults, for example: The Children's Partnership's free *Guidelines for Content Creation and Evaluation* and other free guidelines at
*http://www.contentbank.org/addition_tools.asp*

14) Internet new user free tutorials such as those found at:
*http://firstfind.info/help/internethelp.html*
*http://learningladder.org/basics/index.htm*
*http://www.dclibrary.org/dclearns/learner/howtouse/basics.html*
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13) Guidelines for Web content evaluation for low-literacy adults, for example: The Children's Partnership's free *Guidelines for Content Creation and Evaluation* and other free guidelines at *http://www.contentbank.org/addition_tools.asp*

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*http://firstfind.info/help/internethelp.html*
*http://learningladder.org/basics/index.htm*
*http://www.dclibrary.org/dclearns/learner/howtouse/basics.html*
*http://www.northernwebs.com/bc/*

15) Guidelines for Web content evaluation for low-literacy adults, for example: The Children's Partnership's free *Guidelines for Content Creation and Evaluation* and other free guidelines at *http://www.contentbank.org/addition_tools.asp*

## II. Sources for Instruction Materials

### Commercial Instructional Software

| COMMERCIAL Software and Courseware | ABE | GED | ESL/ESOL | Workplace Basic Skills |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading/Language Arts | PLATO* | PLATO* | ELLIS* | WES |
| | Language Tune-Up Kit | MHC GED Interactive* | | Day in the Life (ABE/ESL) |
| | Reading with Phonics | GED Online | | Basic Life Skills at Work |
| | Lexia Reading SOS | | | |
| | Learning 100 (Steck-Vaughn) | | | |
| | Reading Horizons (HEC) | | | |
| | Academy of Reading | | | |
| Writing | PLATO* | PLATO* | ELLIS* | WES |
| | | MHC GED Interactive* | | Day in the Life (ABE/ESL) |
| | | GED Online | | Basic Life Skills at Work |
| | | | | |
| Math | PLATO* | PLATO* | ------- | WES |
| | | GED Interactive* | ------- | Basic Life Skills at Work |
| | | GED Online | ------- | |
| Science | PLATO* | PLATO* | ------- | ------ |
| | | MHC GED Interactive* | ------- | ------ |
| | | GED Online | ------ | ------ |
| | BrainPop | BrainPop | ------ | ------ |
| | Froguts | Froguts | ------ | ------ |
| Social Studies | PLATO* | PLATO* | ------- | ------ |
| | | MHC GED Interactive* | ------ | ------ |
| | | GED Online | ------ | ------ |
| Listening (ESL) | | | Rosetta Stone | |
| | | | ELLIS* | |
| Speaking (ESL) | | | Rosetta Stone | |
| | | | ELLIS* | |

## Free, Web-based Instructional Software

| FREE Web Based | ABE | GED | ESL | Workplace Basic Skills |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading/Language Arts | CA Distance Learning (CDLP) | GED Practice | English For All* | The Office |
| | City Family | GED practice tests | | 2000 Families First |
| | CNN Learning Resources | GED 2002 Lesson Bank | | |
| | The Key New Readers Newspaper | | | |
| | The Learning Edge | | | |
| Writing | | GED Practice | English For All | The Office |
| | Funbrain Spelling | 5 Paragraph Essay Wizard | Funbrain Spelling | 2000 Families First |
| | Spelling, a Key to Good Communication | GED Practice tests | Spelling, a Key to Good Commun- ication | Workforce Education LAB, |
| | | GED 2002 Lesson Bank | Word Plus for ESOL | |
| | | GED Writing Lesson Plans | | |
| | Harnessing Technology Grammar page | Harnessing Technology Grammar page | | |
| | LEO | LEO | | |
| | Wisconsin Online | Wisconsin Online | | |
| | Writing Argumentative Essays | Writing Argumentative Essays | | |
| Listening Skills | | | Rebecca's EZPage | |
| Math | A+ Math | GED Practice | ----- | The Office |
| | Funbrain math | GED Practice tests | ----- | |
| | Soccer Shootout | | ----- | |
| | Schoolwork UGH! | GED 2002 Lesson Bank | ----- | |
| | Powers of Ten | GED 2002 Math lessons | ------ | |
| | GED Math Formulas | GED Math Formulas | ------ | |
| | Mrs. Glosser's Math Goodies | Guide to Problem Solving | ------ | |
| | Learning about Charts and Graphs | Learning about Charts and Graphs | ----- | |
| | Visual Fractions | | ----- | |
| | Math Forum at Drexel | Math Forum at Drexel | ----- | |
| | Wisconsin Online | Wisconsin Online | ----- | |
| Social Studies | | GED Practice | ----- | |
| | | GED Practice tests | ------ | |
| | | GED 2002 Lesson Bank | ----- | |
| | | Beyond the GED | ----- | |
| | | GED 2002 SS Lesson Plans | ----- | |
| | How Stuff Works | How Stuff Works | ----- | |
| | American Social History | American Social History | ----- | |
| | | Country Reports | ----- | |
| | Fabric of History | Fabric of History | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Fabric of History | Fabric of History | | |
| | Justice Learning | Justice Learning | | |
| | Making Sense of Maps | Making Sense of Maps | | |
| | Odin's Castle | Odin's Castle | | |
| | | The History Buff | | |
| | | The History Net | | |
| | Xpeditions | Xpeditions | | |
| Science | | GED Practice | | |
| | | GED Practice tests | | |
| | | GED 2002 Lesson Bank | | |
| | | Online Units for GED Science | | |
| | Science is Fun | Science is Fun | | |
| | | A Science Odyssey | | |
| | | GED 2002 Science Lesson Plans | | |
| | How Stuff Works | How Stuff Works | | |
| | Rainforest Curriculum | Rainforest Curriculum | | |
| | Shape of Life | Shape of Life | | |
| Financial Literacy | Building Your Money Skills<br>Taking Charge of Your Future | Building Your Money Skills<br>Taking Charge of Your Future | | |
| | The Bee Hive | The Bee Hive | | |
| Mouse Skills | Practice Your Mouse Skills | Practice Your Mouse Skills | Practice Your Mouse Skills | Practice Your Mouse Skills |
| | Mouse Skills | Mouse Skills | Mouse Skills | Mouse Skills |

* Indicates large, integrated learning systems

## Free Products (on line)

**A Science Odyssey**

A history of science and biographies of scientists. the people and discoveries. The databank is well-organized and searchable. *http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aso/*

**American Social History Project**

Includes an online component:

History Matters

*http://historymatters.gmu.edu/*

"A gateway to Web resources and offers useful materials for teaching U.S. history"

*http://www.ashp.cuny.edu/index.html*

**A+ Math**

An interactive Math Website for students. It includes games, flashcards, puzzles and worksheets.

*http://www.aplusmath.com/*

**Beyond the GED: Making Conscious Choices About the GED and Your Future (PDF document)**

"This guide is meant for GED instructors to use in GED classrooms. In addition to providing learners with the opportunity to practice using graphs, reading charts, and writing, learners will analyze research findings on the economic impact of the GED. It serves the dual role of providing a lesson plan on the topic while serving as professional development for the instructor."

*http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall/teach.html*

**Building Your Money Skills Taking Charge of Your Future**

**A Financial Literacy Curriculum**

This seven-week, hands-on YouthBuild financial education program is designed for young adults, ages 16 to 24. The program introduces participants to basic financial planning concepts such as goal setting, making a spending plan, building an emergency fund, and the wise use of credit. In addition, each participant receives a 68-page youth guide. The chapters in the youth guide correspond to the seven units in the program.

*http://www.youthbuild.org/members/login/nefe.html*

**California Distance Learning Project (CDLP)**

Although designed for use in California this Web site offers excellent resources for high-beginner, low-intermediate adult new readers and students learning English. Topics include:

**News Stories**
**Family, Community, and Work**
**ESL Connection Online**
**Workplace ESL Online**
**How To Vote**
**How To Be Heard**
**Safe Streets**
**Employment Application**
**How to Get a Job**
**California E-Mail Project**

*http://www.cdlponline.org/*

**City Family Magazine (online)**

City Family was a magazine for immigrant and working families. It went to visitors to health centers and other places in New York City. Now online it features articles written in plain English for immigrants and other adults learning to read in English.

*http://cityfamily.org*

**CNN Learning Resources**

Recent CNN articles on current events and an extensive archive of articles on compelling contemporary topics (such as abortion, gun control, euthanasia) in a full version and an edited, easier-to-read version.

*http://literacynet.org/cnnsf/*

**Country Reports**

One-stop basic research on nearly every country in the world is made easy through this site which is based on information from: The CIA World Factbook: Web 2001 Edition (public domain), Library of Congress- Country Studies, 1999, USA , the United States Constitution, and the National Archives & Records Administration.

*http://www.countryreports.org/*

**English for All**

A free Web-based multimedia system for adults learning ESL/ESOL. It incorporates California standards for High-Beginning ESL and the Skill Modules of the Latino Adult Education Skills Project (LAES). EFA materials include: an interactive Web site that is the core of the program, 5 stand-alone video tapes, each containing four 15-minute programs, 5 CD-ROMs designed to work with the EFA Web site, and printable materials for students and teacher that

are available as PDF or in Rich Text Format (compatible with most Word Processors).
*http://www.myefa.org/login.cfm?fuseaction=learnmore2*

**Fabric of History Curriculum**
This American history curriculum, designed for young adults who don't particularly care about history, introduces American history through the theme of clothes.
*http://www.alri.org/pubs/fabric.html*

**Funbrain Math Games**
Basic number skills practice in online game format
*http://www.funbrain.com/numbers.html*

**Funbrain Spelling**
"gives students 24 screens with 4 words each, and asks them to identify the word that is misspelled. It provides feedback immediately, telling the student if the answer is correct or not. If the student was wrong, it enables him/her to try again. There are two levels—easy and hard—which makes it good for students of different ages at different levels of ESL."
*http://www.funbrain.com/spell/index.html*

**GED Math Formulas**
*lhttp://www.citelearning.com/GED/math.html*

**GED practice**
A free service provided by Steck-Vaughn to familiarize teachers and students with the types of items on the actual GED test.
*http://www.gedpractice.com*

**GED Practice tests–Franklin Country, VA Public Schools**
*http://www.frco.k12.va.us/ged/default.htm*

**GED Prep at Free-Ed.Net**
*http://free-ed.net/GED/default.asp*
Free, online real-time or asynchronous GED preparation lessons and sample exam questions. A complete 74-unit GED Prep curriculum.

**GED Prep at LiteracyLink**
Free, on-line GED preparation curriculum designed to accompany the KET (Kentucky Educational TV) 2002 GED Preparation broadcast (39 half-hour lessons broadcast on PBS TV stations in many states.) From this page, click on Begin, then register (it's free.) Once registered, go to your home space and choose Workplace Essential Skills and GED Connection. Then, under GED Connection choose one of the five GED test areas: Language Arts/Writing; Language Arts/Reading; Social Studies; Science; or Math. Then choose Learning Modules, Internet Activities or Practice tests. This curriculum is richer and deeper if used in concert with the TV Broadcasts (or videotapes of these.) States can purchase a license that allows teachers to copy these. In any case students can view (and/or copy) them for personal use at home. The Teacher section has staff development resources for teachers.
*http://www.pbs.org/literacy/index.html*

**GED 2002 Teachers' Lesson Bank**
Over 200 GED lesson plans in the five test areas, in PDF format
*http://www.floridatechnet.org/GED/LessonPlans/Lessons.htm*

**GED 2002 Math Lessons**
Pennsylvania GED teachers developed these lesson plans as part of a GED 2002 online course
*http://www.wbtc.ciu10.com/eclass/GEDresourceweb/math.htm*

**GED 2002 Science Lesson Plans**
These lesson plans were developed by Pennsylvania adult education teachers as part of an online GED 2002 course.
*http://www.wbtc.ciu10.com/eclass/GEDresourceweb/science.htm*

**GED 2002 Social Studies Lesson Plans**
These lesson plans were developed by Pennsylvania adult education teachers as part of an online GED 2002 course.
*http://www.wbtc.ciu10.com/eclass/GEDresourceweb/socialstudies.htm*

**GED Writing Lesson Plans**
*http://www.wbtc.ciu10.com/eclass/GEDresourceweb/writing.htm*

**Guide to problem Solving!**
This is a six-lesson, online course in mathematics problem-solving. Lesson five focuses on the kinds of math problems which will be found on the GED test.
*http://www.mnlincs.org/abeonline/solving/index.htm*

**Harnessing Technology Grammar Web page**
Includes a wide range of grammar instruction Web sites from fairly basic to advanced levels. They are: free, not too commercial, fairly easy to use; they do not require the visitor to give a lot of personal information and do not require downloading anything. They could be useful either to a teacher or to a student.
*http://www.alri.org/harness/harnessgrammar.html*

**How Stuff Works**
Includes a wide range of information and animations about how everyday things work including science and social studies topics.
*http://www.howstuffworks.com*

**Justice Learning**
Engages students in informed political discussion based on issues which are important to them. "The Web site uses audio from the Justice Talking radio show and articles from The New York Times to teach students about reasoned debate and the often-conflicting values inherent in our democracy. The web site includes articles, editorials and oral debate from the nation's finest journalists and advocates. All of the material is supported by age-appropriate summaries and additional links. In addition, for each covered issue, the site includes curricular material from The New York Times Learning Network for high school teachers and detailed information about how each of the institutions of democracy (the courts, the Congress, the presidency, the press and the schools) affect the issue. Much of the traditional civics curricula begin with an historical perspective and move forward. The lessons start from a point distant from students' lives. Justice Learning reverses traditional methods by starting with current issues that directly affect their lives. The curricula engage them early with a multimedia set of online materials and then relate it to the historical context that generated it. In doing so, the project incorporates into its methodology the new reality of where stu-

dents turn for information and how they learn."
*http://www.justicelearning.org/*

**Learning about Charts and Graphs**
*http://www.fodoweb.com/erfora/readtext.asp?txtfile=communications/charts.toc*

**LEO: Literacy Education Online**
Common problems in writing are listed with resources to help with each problem.
*http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/*

**Making Sense of Maps**
"Making Sense of Maps offers a place for students and teachers to begin working with maps as historical evidence. Written by David Stephens, [a professor of geography at Youngstown State University], this guide offers an overview of the history of maps and how historians use them, a breakdown of the elements of a map, tips on what questions to ask when analyzing maps, an annotated bibliography, and a guide to finding and using maps online."
*http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/maps/*

**Mouse Skills**
A collection of free mouse skills Web pages for those who are new to computers, and need to practice how to use a mouse.
*http://www.alri.org/harness.html#MOUSE*

**Mrs. Glosser's Math Goodies**
Free lessons on understanding percents, number theory, circumference and area of circles, perimeter and area of Polygons and more.
*http://www.mathgoodies.com*

**Odin's Castle**
Includes links to most eras of US and world history. Set up in a castle theme with historical 'rooms'.
*http://www.odinscastle.org/*

**Online Curriculum Units for GED Science**
*http://www.ecsu.ctstateu.edu/depts/edu/units/gedscienceunit.html*

**Powers of Ten**
This site provides a simple way to demonstrate how, beginning with a common garden scene, by zooming in or out each time with a power of ten one can see microscopically and macroscopically. It's instructive and fun. It also includes a simple, clear definition (an example) of the meaning of "powers of ten."
*http://microcosm.web.cern.ch/Microcosm/P10/english/Po.html*

**Practice Your Mouse Skills**
*http://www.lawrencegoetz.com/programs/mousepractice/* or
Mouserobics *http://www.ckls.org/%7Ecrippel/computerlab/tutorials/mouse/page1.html*

**Rainforest teaching curriculum**
There are several basic science experiments here that require only household objects. This may be useful for teaching science without a science lab
*http://www.rainbird.com/rainforest/index.htm*

**Rebecca's EZ Page**

Web lessons on a variety of topics: health, including headaches and lead paint poisoning; housing, including landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities; workers' rights, lessons which aim to teach the crux of those laws using carefully chosen vocabulary and pictures to illustrate the words; and others.

*http://www.alri.org/ltc/ezpage/index.htm*

**Schoolwork Ugh!**

Lots of good math sites, including a ThinkQuest link which provides some interesting ways of learning math skills: The HEX Agency is an espionage game with the flavor of Mission Impossible.

*http://www.schoolwork.org/math.html*

**Science is Fun in the Lab of Shakhashiri**

University of Wisconsin-Madison Chemistry Professor, Bassam Z. Shakhashiri's home science activities, demonstration shows, videos, and books. The Experiments You Can Do at Home section *http://scifun.chem.wisc.edu/HOMEEXPTS/HOMEEXPTS.html* includes several good experiments, and a list of books of home experiments. Most of these can be performed without expensive equipment.

*http://scifun.chem.wisc.edu/*

**Soccer Shootout**

Whole number and fraction practice in an online soccer game format, part of the Funbrain Math Games Web pages.

*http://www.funbrain.com/fractop/index.html*

**Spelling A Key to Good Communication**

Spelling lessons and exercises field-tested with adult learners.

*http://literacy.kent.edu/Midwest/Materials/ndakota/spelling/toc.html*

**The Bee Hive**

Plain English information includes: Managing your cash and credit (Checking Account Basics, ATM Cards Debit cards, Getting a Loan, Credit Cards;) Paying bills and taxes (Understanding Bill Payment and Late Fees, Paying Taxes, File your tax return, increase your paycheck;) Saving and investing (Basics of Savings Accounts, Individual Development Accounts, Basic Investments, Putting more money in your pocket;) Budget Basics (Controlling Your Spending, Controlling your debt, Getting Help with Debt, and Your Credit Rating).

*http://thebeehive.org/money/*

**The Discovery Channel; History Guide**

News articles/press coverage from the 16th to the 20th century.

*http://dsc.discovery.com/guides/history/history.html*

**The Five Paragraph Essay Wizard**

Everything you need to know plus practice writing prompts.

*http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Atrium/1437/index.html*

**The GED Connection**

Five free learning modules, 10 practice tests, 30 activities quizzes.

*http://litlink.ket.org/*

*http://litlink.ket.org/wesged.aspl*

**The History Net**

Daily features include: *today in history, picture of the day* and a quiz.

The history archives include:

- 20th Century History
- African History
- African American History
- American History
- Ancient History
- British History
- European History
- Medieval History
- Military History
- Women's History

*http://history.about.com/*

**The Key New Readers Newspaper**

*http://www.keynews.org/*

**The Learning Edge**

An interactive, on-line newspaper for adult literacy students produced by the Wellington County Learning Centre in Arthur Ontario Its interesting, topical stories are plainly written for a range of learners. Each story is read out loud slowly by a man with a pleasant voice, and is accompanied by learning activities such as games, puzzles, interactive quizzes and writing contests. At least one of the stories, which supports both literacy and numeracy, deals with the low wages of workers in Indonesia who make expensive shoes for North Americans. The Learning Edge also has student writings.

*www.thewclc.ca/edge*

or *http://www.freespace.net/%7Eliteracy/edge/*

**The Math Forum at Drexel**

This includes "Ask Dr. Math."

*http://mathforum.org/students/*

**The Office**

A workplace basic skills online simulation. Requires installation of Shockwave, a free downloadable program.

*http://www.workingsimulations.com/theOffice.html*

*http://www.workingsimulations.com/dswmedia/working_simulations.html*

**The Shape of Life**

A Public Broadcasting Service website that accompanies an eight-part television series that shows the rise of the animal kingdom through the breakthrough events of scientific discovery.

*http://www.pbs.org/kcet/shapeoflife/*

**2000 Families First Idea Book: Integrating Work Skills and Basic Skills**

A 207-page teacher-to-teacher on-line collection of communication, decision-making, interpersonal and lifelong learning skills lesson plans by Tennessee adult educators. The collection includes lessons such as:

* The Job Application from Both Viewpoints
* Selecting a Career path
* How to Prepare for the First day of Employment
* My paycheck Amount -- Computing Taxes
* Creating a Budget
* Making a Circle Graph of a Sample Budget
* Math skills for Everyday: Filling Out Income Tax Forms
* How to keep a Job
* Communicating at work

and many others. The appendix includes skills identified in the SCANS Report and information about the Equipped For he Future (EFF) Standards and Framework. (Also see Workforce Education LAB below.)

*http://cls.coe.utk.edu/pdf/Idea_Book_2000.pdf*

**Visual Fractions**

An interactive Website that helps a learner to identify, add, subtract, multiply and divide fractions using number lines and pie charts.

*http://www.visualfractions.com/*

Wisconsin Online Resource Center

This site includes GED writing (Choose ABE/ESL, then English)

- GED Essay Writing—Formula for Success
- Scoring the GED/HSED Essay
- Writing the GED Essay—Using Transitional Words

and grammar lessons:

- Homophones: To, Too, Two
- Modifiers and Nouns
- Possessive Practice
- Possessive Practice: Self-Check
- Special Nouns
- ABE/ESL Special Nouns Practice
- Using Commas in a Series
- Using Commas in a Series (three lessons) - Adjectives, nouns and verbs

It also includes 30 math lessons, many focus specifically on math and calculator skills needed for the GED (Choose ABE/ESL, then Math) and 11 financial literacy lessons such as ABE/ESL Best Buy Shopping, Calculating Monthly Expenses, and Learning About Your Earnings (choose ABE/ESL, then Financial; literacy).

*http://www.wisc-online.com/index.htm*

**Word Plus for ESOL Curriculum**

English, Microsoft Word, and Internet Skills for Beginning ESL/ESOL students

*http://www.americaconnects.net/research/wordplusESOL.asp*

**Workforce education LAB**

*http://slincs.coe.utk.edu/gtelab/find.html*

Lesson Categories
Communication and Problem Solving
Convey Ideas in Writing
Cooperate with Others
Decision Making
Interpersonal
Learn Through Research
Lifelong Learning
Listen Actively

**Writing Argumentative Essays**

*http://www.eslplanet.com/teachertools/argueweb/frntpage.htm*

**Xpeditions**

National Geographic web site with geography standards, atlas and printable maps of all the world's countries, and lesson plans.

*http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/*

## Commercial Products

**Large Integrated Learning Systems:**

**Academy of Reading**

This software, also known as Autoskill is a basic literacy instructional program designed to accompany classroom teaching. It has an adult as well as a child interface. And uses a phonics-based approach. It moves from the most basic levels of decoding and automaticity to fluency and proficiency.

*http://www.autoskill.com/*

**ELLIS English Training Software & ESL Curriculum**

3520 N. University Avenue, Suite 275
Provo, UT 84604
866-211-0721; 801-374-3424
Fax: 801-374-3495
Email: info@ellis.com
Web: http://www.ellis.com

**ELLIS Software for Adults**

http://ellis.com/products/academic/

**McGraw Hill Contemporary's MHC Interactive: GED Site License**

Review of GED Interactive software by GED teacher and Program Director, Derek Kalchbrenner at

*http://www2.wgbh.org/mbcweis/ltc/alri/softreview/softreview6.html*

The MHC GED Integrated Online Solution is a renewable one-year site license, $62.50 per seat. This provides access to online instruction and assessment software for individual students, or with a site license, for groups of students. Student records are stored on a secure Internet site.

More information available at *http://shop.mhcontemporary.com/*

**PLATO Learning Inc. Adult education Software (PLATO)**
*http://www.plato.com/adultindex.asp*

## On line (commercial) software

**Brainpop**
Witty, engaging videos on your computer with brief, clear explanations of body parts as well as other health/science-related information. Requires Java-enabled browser for the videos. Also has quizzes on these topics that give feedback and reinforce correct answers.
*http://www.brainpop.com*

**Froguts**
Frog dissection site with free demos.
*http://www.froguts.com*

**GED On Line**
*http://www.gedonline.org/*
Available on line and as a CD

Online self-paced instruction for GED students. An initial four-month tuition and registration fee of $50, then $10/month is charged. The Website describes these services: "One copy of standard GED Practice Test, Form AA, U.S. edition online grading of each test in Form AA; unlimited use of GEDonline chat room and online discussion groups group tutoring, as needed, through scheduled online group discussions moderated by a GEDonline teacher one copy of GEDonline software CD to allow viewing of online interactive practice lessons 4 months to complete your studies unlimited access to online study aids during membership:

- How to write an essay
- Practice essay questions
- Interactive practice lessons
- Knowledge base of answers to questions students have asked in the past
- Teacher assistance via e-mail and GED online chat club"

## Multimedia (software, video and print)

**Workplace Essential Skills (WES)**
Uses multi-media (TV/videos, print, and the Web for brush-up of reading, writing, math, and job skills. There are 24 half-hour programs (plus one for Orientation), four workbooks, and 24 FREE online lessons.
*http://litlink.ket.org/learning_plan.aspl*

## Individual Large or Small Pieces of Software

**Day in the Life... (Workplace-oriented basic skills)**

"Real-world job scenarios expose students to tasks in six different fields:

- Food Services
- Health
- Maintenance
- Retail
- Clerical
- Customer Service"

Review of the software by adult ESL teacher, Diana Satin, at
*http://www2.wgbh.org/mbcweis/ltc/alri/softreview/softreview3.html*

Website for publisher of Day in the Life *http://www.curricassoc.com*

**Basic Life Skills at Work**

*http://www.cognisciencеinc.com/en/mystere-e-description.html*

**Language Tuneup Kit**

"Multimedia reading software on CD-ROM. Uses the Orton-Gillingham method for children, teens and adults. Appropriate for those with dyslexia and as an ESL adjunct."
*http://www.jwor.com/*

**Learning 100 (Steck-Vaughn)**

This system (available in print and software options) has as its strength that I goes to very basic levels. It has a computerized reading skills inventory.
*http://www.steck-vaughn.com/c/@gfu02zV2Aw5P6/Pages/product.html?record@8758*

**Lexia's Reading SOS**

A complete low level phonics software package designed for adults. *http://www.lexialearning.com*

**Oxford Picture Dictionary CD-ROM (for ESL)**

*http://www.oup-usa.org/esl/isbn/0194359794.html*
Review of the software by adult ESL teacher, Sherry Spaulding at
*http://www2.wgbh.org/mbcweis/ltc/alri/softreview/softreview2.html*

**Reading Horizons**

Ranging from beginning literacy to high adult basic education levels, this is based on the "Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself" reading system. Students learn at their own pace to blend and build from a single letter to a word, and then learn to read on their own.
*http://www.hecsoft.com/acc/*

**Reading With Phonics**

CD ROM Product produced by Arrow Educational Products, Inc - Pembroke, NC phone- (910) 521-0840.
*http://www.arrowinc.com/products.htm*

Rosetta Stone (for ESL)
*http://www.rosettastone.com/home*

## Professional Development in Using Technology

**Evaluating Software**
Evaluating and Choosing Software for your adult literacy and ESOL program *http://www.lacnyc.org/resources/technology/evalsoftware.htm*

**Learning Disabilities**
**Discalculia**
Useful resources and information about mathematical and other learning disabilities
*http://www.dyscalculia.org/*

**Ennis' gift, A Film about Learning Differences**
"Ennis' Gift, introduced by Ed Bradley of 60 Minutes, is inspired by the legacy of Ennis William Cosby, a young man who became a passionate educator dedicated to helping all children find their gifts and learn. Ennis knew how it felt to have difficulties learning to read and write. He understood the hurt, frustration and confusion that come from being misunderstood by teachers and not "fitting in" with peers. It was his dream to help children find the self-esteem, support and learning techniques that would open the doors of accomplishment and joy to them. His life was a gift to us; our understanding of learning differences is our gift to his memory, and to all those who struggle to learn.

Special appearances by James Earl Jones, Henry Winkler, Charles Schwab, Danny Glover, Lindsay Wagner, Robert Rauschenberg, Bruce Jenner, Jack Horner and other guests."

This is a free, QuickTime video, which takes about 10 minutes. It requires high bandwidth -- Cable Modem or DSL or a T1 or T3 line, for example. Telephone dial-up access to the Internet will probably not produce satisfactory results.
*http://www.hellofriend.org/store/gift_bb.html*

**Hello Friend/Ennis William Cosby Foundation**
*http://www.hellofriend.org/*

**LD Online**
Articles on adult issues in the field of learning disabilities.
*http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/adult/index.html*

**LD Resources**
How To Support Students With Learning Differences - The Assistive Technology and Education Connection
*http://www.ldresources.com/articles/how_to_support_ld.html*

**How Computers Change the Writing Process for People with Learning Disabilities**
*http://www.ldresources.com/articles/writing_process_change.html*

**Suggestions for Helping Learning Disabled Students to Write**
*http://www.ldresources.com/articles/suggestions_for_writing.html*

**National Institute for Literacy LINCS Literacy and Learning Disabilities Special Collection**
*http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/teacher_tutor.html*

**National Center for Learning Disabilities**
LD at a Glance–Fact Sheet
*http://www.ld.org/LDInfoZone/InfoZone_FactSheet_LD_QuickLook.cfm*

**Online Resources for Learning Differences/Learning Disabilities**
This is an excellent list of reviewed and annotated resources and organizations.
*http://www.hellofriend.org/resources/resources.html*

## Project-Based Learning and Technology

**Knowledge in Action: The Promise of Project-Based Learning**
*http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/1998/wrigley.htm*

**Project-Based Learning for Adult English Language Learners**
*http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed427556.html*

**Project Based Learning and Technology Supports**
*http://www.ed.gov/pubs/SER/Technology/ch8.html*

**Less Teaching, More Learning**
*http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ncsall/fob/1998/gaer.htm*

**Principles and Opportunities for Project Based Learning in Computer Assisted Language Learning**
*http://www.cyberstep.org/TESOL*

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