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## Educator Portal · Mentors

### MENTOR TIP OF THE WEEK

#### Current Tip Of The Week

#### Reading Comprehension Strategy: Five questions to ask Tip from **Robin Letendre**

Posted June 6, 2012

Reading and writing are not done exclusive to themselves. Good readers continually ask questions while reading. This strategy is helpful to boost reading comprehension, but also writing expression. This strategy "invites readers to stay focused, engaged, and thinking" as they read.

The Five Questions are:

1. Visualization: What mental pictures do I see?
2. Connections: What does this remind me of?
3. Inference: What do I know now, even though I wasn't told the information in the text?
4. Prediction: What might happen next?
5. Summarization/conclusion: What was this mostly about?

### Archives

#### News Brief

#### Tip from **Susan Bubp**

Posted May 9, 2012

As part of the class routine in my beginning reading class, we talk about one or two items in the news at the start of every class. Even though members of this class are not yet newspaper readers, most of them are astute listeners and viewers of news programming. After we find out the basic elements of the story, we locate the place where the story took place on the map and read more about the subject in the next class. To do this I find the story online before the next class, copy and paste it to a Word document and edit it to make shorter sentences and easier vocabulary. Oftentimes I make the piece much shorter too, and since most stories are written in the inverted pyramid style, that's a snap too. Since the students are already familiar with the content, they are oftentimes surprised at how well they can read these news stories. This is a great way to learn new vocabulary words too. Knowing about the world gives students a sense of their own importance in the grand scheme of things and helps them academically by increasing their general background knowledge.

#### Two "PERK" activities

#### Tip from **Chris Powers**

Posted April 29, 2012

#### Vocab Chain

This activity is good as you begin a new unit or for a review of a unit. It can also be done as a whole class or in smaller groups as competition. The leader says a word, such as 'money'; the next person says a related word possibly, 'bank'; the third student may say 'saving' and so on. See how many words the class can come up with or if in groups, each group, in a set amount of time.

#### What Am I?

On sticky notes write the focused vocabulary. Place one note on the back of each student and have them walk around the room asking about the word but not asking "Am I (the word)". Instead, ask things such as: "Am I used daily?" "Am I found in the mall?" "Am I red?" and so on. Students could then take the sticky notes and place them in alphabetical order on the board in the room for class review.

#### Jazz Up Your Discussions

#### Tip from **Susan Bubp**

Posted April 16, 2012

Need some new ideas for in class discussions that lead to writing practice? Here are some interesting **POPULAR CULTURE TOPICS**. They may liven things up, especially in a class with students whose ages are widely divergent. Remember to establish ground rules before any class discussion and know your class before you embark on some of the more controversial topics from this list.

- Reality television as a positive or negative cultural phenomenon
- Plastic surgery programs
- Makeover programs

- Hip-hop music lyrics
- Disney films
- Images of women in the media
- Images of minorities in the media
- Images of homosexuals in the media
- Illegal music downloading
- Violent video games
- Violent movies
- Television, movie, music, or video game ratings
- Janet Jackson's "wardrobe malfunction"
- Sexual imagery in the media
- MySpace and Facebook as a cultural phenomenon
- Internet cyberstalkers
- Internet pornography
- Internet filters
- Internet privacy issues
- The effect of cell phones on society
- The effect of iPods on society
- The amount of television and other media used by children
- Advertising in the public schools
- Advertising that targets children
- Alcohol or cigarette advertising
- Requirements for children's educational programming
- Public radio/public television

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#### **Writing Strategy: Pass the Plate**

##### **Tip from Robin Letendre**

Posted April 11, 2012

This is a high energy strategy that encourages students to generate a wide variety of ideas and exposes all students to creative thinking. It also allows for students to see a wealth of rich vocabulary words.

In this strategy, you will need 6 disposable plates and water based, wipe-off markers.

The steps to the strategy are as follows:

- Place students in heterogeneous groups and provide each group with a plate and a marker.
- Announce to the class that you will say a word. One of the group members is to write it down in the center of the plate. For example, the word might be "big".
- Once the word has been written down, tell the students that they will have two minutes as a group to generate as many synonyms for the word as possible. Each student is to take a turn and write a synonym on the plate around the edge. The plate is to be passed around the group as quickly as possible. If a student cannot think of a word, they can pass.
- Explain that each word will generate points but that the most points will be awarded to words that are not found on any other plate in the class.
- If necessary, provide examples such as "large" or "gigantic", or more creative examples, such as "gargantuan" and "supersized".
- At the end of the allotted time, have the groups add up their points. You can determine the points, but the strategy calls for 10 points for all words on their plates, and 50 points for a word that no other group has.
- When finished, just rinse off the plates and reuse them for another activity.

This activity can be further adjusted to be used as a review.

One consideration is to look at the groups and determine if one or more students may struggle with this. If so, try to have the plate begin with that student so they may have one of the first opportunities to "pass the plate".

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#### **When is a GED® student ready to take an official GED Practice Test?**

##### **Tip from Denise Reddington**

Posted April 2, 2012

*Teachers often struggle with knowing when a student is ready to take a GED Official Practice Test (OPT.) Following are some thoughts, guidelines and tips on the subject that I use with my students at the Dover Adult Learning Center.*

#### **WHEN IS A STUDENT READY TO TAKE AN OFFICIAL GED PRACTICE TEST?**

1. The student has as a score of 8 or 9+ on the TABE Test.

2. The student demonstrates mastery of the math skills found in the GED Mathematics Test Curriculum assessment tests and has practiced problem solving. (NH GED Curriculum materials are available on this website.)
3. The student demonstrates mastery of the language skills found in the GED Writing Test Curriculum assessment tests and can compose a passing essay.
4. The student demonstrates Science and/or Social Studies background content knowledge. Refer to the GED Curriculum for more information.
5. The student has reviewed vocabulary pertinent to the specific test. Refer to the GED Curriculum for vocabulary words and activities.
6. The student demonstrates an understanding of the reading skills needed to be successful. These skills include finding the main idea, drawing conclusions, predicting outcomes, sequence, cause and effect, inference, and application.
7. The student consistently scores at least 75 - 80% correct on leveled practice questions.... Building Strategies, Foundations, Pre-GED and GED. *Quality of work is more important than quantity and correcting mistakes with students is very important.* This is also a great way to identify strengths and weaknesses.
8. The student understands what to expect on the OPT and how the GED test is scored.

Start practice-testing by having a student practice informally in class using Official Practice Test A and review mistakes to make sure they can pass and feel confident. Practice test-taking skills at all levels. Build the student's confidence all along the way before taking the OPT under testing conditions. If a student fails an OPT, identify why and assign appropriate study and instruction before another is tried. Once a student has passed an OPT, have them do the other versions for even more excellent practice before the real test.

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### **Balancing Act – Lesson Planning**

From **Chris Powers**

Posted March 22, 2012

When planning lessons for your ESL class you always try to include reading, writing, speaking and listening. Sometimes the class can steer the plan more into one area or feel they only need one or two of the four skill areas. Think of your lessons as a balanced meal – you wouldn't eat only meat all day so why only read or speak in class? To be healthy you need to choose from all of the food groups and to be a good lesson you need to include all of the skill areas. The main course can be the focus of the class but don't forget to include all that compliment it to be balanced!

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### **Holland Codes for career planning**

From **Jen DeCoste**

Posted March 12, 2012

Career planning gives adults a motive to pursue further education and it is an important component of transition programming. So, how can you help the learners that you work with identify the careers that are the best fit for them? One great place to start is by helping learners figure out their personal **Holland Code**.

#### **What Are Holland Codes?**

The **Holland Codes** or the **Holland Occupational Themes** represents a set of personality types described in a theory of careers and vocational choice formulated by psychologist, John L. Holland. Holland's theory argued that "the choice of a vocation is an expression of personality" and that the six factor typology he articulated could be used to describe both *persons* and work *environments*. Holland's theory does not assume that a person is just one type or that there are "only six types of people in the world." Instead, he assumed that any person could be described as having interests associated with each of the six types in a descending order of preference.

The six personality and work environment types described by Holland are as follows:

1. **Realistic** - practical, physical, hands-on, tool-oriented
2. **Investigative** - analytical, intellectual, scientific, explorative
3. **Artistic** - creative, original, independent, chaotic
4. **Social** - cooperative, supporting, helping, healing/nurturing
5. **Enterprising** - competitive environments, leadership, persuading
6. **Conventional** - detail-oriented, organizing, clerical

Taken together, the Holland Codes are usually referred to by their first letters: RIASEC

#### **How Can My Students Learn What Their Holland Code Is?**

A great way for your students to learn what their Holland Code is *AND* discover careers that match their code is to take the O\*Net Interest Profiler located at [www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip](http://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip). The Interest Profiler is an easy to use, questionnaire that clearly states results, and introduces a user to a variety of careers that require varying degrees of training.

A resource that is printable, does a great job of explaining the six Holland Code personality types, and has an easy to use questionnaire is the Holland Codes section of *Job Notes: New Hampshire's Career Resource Newspaper* found at [www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/career/documents/holland-code-sparks.pdf](http://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/career/documents/holland-code-sparks.pdf). Please do be aware that this resource should be printed using colored ink.

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### **Using a quote to start the class**

From **Lynda Galard-LeBlanc**

Posted February 20, 2012

A simple method that I have woven into our weekly activities in the classroom is to write a famous quote on the board before the students come into the classroom for the evening. I try to select a famous quote or passage that has meaning to the students and one that they can relate to in their own personal lives. This structured activity helps me as their facilitator in the classroom to keep the students focused as soon as they sit down in their seats. The main benefit, however, is that the students find it an easy way to earn bonus points by participating in writing a short free-paragraph. It also engages them in a lively short discussion with their classmates.

I find the main benefit of this quick activity for me, as their teacher, is that it also builds compassion, empathy, and even at times spirituality within our students. This is something, as we all know, that does not necessarily get much attention in their own personal lives. It also gives our students a chance to earn some free writing points. Some students who were engaged in this worthwhile activity have then proceeded to turn a simple free-write paragraph into further research for extra credit.

Here is an example of a passage I selected from Thoreau's *Walden*:

*We can never have enough of Nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and decaying trees. . . We need to witness our own limits transgressed.*

The students are required to write a short paragraph. They will then discuss the passage for five to ten minutes as a cooperative learning group. This easy procedure not only helps me with class management and focus, but it has also promoted many memorable discussions that add a different dimension to the assigned syllabus. As teachers, it is important for us to remember that adding moral education and spirituality in a simple way weekly can also help develop our students into thinking NH citizens. This, of course, is ultimately every teacher's goal for his or her students: for them to become life-long learners.

### **A fun way to practice reading fluency**

From **Susan Bubp**

Posted February 14, 2012

Reading fluency (not the verbal skill) is a major component of reading, but oftentimes it's overlooked. A reader is reading fluently when he/ she reads with the same speed, sound and expression as natural conversation. For readers who are still struggling with decoding, reading fluency is a skill that needs time, patience and perseverance to develop. Reading passages by breaking them into "thought units" or logical phrases is one way to start. To practice, students usually read the same sentences over and over until it sounds like natural conversation. So to make it more fun, have the practice be bits of dialogue from an easy play. Before you assign parts to different students, model the reading and have the whole group repeat and practice after you. Then have students practice as pairs before whole class "hears" the performance. Ham it up and show emergent readers how much fun reading aloud can be!

### **Fraction Equivalency Sheet**

Tip from **Elise Hood**

Posted February 6, 2012

Give each student one sheet of colored copy paper. It should be placed lengthwise in front of the student. The paper should be cut into four even strips each being 11 inches long. It is helpful to use a paper cutter if possible. The first strip should be folded in half and the fold line darkened. Each side of the fold should be labeled  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The next strip should be folded in half and then in half again (two even folds.) Each fold line should be darkened and each section labeled  $\frac{1}{4}$ . The third strip should be folded in half and then in half and then in half again (three even folds). Again darken the fold lines and label each section  $\frac{1}{8}$ . And now, the last strip gets folded in half four times and each fold line should be darkened with each quite small section labeled  $\frac{1}{16}$ . All **FOUR** strips can now be arranged in order from  $\frac{1}{2}$ 's to  $\frac{1}{4}$ 's to  $\frac{1}{8}$ 's to  $\frac{1}{16}$ 's. Discussion will follow. Comparisons will be obvious as the student can easily see that  $\frac{4}{16}$  is equal to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{4}{8}$  equals  $\frac{1}{2}$ , etc.

### **Facts about learning disabilities**

Tip from **Robin Letendre**

Posted February 1, 2012

- Fifteen percent of the U.S. population, or one in seven Americans, has some type of learning disability, according to the National Institutes of Health.
- Difficulty with basic reading and language skills are the most common learning disabilities. As many as 80% of students with learning disabilities have reading problems.
- Learning disabilities often run in families.
- Learning disabilities should not be confused with other disabilities such as mental retardation, autism, deafness, blindness, and behavioral disorders. None of these conditions are learning disabilities. In addition, they should not be confused with lack of educational opportunities like frequent changes of schools or attendance problems. Also, children who are learning English do not necessarily have a learning disability.
- Attention disorders, such as Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder, (ADHD) and learning disabilities often occur at the same time, but the two disorders are not the same.

Information taken from: <http://www.idonline.org/ldbasics/whatisld>

### **Free adult-appropriate math activities**

From **Denise Reddington**

Posted January 22, 2012

***Are you looking for some new, excellent, adult appropriate and free math activities and worksheets to use in your classroom?***

To find hundreds of free, printable math activities and worksheets, check out the websites listed below. Each site includes a

variety of math topics including whole numbers, decimals, fractions, percents, algebra and geometry. Skill practice on a variety of levels is available, making our multi-level classes a little more manageable. Many of the activities and worksheets also include a visual component which can help our students develop a "real understanding" of the skill.

- [www.superteacherworksheets.com](http://www.superteacherworksheets.com)
- [www.teachingimage.com](http://www.teachingimage.com)
- [www.math-drills.com](http://www.math-drills.com)

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### Understanding the Budget

Tip from **Debby Kanner**

Posted January 16, 2012

Mention of political battles over the federal budget will almost certainly elicit groans from students. As educators, however, it is our responsibility to inform our students regarding their roles as citizens. With appropriate materials and sources, lessons on the budget can be exciting in a math, social studies, or writing class. A first step might be a brainstorm listing all the items the government spends money on. Students should be encouraged to work with a partner as this is more challenging than might be anticipated. After creating a master list and categorizing expenditures as local, state, and federal, students should view the list with an eye to budget cuts. The website [www.nationalpriorities.org](http://www.nationalpriorities.org) provides further information, charts, and graphs. Under Educational Materials, click on Materials and Resources. The activity "Counting Pennies," is a hands-on opportunity for students to manipulate "tax dollars" and make decisions about spending. A bit more sophisticated is the game offered on [www.buildabetterbudget.org](http://www.buildabetterbudget.org). Teacher – and students – may be surprised at how intense the ensuing discussions will be!

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### Keeping students motivated

From **Chris Powers**

Posted January 9, 2012

Adult Students come to class with goals and a sense of what they want and need to learn. If their needs are not met, more than likely they will stop attending. A large part of teaching in adult education is keeping students motivated. Our students' lives are full with work and family and they do want to learn English and attend class but unlike K-12 our students have the choice to attend or not.

So, what are the tricks to keep students motivated?

"**PERK**" *Progress; Enjoyment; Relevance; Kindness*

#### **Progress:**

Students set goals and need to see progress towards those goals. This does not need to be formal testing. Each student can have a check list that they can refer to on a regular basis, biweekly or monthly. Here they can check on their progress. They can keep a journal of what they worked on in class and how they feel about the progress they are making. Fluency writing (see archived Mentor Tips) is a great progress checker. Students can also keep track their own class attendance.

**Enjoyment:** Class should be fun and stimulating. Activities and games keep students alert and can focus on many skills within the 4 skill areas of an ESL class.

**Relevance:** How is what the student is doing in class going to help them when they leave class? How will the grammar be used in real life and off the page of a worksheet or textbook? Be aware of what you are teaching and think of how it relates to your students' lives. Be sure that they too see the connection.

**Kindness:** No matter how your day is going or has gone, remember no one has ever been killed by kindness! We all deserve a little and a little goes a long way!

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### Career planning & transition programming

Tip from **Jen DeCoste**

Posted December 19, 2011

"Career planning gives adults a motive to pursue further education. It is an important component of transition programming. Adult learners' career awareness is typically informed by whatever exposure they have had to the world of work through personal experience, family, and friends. Many have a limited understanding of career possibilities—which careers are in high demand, what education and training these careers require, and what the wages and benefits are. It is in adult learners' interest to align their experience, interests and aptitudes with educational and career goals that will lead them to decent jobs with opportunities for advancement. In addition, studies show that clear goals improve learner persistence."  
---National College Transitions Network Website, Retrieved September 7, 2011)

Here are two excellent career planning resources that can be used by teachers and counselors:

**Job Notes: New Hampshire's Career Resource Newspaper** published by the NH Department of Employment Security's Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau

*Job Notes* is a **free** publication that includes information on various career related topics such as resume writing, interviewing skills, NH career clusters, Holland Codes, NH jobs and salaries, military careers, and much more. *Job Notes* can be downloaded and printed at [www.nh.gov/nhes/elmi/nhcrn/jobnotes.htm](http://www.nh.gov/nhes/elmi/nhcrn/jobnotes.htm) or you can get hard copies from your local NH Employment Security office.

**My Next Move** at [www.mynextmove.org](http://www.mynextmove.org). *My Next Move* is a website created for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration that is easy to use and navigate. *My Next Move* allows learners to research careers by searching for careers by using key words, browsing careers by industries, and/or answering a questionnaire called the O\*Net Interest Profiler that suggests careers that match their interests and training. This website is frequently updated and clearly indicates if a career has a bright outlook (meaning it will grow rapidly and has a large number of openings), is a career in our new "Green Economy" (meaning new and emerging careers), and if there are registered apprenticeships available for training.

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**Strategies to extend student thinking and analysis**From **Lynda Galard-LeBlanc**

Posted December 13, 2011

Here are some quick and easy strategies for you as a teacher to extend student thinking and analysis in your classroom. I write these quick and easy strategies on a small index card that I find myself using in each class session. I think if you try this simple method you will see how helpful the strategies are to promote real analytical and critical thinking in your classroom discussions.

**Remember "wait time I and II"**

Provide at least three seconds of thinking time after a question and after a response.

**Utilize "think-pair-share"**

Allow individual thinking time, discussion with a partner, and then open up for the class discussion.

**Ask "follow-ups"**

"Why?" "Do you agree?" "Please elaborate." "Tell me more."

Withhold judgment. Respond to student answers in a non-evaluative fashion.

**Ask for summary to promote active listening**

"Could you please summarize John's point?"

**Survey the class**

"How many people agree with the author's point of view?"

("Thumbs up?" "Thumbs down?")

**Allow for student calling**

"Richard, will you please call on someone else to respond?"

This is one of my favorite questions: it perks up the whole classroom.

**Play devil's advocate**

Require students to defend their reasoning against different points of view.

**Ask students to "unpack their thinking"**

"Describe how you arrived at your answer." ("Think aloud")

**Call on students randomly**

Avoid the pattern of only calling on those students with raised hands

**Encourage student questioning**

Let the students develop their own questions

**Cue student responses**

"There is not a single correct answer for this question. I want you to consider alternatives."

**Three cheers for the *Franklin Children's Electronic Dictionary***Tip from **Susan Bubp**

Posted December 5, 2011

If some of your students are struggling spellers and/or readers, they might benefit from the ***Franklin Children's Electronic Dictionary***. Just like the original Franklin Speller, this dictionary recognizes misspelled words and suggests the correct version along with the word's definition, so the student knows if it's really the word they were looking for. What's more, it speaks! (Granted it has a pretty funny voice) It's compact, very easy to operate and costs under \$50.00. It will even show the user how to print the word in manuscript or write the word in cursive. A few word games are included as an added bonus. Students love these things because they make them feel empowered and independent!

**Possible Help for Test Anxiety**Tip from **Elise Hood**

Posted November 28, 2011

This is called mindfulness meditation. We learned about it at the summer College Transition Two-Day Workshop in Concord. It was suggested as a great help before the GED Tests® or the Accuplacer. A student should find a quiet place (a restroom stall is acceptable if nothing else is available), get comfortable, close your eyes and intentionally relax every muscle. Breathe in and out at a natural pace. Notice whether your breath feels warm or cool. When other thoughts and sensations butt in, acknowledge them, then refocus with all your strength on your breathing. After about seven minutes or so, open your eyes and re-enter your present activities slowly and calmly. Retain the feeling of calm throughout your testing.

**Building Classroom Community**Tip from **Chris Powers**

Posted November 21, 2011

As the new school year begins you have many new names to learn and remember, and so do the students. Everyone appreciates being called by name. There are many ways to have students introduce themselves to the class but what do you do to reinforce their names in subsequent classes? How about when a new student enters mid year, or sooner with open enrollment?

Have students write their names on index cards and collect them. During the second class dictate the names to the class so they can learn to write them. The first time, or in beginning classes, spell each name out loud as they write it. This can be done once a week for the first month and then as a warm up during the year as well as when a new student joins the class. As students learn their classmates names choose a student to dictate the names.

Students could write the names in a list and then move around the room to talk with each other and check off the names of those they have talked with. They could report back to the class, either orally or in a journal, and tell something they learned about a class mate that day.



**What is a Learning Disability?****Tip from Robin Letendre**

Posted November 8, 2011

A learning disability is a neurological disorder. In simple terms, a learning disability results from a difference in the way a person's brain is "wired." Students with learning disabilities have average to above average intelligence; however, having a learning disability results in a student having difficulty with reading, writing, spelling, reasoning, recalling and/or organizing information. A learning disability can't be cured or fixed; it is a lifelong issue. It is a "hidden disability", meaning that it is not readily observed like blindness.

Individuals with learning disabilities can achieve success by having support in encouraging their strengths, knowing their weaknesses, understanding the educational system, working with professionals, and learning about strategies for dealing with specific difficulties related to their learning disability.

Information taken from: <http://www.idonline.org/ldbasics/whatisld>

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**Response Papers****Tip from Debby Kanner**

Posted October 26, 2011

Many students find it challenging to recognize, analyze and respond to an opinion piece. Using a rubric that provides an outline assists students in achieving clarity in their thinking and their writing. Initially, it is best to choose an editorial or essay that is very clearly arguing one side of an issue. Prior to reading the article, students should be fully informed of the arguments on both sides. Students are motivated if the topic is personally meaningful to them. Once an understanding has been firmly established, the outline should be introduced and explained:

Title, Author, Source, Date  
 Summary of article  
 Author's Opinion  
 Student's Opinion

Only after this groundwork is covered is the article introduced. Students may use a highlighter to look for the required components and salient points as they read. If students have particular difficulty with comprehension, it may be best to write the first response paper together as a class. It should be emphasized, however, that the student's opinion is entirely his own and will be fully credited as long as it is defended adequately. Once the response papers are completed, further lessons might focus on bias, persuasive language, and reliability.

An example of this process from a civics class focused on recent legislation passed in New Hampshire expanding the right to use deadly force against an aggressor (SB88.) Rep. Tim Copeland, a NH Representative, visited class to explain the implications of the new law. Rep. Copeland shared his personal opinion regarding the law. Students had prepared questions to clarify any confusion. Students were given the choice to write their response paper on Rep. Copeland's presentation, or on an article provided. Students had strong opinions on this topic and a lively discussion followed the writing assignment!

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**Geography basics are fundamental to all learners.****Tip from Susan Bulp**

Posted October 17, 2011

Whether your students are ABE, GED, ESOL or tutorial students, every student should have at least basic geography skills. Many people in the general population are completely clueless about these rudimentary facts. Your students should know the seven continents, the five oceans and understand the concept of latitude and longitude. In addition to those basics, make sure they understand what a map of the USA looks like and the regions of our country. Last, but not least, make sure they look at a map of New Hampshire and know the basics about where they live. But remember, many of your students may associate geography with dry, unpleasant busy work, so make learning it fun, make it relevant to their lives and tie it into all content areas, not just social studies.

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**Pros and Cons Website****Tip from Debby Kanner**

Posted October 6, 2011

An excellent website for stimulating discussion, prompting essay or letter writing, and providing statistics for use in a math class or factual data for science research is [www.procon.org](http://www.procon.org). By providing information that is understandable and data-based on both sides of controversial issues, this site is invaluable for ease of access in preparing for debates. General categories include: Education, Health and Medicine, Law, Media and Entertainment, Money and Business, Politics, Religion, Science and Technology, Sex and Gender, Sports, World / International. A few examples of the many specific topics covered are Teacher Tenure, Vegetarianism, Death Penalty, Social Networking, Big Three Auto Bailout, Climate Change, Gay Marriage, Drug Use in Sports. There is something for everyone and a wealth of balanced information on this website!

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**Look - Remember - Tell****Tip from Chris Powers**

Posted September 28, 2011

All students need and want to increase their vocabulary. Words need to be seen many times before they can be used by a student. The more activities and ways they recycle vocabulary the better! This activity is good when presenting a new story or topic. It allows for individuals to absorb as much or as little as they can and increases active time with the vocabulary as it is discussed in small groups.

Choose 10 to 15 words from a reading or topic that you will be working with. Scramble the words on a piece of paper and give each student a copy face down. When you say go have each student turn the paper over and study the words. Usually 15-20 seconds is enough depending on the number of words and the level of the students. They must then turn the paper face down again. Next have the students individually write as many words as they can remember. Then ask them to write any words that they think may go with the words that they remembered. Working in pairs or small groups, have the students talk about what they think the reading will be about. If the level and time permit, ask students to write a few sentences on the topic. Give each

student a copy of the text and allow time for them to read it. Discuss which words they find hard and which words they think the scramble helped them to remember and why.

Remember that the number of words you use to scramble will depend on the level of your students and the length of the reading you will be presenting.

#### **Getting to know your new students....**

**By Elise Hood**

Posted September 13, 2011

On the first day back to class, it is helpful if the teacher can make a photocopy of her class list and as she/he speaks with students as they are coming in, she/he can make short notes next to their names. For example, the name is Max Johnson who mentions that he raced out on his wife and new baby, so immediately the teacher will jot down "new baby." At the beginning of class #2, the teacher has something personal to talk to Max about as he comes into the classroom. The teacher has the notes to support her memory.

Also, further along the first day, **a learning game** to begin to develop classroom community can be played. A very simple matching game is one that gets students up and talking to each other. I like to use a few cards of sentence subjects and a separate set of cards with predicates. The students need to talk to each other, read, and use their comprehension to make whole new sentences. From there you might want to do a math paper with teams of two (the teams formed during the sentence game) working together on the math worksheet.

#### **Information taken from Learning to Achieve: Module 4: Reading Disabilities**

**Tip from Robin Letendre**

Posted September 6, 2011

A reading disability is defined as:

- A reading proficiency below an individuals' expected proficiency given his/her age, intelligence, education or professional experiences.
- A specific type of disability
- Often referred to as dyslexia, however, dyslexia is actually a combination of reading problems, in particular, trouble accurately and fluently decoding single words, as well as issues with spelling.

#### **Distilling the Essence of Nonfiction Text**

**Tip from Susan Bubp**

Posted August 1, 2011

When students read nonfiction, they can be taught overiewing—skimming and scanning before reading. You can help students by talking about the importance of:

- Activating prior knowledge
- Noting important headings and subtitles
- Determining what to read and in what order
- Determining what to pay careful attention to
- Determining What to ignore
- Deciding to quit because the text contains no relevant information
- Deciding of the text is worth careful reading or just skimming

#### **Goal Setting**

**Tip from Chris Powers**

Posted July 7, 2011

This may sound like a simple activity and to many teachers it is. You have set many different goals for yourself, one of which was to teach. You found the path you needed (education) and worked towards your goal (took classes). Along this path there were people to help you: parents, friends, family, teachers and perhaps many more.

Adult education students do come to class with goals: GED; high school diploma; read, write, speak and understand English; a job. We are set to help them reach this goal – we have books, computers and many other resources but yet they still drop out frustrated. Why? We are there for them even if they do not have a strong support team outside of the classroom!

Did you become a teacher overnight or after a class or two? Did you ever second guess your goal? Perhaps, but you also knew that you had to work in chunks – step by step. Small goals became part of the larger goal.

When students first come into class and state their large goal – ask why. Why do they need this language? GED? Diploma? Work with them to set smaller, more attainable goals. How does the course you are teaching tie into their lives outside of the classroom? Ask students to keep a monthly log of what they want to accomplish this month and how it fits into their "big picture". At the end of each month do a goal check – did they reach their goal? Why? Why not? Then set a new goal for the next month.

You can set an example and model this for your students. Take some time to set teaching goals for yourself within your adult education class. How can you improve? What do you want to improve upon?

Remind students that the only way to the top is by climbing the stairs and each step is a success in the right direction.



**Use Color to Draw an Atom****Tip from Elise Hood**

Posted June 30, 2011

When introducing the Periodic Chart to students, it enhances the students understanding of atomic structure to draw a few atoms in an enlarged form using the information on the chart once it has been explained. Protons, neutrons, and electrons should all be included using a different color marker. I have used this with my class and it seems to help them retain the difference in this three basic particles.

**Monitoring Comprehension****Tip from Susan Bubp**

Posted June 16, 2011

Readers need explicit instruction to

- Become aware of their thinking as they read.
- Detect obstacles and confusions that derail understanding.
- Understand how strategies can help repair meaning when it breaks down

How do we do this? By explicitly teaching them to:

- Track their thinking through coding (with sticky notes), writing responses to their reading, or by class discussion
- Notice when they lose focus
- Stop and go back to clarify thinking
- Reread to enhance understanding
- Read ahead to clarify meaning
- Identify and articulate what's confusing or puzzling about the text.
- Recognize that all their questions have value.
- Develop the disposition to question the text or the author
- Think critically about the text and be willing to disagree with its information or logic
- Match the problem with the strategy that will best solve it.

**SPECIFIC STRATEGY LESSONS****A Few Questioning Strategies****Strategy 1****Share Your Questions About Your Own Reading**

Purpose: Using difficult text to show questions we have when we read

Method: Teacher gives a copy of a short piece of text to every student, reads it aloud and discusses the questions that come up while she's reading.

Responses: Sticky notes coded with ?; follow-up group discussion

**Strategy 2****Some Questions Are Answered, Others are Not**

Purpose: Beginning the process of using questioning before, during and after reading; listing and categorizing questions to promote understanding

Method: Students read the same text as the teacher displays the same on the overhead projector.

Responses: Chart students' questions; use codes of questions including A for answered, BK for background knowledge, I for inferred, D for discussion, RS for research, C or Huh? for confused.

**Strategy 3****Knowing When you Know and Knowing When you Don't Know**

Purpose: Monitoring comprehension to clarify confusion or answer questions about the text

Method: Students read the same text as the teacher displays the same on the overhead projector

Responses: Sticky notes coded Huh? for confused or with a lightbulb for the reader's finding the answer further along

**Strategy 4****Gaining Information Through Questioning**

Purpose: Explore the relationship between the reader's questions and the text

Method: Students read the same text as the teacher displays the same on the overhead projector

Responses: Two-column form headed by Questions/ Facts

**Some Visualizing and Inferring Strategies****Strategy 1.****Visualizing from a Vivid Piece of Text**

Purpose: Merging prior experience and the text to create visual images

Method: Students read the same text as the teacher displays the same on the overhead projector

Response: Discussion of different student's mental image created by the text.

**Strategy 2****Inferring from the Title/Illustrations as Well as text**

Purpose: Using all aspects of a book or article to infer meaning.

Method: Students read the same text as the teacher displays the same on the overhead projector

Response: Two-column note form headed Quote or Picture from Text/ Inference

Example

Quote or Picture from Text	Inference
Tight times are why we don't have beef	They are short on money on Sunday

## Strategy 3

## Visualizing and Inferring to Understand Textbooks

Purpose: Using reading comprehension strategies to better understand content-area textbooks.

Method: Students read the same text as the teacher displays the same on the overhead projector

Responses: Two-column note form headed Facts/Inferences; ongoing discussion about how comprehension strategies help readers understand textbooks

## Example

Facts (Something we can see and observe)	Inferences (Interpretations)
Apatosaurs are slow.	The T-Rex will catch them.
Adults protect their young .	The apatosaurus are plant eaters.

## Strategy 4

## Inferring and Questioning to Understand Historical Concepts.

Purpose: Inferring and questioning go hand in hand to build understanding

Method: Students read the same text as the teacher displays the same on the overhead projector

Responses: Discussion: two-column note form headed Questions/ Inferences

## Example

Questions	Inferences
First picture: What is the name of the ship?	The boy daydreamed and saw a bird
Is it a dream or a daydream?	The little boy is telling the story
Are they Columbus's boats?	They think the white men come from the sky
Do Native Americans think the boats are giant birds or spirits?	The white men turned giving into trading.

**Information taken from Learning to Achieve: Module 3: Legal issues, self-disclosure, and confidentiality****Tip from Robin Letendre**

Posted June 6, 2011

In a disability context, "disclosure" means that people with disabilities share personal information about their disability for the specific purpose of receiving accommodations.

Accommodations are defined as supports that an individual needs to function in learning or employment environments as a way to compensate for a diagnosed disability.

Accommodations are legal rights.

Adults need to decide, what if anything, they want to reveal.

Adults with a learning disability should provide documentation conveying their learning disability and their needs for accommodations.

**Any Topic Article Puzzles****Tip from Elise Hood**

Posted May 23, 2011

The teacher copies an article about, a social studies topic, a science topic, or a human interest story. It should be copied for as many times as there would be groups in the class. Four or five group members is the best. Presently I have three groups of four students each and thus have copied the article 3 times. Cut the article into sections and scramble these sections up, give one chopped-up article to each group and let them reconstruct the original article. Afterwards, have someone in the group read the article. This activity has a double advantage. Information is obtained and discussed, and a sense of community is developed in the classroom.

**Current Events, Balanced Viewpoints****Tip for Adult Diploma Classes from Debby Kanner**

Posted May 15, 2011

The multiple and serious issues currently facing our nation are certainly complicated and controversial. There are several online sources of information that are helpful in providing balanced and understandable information for our students. [www.teachablemoments.org](http://www.teachablemoments.org) is an excellent site for accessing short, readable articles on current themes. [www.procon.org](http://www.procon.org) presents information in an outline format with brief statements on both sides of each issue. The United Nations website, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) has a Cyber School Bus link that offers interactive maps on a range of themes. Since many of us do not have access to a computer for every student, setting up "stations" for the students to rotate through might facilitate use of these sites. Other stations could include maps, listening to excerpts from books on tape, journal writing, articles

to read and respond to, and discussion groups. Upfront Magazine is a publication from Scholastic that focuses on a range of issues of particular interest to our students. A classroom subscription is affordable and arrives bimonthly.

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### **Gradual Release of Responsibility Approach**

**Tip from Susan Bubp**

Posted April 28, 2011

Much of our responsibility when teaching reading is to make what is implicit, explicit. Explicit reading instruction means that we show readers how we think when we read.

#### Teacher Modeling

- The teacher explains the strategy.
- The teacher demonstrates how to apply the strategy successfully.
- The teacher thinks aloud to model the mental processes she uses when she reads.

#### Guided Practice

- After explicitly modeling, the teacher gradually gives the student more responsibility for task completion.
- The teacher and students practice the strategy together.
- The teacher scaffolds the students' attempts and supports student thinking, giving feedback during conferring and classroom discussions.
- Students share their thinking processes with each other during paired reading and small-and large-group discussions.

#### Independent Practice

- After working with the teacher and other students, the students try to apply the strategy on their own.
- The students receive regular feedback from their teacher and other students.

#### Applications of the Strategy in Real Reading Situations

- Students apply a clearly understood strategy to a new genre or format.
  - Students demonstrate the effective use of a strategy in more difficult text.
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### **Information taken from: Learning to Achieve: Module 2: Self-Determination**

**Tip from Robin Letendre**

Posted April 19, 2011

There are six factors that affect an individual's ability to be self-determined:

1. gain self-awareness
2. learn to value yourself
3. plan
4. be proactive
5. reflect and readjust
6. environment

A student with a learning disability needs to develop all of the five factors in a nurturing environment to take the step to be self-determined. Self-determination impacts their ability to advocate for themselves in the classroom.

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### **Hands-on Science**

**Tip from Elise Hood**

Posted April 13, 2011

When teaching some difficult-to-understand science concepts it is important to have some simple experiments ready for a visual illustration. Here is an experiment that illustrates the effect of changes in air pressure.

#### GETTING AN EGG INTO A BOTTLE

Drop three lit matches into a glass bottle that has a narrow neck (an old style milk bottle works well). Quickly put a pre-peeled hard boiled egg into the mouth of the bottle. What Happens? Why? (The flames heat the air in the bottle. As the heated air expands, some of it escapes out the bottle. When the matches go out, the air inside the bottle cools and contracts, thus creating a lower pressure inside the bottle than outside. The greater pressure outside the bottle forces the egg into the bottle.)

#### NEGATIVE INFLATION

Fill a plastic bottle with hot water (not boiling) and fill a bowl with cold water. Let them sit for one minute, then empty the bottle quickly. Stretch a balloon over the open end of the bottle and push the bottle down into the cold water. What happens? Why? (The warm water heats the bottle which, in turn, heats the air inside the bottle after the water is poured out. When the bottle is placed in the cold water, the air inside cools and contracts, causing the outside air to be drawn in, pulling the balloon in and inflating it inside the bottle. Try sitting the bottle back in the hot water again.) A great demonstration of the movement and force of hot and cold air!

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### **Introducing Writing Rubrics to Adult Diploma Students**

**Tip from Lynda Galard LeBlanc**

Posted April 4, 2011

The following is the simple six-trait writing rubric grid I give to my students before we begin our writing process. Ideas and Content (1-5), Organization (1-5), Voice (1-5), Word Choice (1-5), Sentence Fluency (1-5), and Conventions (1-5). I spend forty-five minutes at the beginning of the class explaining the importance of the rubric and the language assigned to scores in each category. For example, in the category "Ideas and Content," a high score of 5 would be accompanied by this comment: "This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme or story line." A mid-range score of 3 would be accompanied by: "The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general." And for a low score of 1: "As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the paper, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy details. The writing reflects more than one of these problems." Each student is given several examples of past papers that former adult diploma students have written. They are then asked to play teacher or editor and score the paper, using the writing rubric. I have found that the students take the assignment quite seriously because I assign points and individual grades. Experience has shown that this activity helps students understand that writing is not first draft writing, even for those who are talented. In particular, this activity builds confidence in those students who have not written for some time. The students see how radically different their second draft is from their first draft and feel especially proud of the improvements they have made in their written work. The quality of the analyses I have received over the past few years from students who have participated in this classroom exercise has been very gratifying. Student in my class are always given the option to get a pass on reading out loud if they are shy, but at the end of this writing assignment most student are so proud of their work that they actually seem to enjoy reading their work aloud to their classmates.

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### Regents Prep Website

#### Tip for Adult Diploma Classes from Debby Kanner

Posted March 28, 2011

As any of us who grew up in New York State well remember, the Regents Exams were the focus of high school curricula and the source of much stress. Lingered negative impressions aside, there is currently an online preparation site available that offers tutorials and background information in an accessible format with plenty of graphics and other visuals. Visit [www.regentsprep.org](http://www.regentsprep.org) for math, science, and social studies presented minus the fear and apprehension!

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### Strategies Used by Proficient Readers

#### Tip from Susan Bubp

Posted March 21, 2011

##### *Making connections between prior knowledge and the text*

Readers pay more attention when they relate to the text. Readers naturally bring their own prior knowledge and experience to reading, but they comprehend better when they think about the connections they make between the text, their lives and the larger world. Readers make text-to-self connections, text-to-text connections, and text-to-world connections

##### *Asking questions*

Questioning is the strategy that keeps readers engaged. When readers ask questions, they clarify understanding and forge ahead to make meaning. Asking questions is the heart of thoughtful reading.

##### *Visualizing*

Active readers create visual images in their minds based on the words they read in the text. The pictures they create enhance their understanding.

##### *Drawing Inferences*

Inferring is the intersection of taking what is known, garnering clues from the text, and thinking ahead to make a judgment, discern a theme, or speculate about what is to come.

##### *Determining important ideas*

Thoughtful readers grasp essential ideas and important information when reading. Readers must differentiate between less important ideas and key ideas that are central to the meaning of the text.

##### *Synthesizing information*

Synthesizing involves combining new information with existing knowledge to form an original idea or interpretation. Reviewing, sorting and sifting important information can lead to insights that change the way readers think.

##### *Repairing understanding*

If confusion disrupts meaning, readers need to stop and clarify their understanding. Readers may use a variety of strategies to "fix up" comprehension when reading goes awry.

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### Information taken from: Learning to Achieve: Module 1: Definition of Learning Disabilities

#### Tip from Robin Letendre

Posted March 16, 2011

There is a difference between learning preferences, learning difficulties, and learning disabilities.

Learning preferences are defined as: the conditions of learning that an individual finds helpful. They are helpful to the individual but not necessary. Learning preferences apply to each individual.

Learning difficulties are defined as: a difficulty that arises when a specific task or circumstance in the learning environment inhibits an individual's ability to learn. Learning difficulties can extend to specific tasks.

Learning disabilities are defined as: a disability that stems from a neurological condition within the individual that makes one or more of the processes associated with learning extremely difficult. A person with a learning disability is protected by laws and has legal rights.

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### Visualizing Fractions

#### Tip from Elise Hood

Posted March 7, 2011

When teaching fractions, I have always advocated for actually cutting things into pieces. This past year I learned how important

it is for teachers to stay focused on the main "benchmark" fractions. While focusing on these fractions you should also teach the decimal equivalent and the equal percentages. For example,  $\frac{1}{2}$  or one-half is the most important fraction. Teach it with .5, .50, and 50% all at the same time. Refer to other fractions in relationship to one-half. Is  $\frac{1}{3}$  larger or smaller than  $\frac{1}{2}$ ? For  $\frac{1}{4}$ , you would teach that  $\frac{1}{4}$  is  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a  $\frac{1}{2}$  and that  $\frac{1}{8}$  is  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Set up a short clothesline in your class room and let students pin up fractions where they fall across the line starting at 0(zero) and ending at the whole 1 (one). Always include decimals and percents in the number line. For more information on this technique use a math series entitled **USING BENCHMARKS, Fraction, Decimals, and Percents** (PDF) from the Key Curriculum Press.

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### Adult Diploma Student: Journal Writing

Tip from **Lynda Galard LeBlanc**

Posted February 28, 2011

Introducing journal writing in the Adult Diploma classroom is one way to give our students a powerful tool that they can tap into during their entire life for life-long learning, reflecting and solving their own individual problems. The students in my classes are required to write in their journal daily but I do not collect the work other than giving them points for providing entries. I call it a "free write" so that they can relax, enjoy, and even sketch in their journals if they want to. I also suggest cutting out articles from newspapers that they find interesting or pictures that they find visually enticing. This is their own journal, full of their hopes, dreams, and aspirations. The journal is that "private place" we all have that lets us pour out our feelings, emotions, and dreams. As one student put it so dramatically, "I enjoy writing in a journal because it helps me to pour out my feelings or mood swings or whatever and clears out my brain for new things." I buy each of my students a simple steno pad at the beginning of each session. I then have them decorate the cover of the pad so that the journal becomes more meaningful to them. As one student said, "There are never any red marks in the journal or wrong issues. Everything is up to you and no one can put you down." One of my own goals as an Adult Diploma English teacher is not just that my students will enjoy daily writing in their personal journals for this session, but that this activity will build into their own personal lives, for years to come, the important ability of daily reflection, thinking, and spirituality.

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### News Headlines

Tip for Adult Diploma Classes from **Debby Kanner**

Posted February 21, 2011

Many of our students are dealing with multiple challenges in their personal lives and have little time or inclination to attend to the big picture. One way to broaden their outlook is to require that students access a news source of their choice as a homework assignment each week. The assignment can be as simple as writing three news headlines from a newspaper, television news show, or online source such as CNN in their journals. Students should be directed to record only news that is broadly relevant – no car accidents or celebrity scandals – unless they are significant in a larger sense. This in itself is a learning process as they develop the ability to evaluate the implications of a story. As their awareness develops they become engaged and listen to more analysis. By opening class each week with a discussion of the news, students are encouraged to participate even if participation is limited to reading the headline aloud from their journals. Math, science, social studies and English lessons can all be generated from the news.

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### One Minute Feedback

ESL Tips from **Christine Powers**

Posted February 14, 2011

As students enter class give each one an index card or small piece of paper. At the end of class ask each student to write for one minute about something they learned in that class. Because the time is short they will not feel pressured to write a lot and won't have to worry about grammar or spelling. This can tie well into the fluency writing which with you can start the class. If you continue to do this in each class the students will get better at it and look forward to it and you are assessing their progress each time they come to class.

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### Strategies that Work by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis

Tip from **Susan Bubp**

Posted February 8, 2011

#### Introduction

The aim of comprehension instruction is to allow the reader interact more completely with their reading, bringing themselves to the text to engage in a richer, deeper, more thoughtful reading experience.

"The reader writes the story" Annie Proulx

#### Chapter 1 Strategic Thinking

Text-to-self connections

- Teachers should find a book they can really connect to and share their connections with the class. Passion is contagious!
- Sticky notes and t-s code mark those connections in the text

Strategic readers address their thinking in an inner conversation that helps them make sense of what they read. They search for answers to their questions. They attempt to better understand the text through their connections to the characters, the events and the issues.

When readers interact with the text they read, reading becomes important. Reading shapes and even changes thinking. Getting readers to think when they read, to develop an awareness of their thinking, and to use strategies that help them comprehend are the primary goals of comprehension.

Reading encompasses both decoding and the making of meaning

Comprehension means that readers think not only about what they are reading, but also about what they are learning. When readers construct meaning, they are building their store of knowledge. But along with knowledge is understanding. They must go beyond the literal meaning of a story or text. A reader who understands begins to think deeply, and in that way reading

sometimes changes thinking.

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### English Language Learners and Learning Disabilities

#### Tip from [Robin Letendre](#)

Posted January 31, 2011

There are many different reasons why individual may have difficulty learning a second language.

1. Current problems with work, health or family
2. Stress or trauma experienced early in life
3. Social and cultural identity issues
4. Schooling in two different countries
5. Incomplete secondary school education
6. Frequent absences from school
7. Poor instruction in school
8. Limited practice outside of the instructional setting
9. Learning disabilities

Finding out who the adults are that have learning disabilities is a difficult and complex undertaking.

There are many unanswered questions about how adults learn

English and this lack of basic information makes it extremely difficult to make an accurate diagnosis of LD in adults who are learning English. The relationship between language, learning, and Learning Disabilities is far from clear.

~Taken from Learning to Achieve, material developed and prepared by the National Institute for Literacy Module 9

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### Pre-Writing is Thinking, Talking and Sharing

#### Tip from [Elise Hood](#)

Posted January 24, 2011

Sometimes students may come up with a complete blank when faced with a writing prompt. Famous authors call this writer's block. Thus, it can be very valuable to spend time practicing "thinking" when a prompt is presented. Post a large copy of a writing prompt that you want your students to think about. Give them a few minutes to read and think. Then, discuss the students' ideas, letting everyone who has an idea voice it. Take notes about their comments and post them on the prompt. Let the students argue a little if appropriate. If they are ready to create an essay, let them use the notes you have posted. Thinking, talking, and sharing can give students the confidence to begin writing. Every discussion does not have to lead to an essay. You can discuss and take notes on many topics to lubricate the "thinking" step. These discussions are very good for continuing to cement your class's sense of community.

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### Introducing Important Literary Terms through Game Activities: A Wakeup Activity for our Late Night Adult Diploma Students

#### Tip from [Lynda Galard-LeBlanc](#)

Posted January 18, 2011

Introduce adult diploma students to important literary terms by playing a fun game that helps promote interest in what some students might conceive as dry glossary literary terms, terms that we, as English specialists, know are so important in our literature discussion with our students. The teacher has students sit in the round with two group leaders dividing the class in half; then the teacher selects a student to be a judge or referee. It is a good idea to select for this role a student who has never participated in a leadership role in the class before. This gives them the opportunity to be seen by the other class members as being a very important participant in this class activity. Terms such as Hyperbole, Iambic Pentameter, Irony, Metaphor, Meter, Motif, Narrator, Onomatopoeia, Parable Parody, Personification, Plot, Point of View, Prose Protagonist, Rhetoric, Rhythm, Satire, Setting, Soliloquy, Sonnet, Stanza, Stereotype, Structure, Style, Symbol, Synopsis, Theme, Tone, Tragedy and Verse are written on white index cards with their concise definitions on the other side. The students then are called on individually to read their index card to the class. The game begins when the student leader enclosed in the circle calls on the student to give the definition and then waits for another student in their own words to define the definition. Ten points are given for correct answers. It is wise to have the students play the game for thirty minutes. The students also receive additional points for team on task. This is a very simple game but the results are remarkable. The students repeat the game several times each class session, thus building their familiarity with literary terms. This activity helps the students feel much more confident when we begin our discussions on the assigned novels during the nine-week session.

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### Guided Notes

#### Tip for Adult Diploma Classes from [Debby Kanner](#)

Posted January 10, 2011

While lecturing and note-taking should be minimized as a format in an Adult Diploma class, sometimes it is the best way to convey background knowledge in content area subjects. When note-taking is required, it is helpful to provide an outline with major topics and some supporting details provided. Students then fill in the blanks as the teacher closely follows the outline. Following the "lecture" (shouldn't be more than 15 - 20 minutes) students could work in pairs to read through their notes to identify information that might have been missed.

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### One Book for the Whole Class!

#### ESL Tips from [Christine Powers](#)

Posted January 2, 2011

Think out of the box and the copier. One book would make a great listening activity. If the book comes with a CD you can play the CD. The first time ask the students to listen only. In small groups then talk about what they heard. Play it again and ask

them to take notes. This time share their notes with their groups. If you are working in a lower level class you may want to prepare a sheet with some of the vocabulary or put it on the board for them to copy. You can use some of the activities from the book as dictation or put it on the board for students to copy and work on together. If it doesn't come with a CD you can be the reader or even ask a colleague or friend to record the story for you, thus introducing another voice.

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### **Literacy students and the computer**

#### **Tip from Susan Bubp**

Posted December 27, 2010

Whether they are ESOL or ABE students, beginning literacy students know how important it is for them to understand how to use a computer, but are terrified of the prospect of it because they can not read. Although some phonics software programs for adults have been created, students don't seem to find them to be engaging. But some websites designed for kids not only provide good practice with phonemic awareness and phonics, but also they are colorful, fun and interactive. **PBS Kids** has many good sites for phonics practice. Check-out Reading Between the Lions @ <http://pbskids.org/lions/games/> for some great activities to reinforce phonemic awareness and phonics skills while building the student's comfort with a computer in a non-threatening and entertaining way.

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### **Content Learning**

#### **Tip from Robin Letendre**

Posted December 24, 2010

Content Learning is the acquisition of information from written material. Content learning is more than learning facts. Effective and efficient content learning involves higher order thinking skills.

Higher order thinking skills can be defined as:

- Comparing and contrasting
- Determining facts vs. opinions
- Making inferences
- Elaborating
- Summarizing
- Interpreting
- Knowing genre characteristics

Material that is accessible for the average adult learner may not be for many adults with LD. Content learning depends on how well an individual can negotiate the characteristics of a text. Many adults with LD have difficulty with the specific characteristics of text.

Characteristics of text can be defined as:

- Amount of information
- Organization of information
- Difficulty of concepts
- Difficulty of vocabulary
- Text structure

There are four characteristics that can limit an individual's ability to learn content from text. Research has found that adults with LD tend to have weaknesses in the following four areas:

- Reading comprehension
- Listening comprehension
- Working memory
- Higher order processes

~Taken from Learning to Achieve, material developed and prepared by the National Institute for Literacy Module 8

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### **Math Problem Editing**

#### **Tip from Elise Hood**

Posted December 7, 2010

When assigning a set of math problems to your students, make sure you have become very familiar with them yourself. Some of our textbooks and skill-books include a few problems or examples that are even more difficult than some of the examples students will face in real life or on the GED Math Test. I either X these over-the-top items out or circle the numbers I want my students to focus on. Example: The new hand mixer is on sale at a discount store for 14 and 2/3 % off the retail price of \$89.99. How much will the person purchasing this item pay at checkout? I would definitely X this out as I have never seen that particular percentage on an actual practice test or in an actual sale flyer, but I have seen it on a practice sheet. Remember, the book publisher is not in charge of your students, YOU ARE.

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### **Adult Diploma Teachers: Student Leadership**

#### **Tip from Lynda Galard LeBlanc**

Posted November 22, 2010

An easy way to build community and leadership into the Adult Diploma classroom is for the teacher to begin each class with a volunteer to be the class leader. At first the students may hesitate but the reward for them is that this activity will help their class participation grade. The student is assigned specific duties for the night, such as writing the Focus Agenda on the board, delivering the attendance sheet to the secretary, and adding their name under the teacher's name as the leader for the evening.



They are also asked to be the timekeeper or judge for classroom activities. The student leader may also stand in front of the class and lead a guided question-and-answer exercise for the literature review of the novel. They may also be asked to write Character Reviews on the board using Schematics.

This activity also gives the student leader an opportunity to experience being a teacher in the classroom. By the end of the semester, students are volunteering readily, without even being asked. It is enjoyable to see the newfound confidence and renewed self-esteem this leadership activity instills in our Adult Diploma students. For many, it is the first time they have ever been asked to be in a leadership position either at school or in their jobs.

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### **Group Writing**

#### **Tip from Denise Reddington**

Posted November 15, 2010

One way to get students writing and working together is to brainstorm ideas for writing topics together. Be sure to write all student ideas on the board. This activity really helps students get started. They have a list of ideas as well as the correct spelling of words they might use. Students can write a paragraph together or individually. This method works well in a multi-level classroom. Some students may write a paragraph while others develop an essay.

Topics that work well with this activity include:

- The Characteristics of a Good Parent, Good Student, or Good Teacher
- The Best Season of the Year
- What I Like About Living in New Hampshire or What I Don't Like About Living in NH
- The Qualities of a Good Husband or Wife

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### **Reading Comprehension**

#### **ESL Tips from Christine Powers**

Posted November 8, 2010

Many ESL students feel insecure in reading a passage without their dictionary handy. This technique will give them the confidence they need. Find a short article and cover either the left or right side of it with a blank piece of paper and make a copy. They now have half of the story. Ask them to read what they have and talk in pairs about the article. You can ask a few comprehension questions and they will be surprised when they are able to answer them. Finish by giving the whole story to the students and see how good they feel about themselves and their dictionary-free reading. If you can be sure the students won't peek, you can give them the whole article and ask them to fold it in half!

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### **Community Connection II**

#### **Tip for Adult Diploma Classes from Debby Kanner**

Posted November 1, 2010

It is a constructive experience for our students to meet individuals who provide services to the community. State representatives are very willing to visit local classrooms to discuss state government and its impact on the lives of New Hampshire citizens. There is no better way to promote good citizenship than to demonstrate to students how significantly state and local governance directly affects their lives. The state website, [www.nh.gov](http://www.nh.gov), and [www.frontdoorpolitics.com](http://www.frontdoorpolitics.com), provide information about current legislation being considered. Students are always impressed by the fact that state senators and representatives are volunteers, earning only \$100 a year. They will also learn that any citizen can suggest legislation through their state representatives. This can generate lessons in letter writing, advocacy, and even statistical analysis regarding the cost of proposed programs. Other guests might include representatives from the police department, district attorney's office, or local agencies. Representatives of agencies such as SASS (Sexual Abuse) or NH Works are also very willing to visit classes.

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### **Place Value**

#### **Tip from Susan Bulp**

Posted October 25, 2010

Surprisingly, many students don't really understand place value...even with whole numbers. This becomes apparent when students can't read large numbers, don't align numbers properly when adding or subtracting, have difficulty with regrouping in adding and subtracting, are stymied by zeroes in subtraction and division, and can't make reasonable estimates about answers to word problems. Most workbooks give nominal attention to place value in the form of a page or two at the beginning of the book, so teachers will have to dig for more ways to practice and reinforce this important foundation skill. One fun activity is to find a newspaper article with lots of numbers. Then create a chart with one, tens, hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, hundred thousands, millions, etc. and ask students to write the numbers from the article onto the chart. The more students see and practice the connection between place value and numbers in "real life," the better.

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### **Writing Disabilities**

#### **Tip from Robin Letendre**

Posted October 18, 2010

Writing Disabilities, referred to as written expression disabilities, or dysgraphia, are a type of specific learning disability.

#### **Dysgraphia can manifest itself as difficulties with:**

1. Transcription: The specific to the process of writing. It is the production of letters and spelling required for a written product. Transcription draws on processes involved in retrieving letter forms and familiar word spellings from long-term memory, strategically spelling novel words and motor planning to produce letter by hand.

- Handwriting
- Spelling

2. Generation: The translation of ideas into written language. First, ideas must be retrieved from memory and then expressed in a way that others can understand.

- Composition, for example, trouble putting thoughts on paper

Dysgraphia is a deficiency in the ability to write, regardless of the ability to read.

Taken from [Learning to Achieve](#), material developed and prepared by the National Institute for Literacy Module 7

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### Reality Math

#### Tip from [Elise Hood](#)

Posted October 11, 2010

When introducing fractions, spend a little time cutting similar size papers in halves, fourths, eighths and even sixteenths. Seeing how fractions actually work visually and kinetically can make a big difference. When working with  $1/3$ ,  $2/3$ ,  $1/6$ , and  $1/12$ , use egg cartons with colored plastic Easter eggs or colored pom-poms. Students can visually see that  $4/12$  will equal  $1/3$ , that  $2/12$  will equal  $1/6$ , that  $8/12$  equals  $2/3$ , and that  $9/12$  equals  $3/4$ . When teaching measurement, have rulers, yardsticks, tape measure, gallon jugs, quarts, and pints available for students to handle, talk about, and use. Let them go to the sink and discover for themselves how many cups in a pint, how many pints in a quart, and how many quarts in a gallon. Leave these measuring tools around the room while you are working on these skills. Do plenty of follow up paperwork practice after your students have a general idea on sizes in measurements.

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### Adult Diploma Teachers: Students Love Poetry Night!

#### Tip from [Lynda Galard LeBlanc](#)

Posted October 4, 2010

In the middle of each term, I plan my curriculum for "poetry night," two class sessions when the Adult Diploma students write and read their own poetry. The two-session curriculum includes the teacher selecting some of her favorite poems and reading them to the class. Afterwards a student reads, in his/her own voice, the teacher's poetry selection again to the class. The other students participate by writing down what the poem means to them. Appropriate music may be used for background effect. Then each student writes their own individual poems (they must fit into the genre of the course); these poems are then read aloud by the teacher and then again by another classmate (one with a good speaking voice).

This technique of reading poetry out loud illustrates effectively to students that, just like in writing, hearing a poem once is not enough as far as understanding and interpreting the meaning of a poem is concerned. This activity also leads to a lively discussion among the student author of the poem, the classmates who interpreted it, and the teacher, all of them sitting together in the round.

The results of this classroom work are then compiled into a booklet (a student volunteers to copy it for points), and a colorful cover, complete with artwork, is created by a student volunteer (one who has an artistic streak); that student's name is listed on the cover. A copy of the completed booklet is given to each student, who may keep it as a memento of their participation in "poetry night" in their Adult Diploma class.

This project is really quite simple to organize (especially after doing it once), but please feel free to call if you need some help. I have found "poetry night" to provide some of those memorable moments that remind us why we teach in an Adult Diploma program with all its many rewards and at times difficult challenges.

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### Writing Samples

#### Tip from [Denise Reddington](#)

Posted September 27, 2010

It's very helpful to get a sample of a student's writing soon after they begin a class. It's also a way for students to let you know what they are thinking. Below are some of the topics that have been successful with my students.

*Please write all that you can about one of the following topics or any topic of your choice. Do your best but don't worry about spelling.*

- My Goals
  - My Life
  - What School Was Like For Me
  - What I Hope To Accomplish By Coming Back To School
  - What My Life Will Be Like In 10 Years
  - My Children
  - My Dream Job
  - My Dream Vacation
  - If I Won \$1,000,000!
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### Show and Tell

#### Tip from [Chris Powers](#)

Posted September 20, 2010

Yes – this age old activity is good in the adult ESL classroom. It is a "shield" for the ESL student that will allow them a bit of comfort to talk behind. In ABE and diploma classes this activity could be used to promote class community within the first few weeks of school.

Everyone has something special in their life and without too much prodding would be happy to talk about it. Be the leader – as the teacher share one thing with your class that is special to you – a pen, a coin, a picture, I am sure you get the idea! Tell your

students why it is special, why you have it or carry it with you. Where did it come from? Who gave it to you and how would you feel if you lost it?

Ask the students to bring something to class that they would like to talk about. Limit the presentation time to no more than 2 minutes. You can decide if there should be questions from the class or limit it to presentations. If your students write in journals in each class have them write what they learned about a classmate. How did it make them feel? Did they want to laugh? Did it make them smile or maybe feel a bit sad?

Students who know something about the other students in the class tend to support each other and take an interest in one another rather than come to class just for the credit, GED or English grammar.

Give this a try – be a kid again!

### Getting Organized

#### Tip from [Susan Bulp](#)

Posted September 6, 2010

Requiring that students get a three-ring binder is only the first step in helping your students to be organized. For many students, having subject dividers in a notebook is also meaningless because they don't understand how to categorize their class work. So it lies on the teacher's shoulders to teach these important organizing and categorizing skills. The first step is to ask each student to have their binders divided into the subjects you cover in class such as *reading, maps, spelling, writing, and math*. Then when handing out papers, designate where the paper should be filed by writing the subject on the top of each paper. After students get the idea, stop writing the subject on the top of the page and discuss where the class thinks the papers should be filed. Eventually students will develop the skill to categorize their work independently. Classifying and categorizing skills are necessary for many cognitive tasks, so doing this in a concrete way is time well-spent.

### Reading Components and Reading Disabilities

#### Tip from [Robin Letendre](#)

Posted July 29, 2010

#### Reading Components

1. phonemic awareness
2. decoding
3. fluency
4. vocabulary
5. comprehension

Phonemic awareness is the ability to detect individual sounds within words. This means when we hear the word "bag", we can distinguish three distinct sounds, the /b/, /a/, and /g/. We don't need to see the word to know this.

Decoding is the ability to recognize words in print using letter-sound correspondences and sometimes larger word parts like prefixes and suffixes.

Fluency is the ability to read smoothly and at a reasonable rate with little effort. Fluent readers also use appropriate phrasing and expression, indicating an understanding of the writer's message.

Vocabulary knowledge is understanding the words in a passage and being able to connect them to what we already know.

Comprehension is understanding what we are reading, and rereading when something is not clear.

#### A reading disability or RD is:

- A reading proficiency below an individual's expected proficiency given his or her age, intelligence, education or professional experience.
- A specific type of learning disability.
- Span a broad range, from those who cannot read at all, non-readers, to individuals who struggle with particular aspects of reading.
- Often referred to as dyslexia, however, dyslexia is actually a combination of reading problems, in particular, trouble accurately and fluently decoding single words, as well as issues with spelling.

~Taken from Learning to Achieve, material developed prepared by the National Institute for Literacy Module 4

### Classroom Community

#### ESL Tips from [Christine Powers](#)

Posted July 11, 2010

Create a community of learners within the walls of your classroom. Encourage students to share something about themselves that they would like others to know. Name tents help students to learn each others names and besides writing their name on the tent ask them to draw or write something about themselves that they want all to know. As you circulate the room you can personalize a conversation with each student. In the beginning of the year it is a good way for students to learn the names of their classmates. You can use it as a grammar lesson to work on pronouns. During the year revisit the cards and have students ask more questions of each other. They may find they have more in common as the year goes on.

### Community Connections

#### Tip for Adult Diploma Classes from [Debby Kanner](#)

Posted June 24, 2010

An important goal of Adult Education is empowering our students to advocate for themselves and to connect with their communities. Healthy living requires the ability to locate resources and engage in meaningful social interactions. Early in the semester it is useful to have students visit their town's website and research information about town government, service agencies, and recreation opportunities. Many of us are unaware of the names of town officials and state representatives. This exercise serves as an ice breaker as students share information about where they live, how long they have been in the area, or what schools they have attended. An assignment might be for each student to make one new contact in their community. Suggestions might include obtaining a library card, attending a town event such as a fair or a farmer's market, visiting a local museum or historical society, volunteering at the SPCA, or attending a town meeting.

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### Health Science Information

#### Tip from Denise Reddington

Posted June 6, 2010

Click on this amazing website if you're looking for health science information to use with ESOL, ABE, or GED students.

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorial.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorial.html)

- Fantastic site of interactive health education tutorials
- Animated graphics and easy to read language
- Is read aloud and you can choose questions or no questions
- A free site with no ads or registration

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### Teaching Drama

#### Tip from Elise Hood

Posted June 6, 2010

When preparing students for the GED Language Arts Reading test we need to expose them to fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama. Drama seems to be a obvious form of literature, but this is not always so for students. Start with a simple play and assign parts to your more comfortable readers. Teach drama vocabulary like act, scene, cast list, characters, stage directions etc. Let the students with assigned parts go off a few minutes and read through their parts at least once. I call this "dress rehearsal". Then, the return and read through the play "with feeling, acting out the stage directions but not reading them. Continue to use scripts of more difficulty and include other students. Besides helping with reading comprehension and literature, this activity will cement your classroom community.

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### Adult Diploma Teachers: A Special Calling

#### Tip from Lynda Galard LeBlanc

Posted June 1, 2010

An Adult Diploma teacher is a special calling. We are faced with the daunting challenge of motivating students who have, for one reason or another, fallen through the cracks of the normal high school experience. Many of them have the ability and even the desire to learn, but they are not always aware of their skills and capacities. And they do not always see the purpose of learning. So we have to find innovative ways to get them to allow themselves to achieve academically and strive for personal success.

One of the best ways to get off to a good start is to be honest with the students: tell them that this program is a unique opportunity for them to turn around their poor academic record and start over again fresh with learning. I think it is important to impress upon them that the course they are taking with you is designed to be a serious and rigorous academic experience. Students should be told that they will be held to high standards, strict accountability, and regular attendance. But if they rise to this challenge and meet your expectations, they will find the class to have been a highly rewarding and enriching academic experience.

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### Reading Comprehension

#### Tip from Susan Bubp

Posted May 18, 2010

Typical reading comprehension questions ask who, what, where, when, why and how. These questions actually test comprehension rather than teach students how to comprehend. So instead of solely relying on the workbook approach to teaching comprehension, teach students how to make connections with what they are reading and what they know already, with other things that they have read, and with things they've heard about in the world. Have them practice paraphrasing what they've read. By all means teach them that rereading is something that all good readers do! Stress that reading is an active process and that the reader must ask questions while he/she reads and even make predictions about what will happen later in the text. Readers must learn to read between the lines and make judgments about what is important and what is not. Finally, help students to learn how to create mental pictures of what they're reading so they are fully engaged with the text.

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### Teaching Vocabulary

#### Tip from Denise Reddington

Posted May 10, 2010

**What research, experience, and many wonderful students have taught me:**

1. Vocabulary lessons should be *meaningful and purposeful* to the students.
2. Encourage students to read and define as many words as possible before teaching them.
3. Introduce new vocabulary by category or topic, such as law words, government words, geography words, or solar system words.
4. Students should practice ways to define unknown words by using context clues.
5. When reading independently, students should highlight or underline any words that they want to review or ask about.

6. Preview new vocabulary before oral reading so students are comfortable with pronunciation.
7. Read orally often and discuss the meaning of new words at the end of each paragraph.
8. Use pictures or visual images, as much as possible, to help learners understand and remember new words. Keep a collection handy and collect them everywhere.
9. Students should repeatedly use new vocabulary in a variety of ways: *read, see, say, write, and use*.
10. Using a dictionary can be very frustrating for students.

**Teachers and tutors might recommend that students:**

- Use an intermediate or school dictionary
- Look for definitions in the back of workbooks
- Look for definitions in bold print or on the side of the page
- Use context clues to get meaning
- Ask others for definitions when possible
- Use an electronic dictionary

**Please Note:** Order ABE/GED Science & Social Studies Vocabulary Lessons & Activities by Denise Reddington free from the NH Bureau of Adult Education Mini-Grant Program. The order form can be found [here!](#)

**Creating Community**

**Tip from Susan Bulp**

Posted 4/28/10

Create community by allowing time at the beginning of every class for people to have a time to discuss something going on their lives. After people get used to this, everyone usually enjoys having the floor. But one caveat-- before you start this routine, tell the class how much time will be allotted for the activity, so they will understand that they must keep their turn to speak to a reasonable time limit. Some students may "over share," so the teacher must be tactful about facilitating the discussion and keeping to time limits. Shy individual's comments may be very brief, but they too will benefit from the activity. After establishing this custom for a few weeks, students will get used to the routine and look forward to their time to connect with you and with the group. When people in the group feel like they know each other and care about each other, they have created a sense of community.

**Adult Diploma Teachers: Student Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

**Tip from Lynda Galard LeBlanc**

Posted 4/15/10

I have found that using a simple Student Self-Assessment questionnaire [adapted from *Keys to the Classroom* (Corwin Press)] on the first day of class in the Adult Diploma classroom helps guarantee success. This brief questionnaire has proven invaluable to me as far as individualizing each student's unique educational needs and learning styles. I refer to it continually throughout the term as I plan my curriculum and correct written assignments.

**Student name, email, and cell**

**Write a sentence about each of the following statements:**

1. I like school.
2. I am a responsible person.
3. I have many friends.
4. I have a close friend.
5. I like to read.
6. I am comfortable reading aloud.

**What I Think about Writing:**

1. How do I feel about writing?
2. The kind of writing I enjoy most are: stories, poems, reports, plays, songs, newspaper articles
3. The hardest thing about writing is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The best things I have ever written were \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The reason they were so good was \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Some of the things I would like to do better in my writing are \_\_\_\_\_.

**What I Think about Reading:**

1. How do I feel about reading?
2. How much time do I read and when do I do it?
3. What are the best books or stories I have ever read?
4. What are the things I don't like about reading?
5. What way will I become a better reader?

**Federal Laws That Affect Individuals with Learning Disabilities****Tip from Robin Letendre**

Posted 4/7/10

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

- Limited to children and adolescents from birth through school age, up to 21 years
- Provides for an identification and diagnostic process that is the responsibility of schools
- Establishes an entitlement to services
- Provides direct funding to schools for special education and related services

**Rehabilitation Act of 1973, also known as the Rehab Act**

- Applies to an individual of any age
- Extends past secondary education to post-secondary education and employment
- Provides for reasonable accommodations
- Requires self-disclosure
- Places responsibility on the individual with a disability to provide his or her own documentation of the disability
- Provides funding to state rehabilitation agencies for direct services for employment-related training, education and support

**Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) ADA was enacted in 1990, and amended in 2008, thus why it is called ADAAA**

- Extends concepts of the Rehab Act
  - Access to all aspects of society for individual with disabilities
- Like the Rehab Act
  - age
  - Self-disclosure
  - reasonable accommodations
- Unlike the Rehab Act
  - no funding

*Taken from Learning to Achieve, material developed and prepared by the National Institute for Literacy Module 3*

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**Modeling****Tip for Adult Diploma Classes from Debby Kanner**

Posted 3/29/10

One of the biggest challenges in teaching an Adult Diploma class is the range of student ages and abilities. It is important not to assume that students come to class equipped with the set of skills one might expect from a typical high school student. Before requiring students to write an essay, research paper, or response paper independently, it is helpful to model the activity by breaking down the process into steps and following through that process as a class. Using graphics to "map" the process provides a visual outline to reinforce learning.

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**Memory Games****Tip from Elise Hood**

Posted 3/23/10

Everyone seems to like games. You can use basic simple memory games for a variety of subjects. In English, make half the cards a complete subject and another set of cards, complete predicates. Matching the two sets will give practice in reading and comprehension. Also, if you develop the cards with singular, plural, and complex subjects and predicates, your students will be practicing subject-verb agreement. In math, you can make a set of fractions and decimals and let students determine the match. These games are also fun for students to create themselves. To make the project as simple as possible, use index cards and markers. Both items can be found at "dollar stores" or other discount stores.

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**Teamwork Worksheets****ESL Tip from Christine Powers**

Posted 3/12/10

When you find a good paper activity that will reinforce a skill use it as a class activity to encourage conversation. Each student does not need to finish the page so assign a few numbers to a pair of students. The pairs then split and join another classmate to form a new pair. These "experts" share their answers and then split again. This continues until the page is finished. This leads to a lot of speaking practice as well as writing and gets the students up and moving.

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**Teaching in a Multi-level Classroom****Tip from Denise Reddington**

Posted 3/5/10

If you are an adult education teacher in New Hampshire, chances are you are teaching in a multi-level classroom. Organizing a class with different level learners can be challenging. Listed below are some things to consider when working in a multi-level classroom that may be helpful.

**1. INVOLVE STUDENTS IN PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING**

Guide your students into taking charge of their learning as much as possible. They decide on how much homework is right for them, correct their own work, decide when something is too easy and go on, ask for extra work when needed. Assess progress often and adjust as needed.

**2. ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE "COMMUNITY" IN YOUR CLASSROOM**

Always introduce new students to the class and point out others with common goals. Throw questions back to the class; correct work together, share writing, work in small groups or pairs. Have "fun" worksheets handy to do together.

**3. STAY ORGANIZED**

Use folders to keep track of individual learners and group lessons. Have students keep track of their own work.

**4. BE FLEXIBLE**

Have a variety of lessons and individual work on hand to use. Always be listening and paying attention to the needs of the group as well as the individual.

**5. SET RULES THAT EVERYONE KNOWS AND FOLLOWS**

Don't disrupt other students learning, be positive, don't ever answer for another student unless asked, listen to and respect others.

**6. STAY UPBEAT, POSITIVE, & ENTHUSIASTIC WITH STUDENTS.**

Humor and laughter is a very good thing.

**7. GET HELP**

Volunteers or assistant teachers can be very helpful.

**Concept of Specific Learning Disability****Tip from Robin Letendre**

Posted 2/28/10

The concept of specific learning disability can be defined with six key points.

1. The concept of specific learning disability, or SLD, is valid and is supported by strong converging evidence.
2. Specific Learning Disabilities are neurologically based, and intrinsic to the individual.
3. Individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities show intra-individual differences in skills and abilities.
4. Specific Learning Disabilities persist across the lifetime.
5. Specific Learning Disabilities may occur in combination with other disabling conditions, but they are not due to other conditions, such as mental retardation, behavioral disturbances, lack of opportunities to learn, or primary sensory deficits.
6. Specific Learning Disabilities are evidenced across ethnic, cultural, language and economic groups.

(Taken from Learning to Achieve, material developed and prepared by the National Institute for Literacy Module 1)

**Add Color to Lessons****Tip from Elise Hood**

Posted 2/18/10

Just because you are teaching adults, don't think crayons or markers should never be used. There are many lessons that will be enhanced if a little color is added. The color can expand your students' learning capacity and their retention. When working with maps, using markers to enhance certain geographic areas really makes sense. When teaching latitude and longitude, use two different colors to make a visual connection in the brain. In math, preparing graphs and making color-coded liquid capacity charts can catch your students' attention. Even in writing, you can have students sketch something from their past and then use their picture as a writing prompt.

To get started, put a mug, cup or any container of markers in the middle of classroom tables or desks. Encourage students to use these markers when appropriate. There are students who will resist or think this is "kiddish". But, after a while most will participate. Do not worry if a few never want to use them. It happens.

**Walking and Talking****Tip for Adult Diploma Classes from Debby Kanner**

Posted 2/11/10

A great way to get acquainted with your students on the first night of class in September is to go for a themed walk. For a social studies class the walk could feature local monuments, public buildings, or historic markers. Science students might focus on local flora or weather and a math class might do some measurements or try orienteering. Walking provides a non-threatening opportunity for class members to chat with each other and the teacher, thereby becoming more comfortable. Remember to ask the program director or counselor to notify students as they register so that they will dress appropriately!



**Adult Diploma Teachers: Classroom Management Tips****Tip from Lynda Galard LeBlanc**

Posted 2/3/10

I enjoy the challenge of getting the students in the Adult Diploma program engaged in literature. Many of these students do not care much for reading when they enter my courses, but I have been successful in getting them to develop a love for, and appreciation of, the pleasures of reading great works of literature, whether they be works by Shakespeare, F. Scott Fitzgerald, or Arthur Miller.

Here are a few classroom management tips I have shared with other Adult Diploma teachers across the state to help them build a successful classroom community. By implementing these easy strategies and techniques with your students, you will find that they will soon feel comfortable and, even more importantly, they will develop a strong sense of community within their individual classroom.

Some classroom practices and activities that have proven particularly effective for me include the following:

- making the students accountable (for attending class regularly and being on time, for completing reading and writing assignments by their due date, etc.)
- structuring the class in an orderly way so that there will not be any surprises (e.g., I put a focus agenda – or “road map” – on the blackboard at the start of each class so that the students know exactly where we will be going during the remainder of the class session, and at the end of each class session, in a free-write activity, I have them answer the question: “What have I learned today in class?”)
- instituting a leadership program (one of the students volunteers each class session to be the group’s unofficial leader)
- utilizing catch phrases that grab the students’ interest and attention (I label one of our reading comprehension and textual interpretation activities “detective hunt”)
- implementing active learning and active questioning (e.g., students regularly do structured pairs work and small-group work, during mini-lectures I use the “think-pair-share” technique, etc.)
- exposing students to works of critical literature that interpret many of the texts they are reading.

**Fluency Writing****ESL Tip from Christine Powers**

Posted 1/27/10

Transfer this skill from speaking to writing. Have the students discuss a topic in small groups to get ideas for writing. Limit this to about 10 minutes, leaving the students wanting to talk more. Next ask them to date a page in their notebooks and write for 3 minutes. They are not to use a dictionary or worry about spelling or grammar. The pencil and paper must be in contact for the 3 minutes. The first few times if they can not think of anything to write let them know they can write their name, address, children’s names, grocery list – anything, as long as the pencil and paper are working together.

At the end of the given time have the students read what they have written out loud to themselves. It is fun to listen to all of the voices! Initially the students may feel a bit silly but as you continue the activity in each class they become comfortable with it and look forward to it. Dating the page each time allows the students to look back and see how they have progressed.

**Essay Writing****Tip from Susan Bubb**

Posted 1/18/10

One way to give students additional experience with essay structure is to cut-up an essay into paragraphs and ask students to reconstruct the essay into the whole. When choosing an essay for this exercise, make sure the introduction, body and conclusion are quite clearly denoted with transitional words like “first of all,” “next,” “in conclusion”, etc. Students can highlight the transition words to help them justify and understand their organizational strategy. This exercise works particularly well if students work in pairs so they can discuss their thinking; then everyone can come together as a large group to discuss the results. Eventually, you can try this technique with essays that the students have written.

**Lesson Planning Help****Tip from Christine Powers**

Posted 2/14/07

Do you have trouble finding just the right idea or activity for your lesson? Do you find yourself looking for a new “hook” to get your students motivated? Do you find planning time a difficult thing to fit into your busy schedule? If your answer is yes to any or all of these questions then I have a book for you!

“ZERO PREP Ready-to-Go Activities for the Language Classroom”

by Laurel Pollard & Natalie Hess

Alta Book Center Publishers

ISBN 1-882483-64-2

This book is set up into seven chapters covering the four skill areas as well as ice breakers, vocabulary and structure. The activities are written very clearly with simple, easy to read directions. The level it is intended for, the aim of the activity and the procedure to carry it out as well as variations for some activities are included. With a little bit of experience and time you will find yourself thinking of new ways to use some of the ideas.

An example of an Ice Breaker: “MY ADJECTIVE”

This is suggested as a Monday morning wakeup to encourage conversation as well as a focus on adjectives. Students brainstorm adjectives that can be used to describe people. This can be done in small groups or as a class. They then choose the adjective that best describes them at that moment. They mingle throughout the class telling each other which adjective they have chosen and why. They can then talk about what classmates told them in plenary.

This could be expanded by having students choose a few classmates to write about. This lesson can lead to work with comparisons and superlatives as well as the use of pronouns.

An example of a Writing Lesson : "CLOZE DICTATION"

This activity promotes attention to detail and student self-correction.

It is for beginning to advanced levels and works on spelling, vocabulary and content review.

Choose a passage the students have read. It should be about 2 paragraphs, less for beginners. In pairs have the students create 2 cloze passages with different words left out in each. Next have each pair trade with another pair and then dictate to each other the passage with the left out words. When both dictations are finished they should be the same and they can check by looking at the original.

This requires little teacher work but the students have practice in writing sentences in the correct word order with the correct punctuation.

These are only two of the 100 activities that are in this great book. It is handy for the times you are tired and need a quick lesson and for those times when you need an idea to stretch to meet the needs of your class.

If you have this book let me know how you have used it. If not, put it on your wish list for materials to get. As with all ideas and lessons, think about how else you could use any of the ideas in this book.

Posted by Christine Powers

### Here's A Great New Book About Writing!

Tip from [Susan Bubp](#)

Posted 9/8/06

Mary Pipher's newest book, *Writing to Change the World*, (ISBN 1-59448-920-3, Riverhead Books, 2006) should be on the nightstand of every adult educator. Whether you're a teacher or administrator, or a little of both like me, you'll find this book to be both useful and inspirational.

One section is devoted entirely on writing to elected officials... (We're no strangers to that) According to Pipher, "Politicians pay attention to personal stories about the impact policies have on voters. They are also influenced by letters of appreciation. Many politicians said they choke up when they receive thank-you notes. I inferred from this that gratitude is in short supply for people in public life."

She goes on to give some concrete guidelines when writing to your political representatives:

- Respect your reader
- Find common ground
- Keep to what you hold in common
- Empathize with the person
- Say what you want to achieve
- Say what actions you would hope the recipient will take
- Keep your language simple
- Avoid academic language and acronyms
- Be hopeful
- Use the "sandwich method" to place any criticism between two positive comments
- Always end your letter with a suggestion for action

Every chapter is loaded with stories of the power of words. Pipher's goal in writing this book is "to help you translate your passion and idealism into action. This is not a book on how to write; rather, it's a book on how to write in order to improve the world."

### Practical Learning Disability Resources

Posted 11/5/06

Over the last few years, the educational resources developed by Dr. Richard Cooper for learning disabled students have been of value to me. Although he is not in the business of creating educational materials for marketing purposes, Dr. Cooper has made many of his resources available in an inexpensive catalog. These resources have proven useful at the his Center for Alternative Learning in Havertown, Pennsylvania. Dr. Cooper, who has 'learning differences' himself, developed these simple instruction booklets and tools which are not sold elsewhere. One appeal of these tools is that they are related to specific difficulties that a student may be experiencing. Dr. Cooper (and recently some other professionals) identifies and addresses specific difficulties rather than general learning disabilities. Dr. Cooper uses specific phrases such as 'students who have difficulty keeping their work organized on a page'.

My first recommendation is an instruction manual for the Tic Tac Toe math system. This technique uses grids to help 'students who have problems with multiplication and division'. Using the system, I have found that it is possible for students to learn their math times tables and solve problems related to multiplication and long division. This technique uses visual spatial memory effectively.

The Cooper Screening of Information Processing has a long and short form. The short form takes about ten minutes. The longer form helps teachers develop an educational plan based on its findings. There is also a Spanish form for those able to use it.

The Mnemonic Guidebook lists guidelines and examples for effective mnemonics. The mnemonic technique employs clues for memorization that help 'students having difficulties with memorization'.

A Packet of Dice is another inexpensive tool used for teaching 'students with difficulties learning number facts and organizing their numbers'. The packet includes a set of 16 die, eight white and eight red, which are used for assessing organizational skills and increasing speed with number facts.

The Modified Rulers are another device that can be used to reduce confusion for 'those who have difficulties learning measurement'. These rulers keep the inch and half inch labels directly below the actual distances.

The Comprehension Companion provides notepads printed with the words 'who, what, when, where and how' on the front, and 'why and summary' on the back. 'Students with difficulties remembering and organizing what they read' can use the sheets as bookmarks and write notes as they read.

Another resource worth mentioning is the graph paper with half plain and half graph lines to help 'students who have difficulty keeping their math calculations straight'. There are also clock faces with the minutes printed on them, and a talking math calculator for 'students who need to hear the numbers when they enter them'. Finally, there is a discrete checkbook insert for those who resist writing checks because they can't spell the number words correctly.

These and many other teaching aids are available in the Learning Disabilities Catalog. I have found them useful in my own work with students with learning difficulties and I hope you will find them helpful as well. The catalog can also be found on line at [www.learningdifferences.com](http://www.learningdifferences.com) or requested by calling 1-800-869-8336.

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