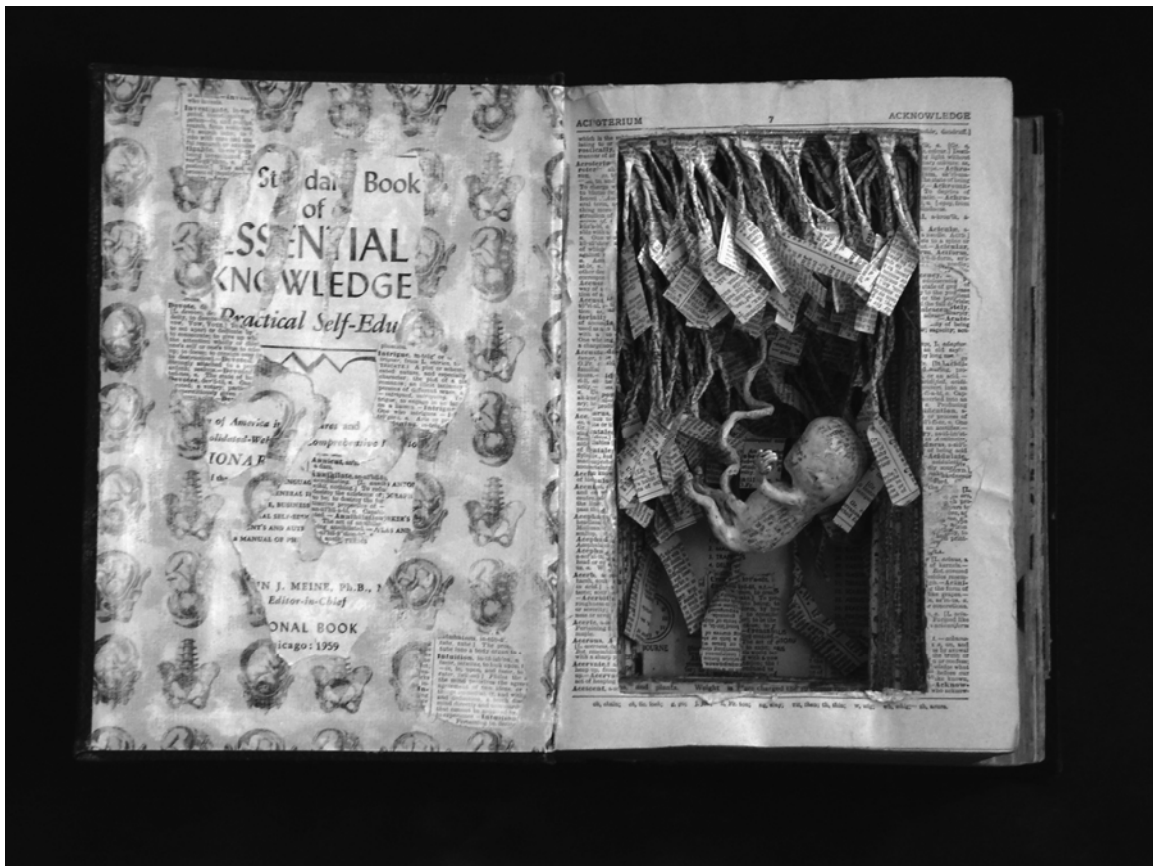


JALM

JOURNAL OF
ADULT LEARNING
IN MANITOBA

Volume 1 2007
ASEC MANITOBA



**Literacy –Expanding
the Definition to
Create a New Kind
of Adult Literacy
Classroom**

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the ASEC Story**

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**The History of
Manitoba's Adult
Literacy Programs**

MARION TERRY, Ph.D.

JALM

The Journal for Adult Learning in Manitoba is published annually by **Adult Secondary Education Council (ASEC) Manitoba**. JALM is committed to encouraging new research and the dissemination of Manitoba-based research in the area of adult learning in Manitoba -- specifically adult literacy and secondary education. JALM has a refereed section for which articles are subject to a peer review process before being accepted.

JALM also publishes articles of best teaching practice and resource reviews which do not have to undergo peer review for publication.

JALM Coordinator

Marc SCHAEFFER

ASEC Manitoba

JALM Steering Committee

Dr. Marlene ATLEO

University of Manitoba

Anna BEAUCHAMP

Adult Learning & Literacy

Province of Manitoba

Gerry MOORE

Winnipeg Technical College

Dawn ROMANOWSKI

Stevenson Britannia

Adult Literacy Program

Dr. Marion TERRY

Brandon University

Website

www.asecmanitoba.ca

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Designer

Kae Sasaki

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Call for Papers for JALM Volume 2, 2008

INTRODUCTION **Marc Schaeffer** Editor, JALM

The Journal of Adult Learning in Manitoba launches into publication with this, its first issue. This first issue serves as both a source of quality information relevant to the sector of adult learning in Manitoba and an open invitation to our sector's researchers, literacy practitioners and other adult educators to produce and submit articles for consideration.

JALM launched its first call for papers in March 2007 and by the deadline of August 15th we had received around a dozen articles of various lengths submitted by people in Manitoba. The time-taking process peer review process began for research articles. Some of the articles submitted were not able to complete the peer-review process by the time this issue went to press and will be considered for our next of many issues to come out in October 2008. Articles that were not intended for peer-review were selected by me and approved by the **JALM** steering committee.

Our first issue exemplified **JALM's** desire to represent research relevant to adult literacy and adult secondary education. **Dawn Romanowski**, a literacy practitioner at Stevenson Britannia Adult Literacy Program, wrote the article that you will find first in the journal. It is an action research case study on her literacy classroom in which she describes the importance of valuing and developing the multiple-literacies of her students.

Mike Talgoy of Yellowquill College wrote a short review of a methodology called "Microchemistry" which extols the benefits to students of using small amounts of chemicals to do chemistry labs without the necessity of Adult Learning Centres outlaying capital for an expensive laboratory.

The next article is a perspectives piece written by **Anna Beauchamp**, registrar for Adult Learning & Literacy, Province of Manitoba. This article overviews the history of ASEC and through ASEC of the adult secondary education movement from its inception until today. This article perfectly situates the birth of **JALM** while at the same time segueing into the next and last article.

Our peer-reviewed section contains one article this issue by **Dr. Marion Terry** of Brandon University. Her article comprehensively reviews the history of literacy education in Manitoba over the last hundred years.

It is through knowledge of the past that we can affect the present and the future and so these two articles about the history of adult secondary education and literacy in Manitoba is an excellent starting place for **JALM**.

JALM will build on the strengths of this issue in making our second of many annual volumes better and better. To do this we are putting out a general call to the readership of **JALM** for research articles for peer review and non-peer review. Non-peer review articles involve articles describing best practice, resource reviews, and perspectives. Please consider applying to act as a peer reviewer for **JALM** articles or to write book reviews, supply photographs and send us announcement for relevant events.

Practitioner Research
Literacy – Expanding
The Definition to Create
A New Kind of Adult
Literacy Classroom

Dawn Romanowski
Stevenson Britannia Adult
Literacy Program

“Literacy is primarily something people do; it is an activity located in the space between thought and text. Literacy does not reside in people’s heads as a set of skills to be learned, and it does not just reside on paper, captured as texts to be analyzed. Like all human activity, literacy is essentially social, and it is located in the interaction between people” Barton and Hamilton (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p. 10).

Once I began to internalize the notion that there was far more to literacy than conventional reading and writing, I began to see the positive implications this ideology could have in an adult literacy classroom. The idea that there are multiple literacies (such as music, drama, art) that students bring with them to any class, coupled with the reality that new kinds of literacy are being used every day by some of our students (text messaging, chat rooms, emails) helped me to see the word “literate” in a whole new way.

When I was given an opportunity to put this theory to practice in a small basic literacy classroom of my own, I found that, when embraced as a “social practice” and viewed as “changing participation” (Larson and Marsh, 2005, p. 10, p. 9) literacy is all around us, just waiting to be experienced.

Incorporating New Literacy Studies, Critical Literacy and Sociocultural – Historical Theory (encompassing as it does some tried and true methods and ideas straight from elementary and EAL classrooms) into my classroom, as well as bringing technology in where possible, I endeavored to create a space where students could be an integral part of a community, where they could learn to value the literacies that they brought with them. I wanted to create a new kind of literacy classroom where students who had previously been relegated to individual work could be part of a team, celebrating the skills and knowledge that they already possessed, while participating fully in a memorable learning experience fueled by their own interests and inquiries. I wanted to make reading and writing purposeful

and meaningful to my students. I wanted to open the world to them, and encourage them to take part.

My Classroom

My literacy classroom is comprised of very diverse people, with differing abilities and experiences. The same could be said of any classroom. What sets my classroom apart is not necessarily that the students deal with such things as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Developmental Delay, Autism or reading difficulties in general – this is also a norm in many literacy classrooms. What set my students apart was that they wanted more than the regular classroom could provide.

Having taught adult literacy classes over a number of years, I understand the difficulties teachers face trying to maintain a cohesive whole in a literacy classroom, while also meeting the individual needs of each student. To ensure that each student is learning is one thing, but to ensure that each student feels important, recognized and a part of the group is an essential, often daunting task in any diverse group of students.

I have often found that, in a literacy group where the majority of students are at a particular level, the easiest route is to address the majority as a whole, in terms of group discussions, readings and writing activities. This leaves the rest of the students, usually the ones in most need of help, to do individualized versions of the assignment, or something completely different from the rest of the class. I often wondered how it must feel to be relegated to separate tasks, to be blatantly set apart in such a way.

In the past, my classes were usually 10 to 15 students; mostly working at level two with three to five students working at or below level one in reading and writing. I have always felt that students who need more help require more than just a volunteer tutor, as important a resource as volunteers are. They need more than the most one-on-one time that the teacher can squeeze out of his or her busy day. They need to be an integral part of the community; they need the opportunity to learn from one another, to help one another and to realize that they have a great deal to contribute. If literacy is indeed found in the interaction between people, group interaction among students is necessary to effective literacy teaching.

In my classroom, I had the chance to see this idea in action. I had six students, mostly working at level one. Most of them seemed at first as though they might be career literacy students, unaware of their potential and of the opportunities available to them. I

wanted to inspire them to move out into the world. Finally the group in need of the most attention could be my focus; they would not be shipped off to individually work with a tutor, they would not be kept busy with something until I could break away from the group and get to them, they would be the heart of the classroom – which is as it should be.

New Literacy Studies

New Literacy Studies “assumes literacy is a critical social practice constructed in everyday interactions across local contexts” (Larson and Marsh, 2005, p. 3).

“...in a classroom based on NLS principles, students do not understand literacy learning to be restricted to any one place or time but, rather, that it occurs in everyday activities in multiple contexts and at different times”(Larson and Marsh, 2005, p. 38).

NLS is inquiry based learning which values what students already know, providing an opportunity to apply it to the wider world. It offers real experiences to expand literacy. The notion that students always bring their own literacies to a classroom is something that can easily be overlooked in a traditional classroom setting where outcomes are predetermined, and the view of literacy is limited.

How We Put New Literacy Studies to Use in Our Classroom

According to Brian Street, “New Literacy Studies can offer a solid framework for building upon what students bring with them from home and community...” (Larson and Marsh, 2005, p. 37) The idea that they bring vast knowledge and experience to the classroom is one that my students had a hard time understanding at the outset. In the first class, I listed the following three headings on the board:

Reading Writing Math

I had the students make lists under each heading of where they used each discipline in their everyday lives. After they had a chance to complete their own lists, I had students share their ideas with me as I wrote our class lists on the board, under each heading in turn. We managed to fill two full chalkboards once the ideas started flowing, and more and more new ideas were shared throughout the class. In the next phase of the discussion, I had students get into small groups and, using our exhaustive lists, come up with field trip ideas and activities we could involve ourselves in that would “make literacy real.”

The students had some very specific ideas, relating to their own interests, and soon it became more than just a brainstormed list – it was an introduction to what mattered to them,

what they wanted from the class, and who they were. The two students who had used email before suddenly saw that as purposeful communicative writing; the ones who loved to bake realized the math and reading inherent in the activity; those who had traveled and used maps realized they had used both math and reading for a purpose. It was an eye opening experience to people who hadn't considered themselves readers or writers, for those who didn't see a purpose to math skills in their lives. This, in addition to the assessment tests they completed and the individual meetings I managed to have with each student over the next few classes, gave me a good idea of where the individual students were, and where we were as a group.

Where We Are

Our first thematic unit was called Where We Are. Though I initially named it with a skills/knowledge perspective in mind, I also brought it to a literal realm and began with topics relating to our physical place in the world.

We completed maps of Canada and Manitoba using atlases, we studied Manitoba's plants and animals in class, and followed that up with planting and tracking the growth of Manitoba Tomatoes along with trips to Fort Whyte, the Conservatory and the Manitoba Museum. We wrote detailed autobiographies and detailed everything to see and do in Winnipeg as if we were writing a travel guide. All of this was leading to our writing of letters to refugees, which will be discussed in the **Critical Literacy** section of this article. Following our theme, I thought it might be a good idea to take a look at Canada's Food Guide as an introduction to our first major NLS project.

Canada's Food Guide – One NLS Project in Detail

I chose this topic for a number of reasons. First of all, it fit our theme, dealing as it does with a Canadian topic. Secondly, I felt that such a reading would be ultimately beneficial to my students, from a healthy living perspective. Food is a topic that everyone can relate to, and it was also a perfect starting point for our project.

Before handing out copies of Canada's Food Guide to my students, I started the class by writing the heading of each food group up on the board and having students give me the foods that they thought fit into each category. After we had discussed their recorded ideas, I had the students take turns reading sections aloud, as we navigated our way through the guide.

Some of the writing was difficult for my students to understand, so I took that opportunity to read particular sections aloud as the students followed along. I try to read aloud to my students every time we meet, even if it is just a short passage that I want to share. Finding relevant readings at my students' level is challenging; newspaper articles are often too difficult, as are most magazine articles and short stories. Because I want my students to experience such readings, and to learn up to date information, reading aloud is often necessary.

Mem Fox extols the many virtues of reading aloud to children in her book, Reading Magic –Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever. Being read aloud to is not only beneficial for children, but can help a student of any age learn fluidity, pronunciation and a love of reading. Most importantly, it can help students to make meaning. “Although you and I can actually “read” most English texts competently and correctly, are we really reading if the content happens to be way beyond our own understanding?” (Fox, 2001, p. 102)

The next step was to discuss the students' current nutritional practices, and give them a three-day assignment to track their eating schedules and compare their actual intake with the recommended intake. Once this was discussed, I moved on to the next phase of the project – The Recipe.

The Recipe

After our nutritional discussion, I asked the students to go on the internet and find a recipe that would encompass all or most of the food groups. I had a quiche and a broccoli salad recipe on hand, just in case, but when I mentioned that quiche recipes might be a good place to look, the students let me know that they had a much better idea –pizza. I couldn't argue with that, and the search for a recipe began.

1. Once they had found a good crust recipe, we decided what kinds of pizza we'd like to make. From this came our shopping list.
2. After we completed the list, we checked it over to ensure that all food groups were accounted for.
3. Then came the next task- cost estimation based on our list. The students used flyers from a variety of grocery stores to fine tune their calculations.

4. A plan was then made for our shopping trip to Safeway the next class. We set a time and I reminded one and all to bring along their shopping lists -- complete with cost estimates.

The Shopping Trip / Pizza Day

Every phase of this project offered students an opportunity to use and share their respective expertise in a variety of areas. Some were very confident, for example, with cost estimation, having shopped every week for themselves for the last several years. Some knew Safeway very well, and this was an advantage to the team as a whole. One student was very professional when it came to work in the kitchen, proudly sharing his knowledge and skills with another student who planned to have a career in the Culinary Arts. Field trips are real team builders, as can be the case with group work on any level. My students had known one another from the other classroom before they took part in my class, but they became a team as a direct result of our adventures. The students came up with a game plan at the store, using the signs to direct themselves and dividing the tasks amongst themselves. The shopping trip was a good exercise in teamwork and delegation, as it required the students to find a way to get the job done as quickly as possible so that we could get back to the school and commence the highly anticipated pizza phase.

Once back at the school, we used the receipt to go through our cost estimates as a group, using math to calculate how close each student was to the actual total. They had worked collaboratively on the estimates, and, in the end, were not far off either the individual item prices or the total in most cases. To see math at work in the real world opened their eyes to the importance of math skills, and the extent to which some were already “experts”.

Then it was time to put our measurement math skills to the test in the kitchen. Students took turns to read through each step of the recipe as a group (each student had his or her own copy), they worked out the fractions necessary to double the recipe and had worked out who would be in charge of the dough, the vegetables, the sauce, etc. in advance. I found that when reading aloud for a distinct purpose, their reading was clear and fluid. They wanted to make sure that their teammates were doing exactly what they should be doing, in the right order, and this resulted in great clarity. (Though this had not usually been the case in day-to-day student read-alouds)

The delicious pizza that we had for lunch that day was the direct result of their hard work – a tangible reading and math assessment. Students had used their strengths and come together to create something in which they could all take pride and ownership.

Students need to see literacy at work in the world; they need to be a part of the dialogue and interaction that is literacy. Worksheets and irrelevant readings could never have given them the enjoyment and sense of accomplishment that we experienced that day.

To me, New Literacy Studies is going out and doing what we used to passively read about in class. It is the realization that literacy exists in communication; that it is taking part in the world. It is actually building bird feeders and planting flowers to display understanding for written instructions. It is really going to the places that you've located on a map and found the bus route for. We actually use the yellow and white pages now, where previously they had been hypothetical practice resources. It is offering students knowledge to build on – and a chance to apply that knowledge – as was beautifully illustrated when a student of mine proudly and correctly identified Tilenius' painting of a buffalo hunt in the Pavilion Gallery as the same as the diorama we had seen at the entrance of the Manitoba Museum on first sight. Hearing that observation from a person who had previously never been to the museum, an art gallery or even the library before was a strong affirmation that the experiences held meaning for the students. It is action, recognition, inquiry, and teamwork. It's also a great way to build a relationship with and among your students.

Critical Literacy

Critical Literacy “involves interrogating texts in terms of the power dynamics embedded within and reflected by them, in addition to positioning readers and authors as active agents in text creation and analysis” (Larson and Marsh, 2005, p. 3). It “involves local action and imagination, interrogation of the ways things are, and design of how things might be otherwise” (Comber and Thomson, 2001, p. 451). Critical Literacy investigates social justice and equity, and offers students an opportunity to realize that they can make a difference in the world using the literacy skills that they possess.

How We Used Critical Literacy in Our Classroom

In order to access what my students were interested in and passionate about, I gave them the following survey, which I derived from a list of questions by Comber and Thomson (2001, p. 455) and designed to suit my students.

Making My World a Better Place

1. What makes you happy about your neighbourhood, city, country or world?
2. What local, national or global issues cause you to worry?
3. Is there anything about your neighbourhood, city, country or world that makes you angry? Explain.
4. If you could have three wishes to change your world for the better, what would they be?
5. Do you think that you could help any of your wishes to come true? If so, which one(s)? How could you make it happen?

The answers that the students came up with were very diverse and telling. Some students answered in very politically correct, all encompassing ways (Rid the world of poverty, attain world peace, etc.), while others answered in very honest, personal ways - as in the case where one student wished to marry a rich man, get many jewels and travel the world. The student who wished that he could learn to read better and thereby improve his life revealed another very personal dream.

The question that led to action for my students was the last one, which asked how they could make their wishes happen. This is where the individual inquiries and projects began. One student's main concern was youth crime in our city. He addressed his concerns by writing a very thoughtful, well-researched editorial for the Free Press. Another student was concerned about the welfare of animals. This led her to do research to see how she could help in this area. Together we found a rescue shelter in the neighbourhood where she could volunteer a few hours a week, and we made a trip there as a group to get her and another interested student application forms for volunteer positions.

Getting the students involved in the community is a crucial first step to helping them to get out into the job market and on with their lives. Often students working at level one get stuck in the rut of coming to school for years and years with little improvement and limited future prospects. My main goal was to get my students out into the world to use the skills and knowledge they had to enrich their own lives, as well as others' in the process. My students got busier and busier as our term progressed, taking part in job interviews and volunteer training sessions. It made my class rather small on some days, but knowing that they were out in the community being actively literate made me more than happy to see them go.

Refugees- One Critical Literacy Project in Detail

All of the students mentioned some aspect of poverty in their survey, and this led to a number of discussions about poverty in our city and around the world. Because our school is a UNESCO school, and because we have refugee students in our program, our thoughts and discussion eventually led us to discuss refugees, and to think about ways that we could make a difference in that realm. Fortunately for us, another teacher in the school happens to run an organization called RESPECT, which educates people about refugees, and links students with other refugee students from around the world through letters.

After receiving a batch of letters through RESPECT, we embarked on a letter writing campaign to a particular refugee camp in Ghana. My students, for the most part, were not comfortable even writing a paragraph in January when I first met the class, and very few of them were comfortable using a computer. In order to write letters, we practiced paragraph writing and typing on the computer for several weeks with such topics such as “All about Me”, “Living in Winnipeg” and “Something I Can Do Well”.

These paragraphs served as an invaluable resource to the students once we started the actual letter writing. Not only were they comfortable writing paragraphs by that time, but they were also capable of cutting and pasting relevant information from their prior pieces of writing into their typed letters. Writing for a real purpose is very motivating to any student, and the possibility of getting a letter in return made my students more than happy to take part.

In the past I had asked my World Issues students to write letters to refugees and we had also sent along a care package comprised of books, paper, pencils, etc. that my students had put together using their own resources. My current literacy class is comprised of many students who do not have the means to donate to such a project, and so we decided to come up with a way to raise the money necessary to send something along. Since we are such a small class, we decided to collaborate with another class in the school – a World Issues class – and put on a fundraiser lunch with a silent auction to raise money and awareness about refugees and the situation in Darfur.

I found that my students were quite knowledgeable about the situation in Darfur, and about refugees in general. This was because they had a perfect resource in the refugee students from another literacy class who had come from Darfur and had shared their stories with the class. We intended, along with the World Issues class, to try to raise enough money

to buy their camp a goat or some chickens- a gift that would continue to give. In the end, the refugee students asked that we donate the proceeds to Doctors Without Borders- citing sometime difficulty getting livestock into Darfur. This seemed like a perfect idea, and, ultimately, we managed to raise over \$500.00 toward the cause.

My students were very happy to work on posters and flyers for the event. We also did an instructional reading project, which involved building bird feeders. All of my students were proud and more than willing to put their bird feeders into the silent auction to help raise the money necessary.

These assignments were all for a purpose and addressed something that my students themselves had expressed concern about. Meaningful work is absolutely necessary to understanding and motivation. My students found through hard work that they could have a positive effect on the world. Critical Literacy empowers students and allows them to see that they can make a difference.

Useful Resources for the Implementation of Critical Literacy into an Adult Literacy Classroom

Nash, A. (Ed.). (1999, 2001). *Civic participation and community action sourcebook*. Boston: New England Literacy Resource Center.

Nash, A. (Ed.). (2006). *Through the lens of social justice-using the Change Agent in adult education*. Boston: New England Literacy Resource Center.

Sociocultural – Historical Theory

“This theoretical framework challenges traditional definitions of learning as the transmission of knowledge. From this perspective, learning is defined as changing participation in culturally valued activity with more expert others”.

“...people learn to read by reading and to write by writing, with the assistance of an expert or more proficient other, about something and for a specific purpose or purposes”(Larson and Marsh, 2005, p. 4, p. 104).

This ideology, which encompasses such methods as guided reading and modeled writing, is often used with elementary and EAL students. As such, I had never thought to formally implement it into my adult literacy classrooms of the past. Though I had modeled reading aloud in the past, and had certainly modeled writing in a very informal way, I had no idea the impact that shared reading and writing could have on fluidity, understanding and the enjoyment of language in an adult literacy setting.

How We Used Sociocultural-Historical Theory in Our Classroom

Email Dialogue Journals

At the outset of our journey, I asked the students how many of them had ever used email before. Out of the six, only two students had ever used it, and some seemed unsure of the concept altogether. I told the class that we would be setting up email accounts that morning for each one of them. I informed them that I would write them an email every Monday morning, and that they were to write a letter back to me in the same letter format that I would use in the email.

The response was mixed – some students were excited at the prospect of using the computer on a regular basis. Some were thrilled that they would have a letter waiting for them every Monday morning. Some, on the other hand, balked at the idea, stating that they disliked computers and would prefer to write letters on paper. In the end, every student tried it, and the majority got rather good at it after a few weeks of practice.

It wasn't an easy routine to initiate or to establish – one student had a penchant for forgetting her password, for example, but in the end it was very valuable and served a number of important purposes.

1. Students wrote for a distinct purpose on a regular basis.
2. Students used letter format, as a realistic way to practice a usable format.
3. The use of email dialogue journals, in addition to drawing from a literacy some already used in their everyday lives, encouraged the ongoing use of technology, making it normal and comfortable for those unused to it.
4. It helped to establish and build a one on one relationship between teacher and student. It helped me to be aware of student interests and concerns, which ultimately shaped the course.
5. It provided the students with an outlet for reflection on activities we took part in, field trips we took as well as on their own progress.
6. It served as a means of student assessment- an ongoing progress report.

The use of email dialogue journals not only helped to create a relationship between my students and myself, but it also contributed to the sense of community in the classroom. After only a few experiences with email, one student made the observation that she could now even write emails to the other students. I encouraged this once the students were quite familiar with the process, and the students found it quite motivating. I noticed that they took

great care with their grammar and spelling when writing to their fellow classmates, and were quite pleased with their ability to reach out to one another in this way.

Reflecting upon my choice to use an email format, I have to concede that paper dialogue journals would certainly have been an easier route. Ultimately, though, the consistent experience with computers was beneficial to the students, and well worth the initial effort.

Shared Writing

As a way of reflecting as a group on our numerous field trips, I began to use Shared Writing. In her book Reading Essentials- The Specifics You Need to Teach Reading Well, Regie Routman (2003, p. A-16) defines shared writing in the following way:

“Students and teacher compose a coherent text collaboratively, the teacher doing the writing while scaffolding children’s language and ideas; often these texts become shared reading texts as well as published texts for guided and personal reading.”

I was reluctant at first to try the technique with my students as it is primarily used with elementary students and people learning English as an additional language. I certainly did not want to offend the students or make them feel like children, but I saw the potential for the creation of meaningful texts and decided to implement it into my program.

After a field trip, I wanted to review what we experienced, what we learned and how it all tied in together with what we had discussed previously. Class discussions with my group are always interesting, but can often go off the track if not properly framed. The first class after our trip to the Manitoba Museum I wrote – “Reflection – The Manitoba Museum” at the top of a page of chart paper and asked students to think back over our field trip and try to pick out the most important events.

After my students had a few minutes to think, I asked the class how we might start our reflection. One by one my students offered up sentences, building on the last idea until we had a paragraph, which concisely outlined our experience. I wrote the sentences on chart paper as they were given to me, and the students wrote along with me in their books. I always had the student who recited the last sentence read what we had so far from the beginning. The repetition and relevance led to fluid reading from students whose reading was normally quite stilted, who typically left out hard words as they went along. There were no words left out of these readings, and students seemed excited to have a turn to contribute and to read. The students had a good time reminiscing about our experience, and one in

particular loved to try to come up with the most complex sentences he could when it was his turn. They were actually having fun reading, which probably had rarely been the case before.

Example of a typical shared writing text from our class:

The Manitoba Museum – Reflection

Last Wednesday, Bryan and Linda arrived early at the Manitoba Museum. Darren arrived just before 10:00. They soon found Holly, Dawn and Jason in the lobby. Then we got ourselves organized and walked into the exhibit. As the group walked around the artifacts, Bryan shared some of his previous knowledge about the Inuit. Dawn took some pictures of us near the dinosaur. We had a fun time!

We used our completed texts in a number of ways. I had students look up new words in the dictionary and use them in new sentences. I cut up sentences from the text and had students arrange them back into sentences, and into a meaningful whole paragraph again. With our texts we could focus on problem or new grammatical areas such as punctuation, spelling and word order. The students seemed glad to revisit their own texts, and realized that they were capable of using far more sophisticated language verbally than they typically used in their writing.

I used this technique in the class after every field trip, and, in the end, the students had a collection of reflections that they could easily read and understand in their portfolios. The subject matter made it meaningful and interesting to the students. They were, after all, the main characters in each story. It was a surprise to me to see the effectiveness of such a simple technique, and I was struck by its clear illustration of the impact of meaningful language on reading comprehension.

A Reading Challenge

“If you want to know how to read better, just keep on reading” (Routman, 2003, p. 84). I believe that in order to read better, one must read, read and read some more. This was not possible in my class, as we completely lacked a classroom library. When I took my students to the public library to remedy this situation, the only books we could find at their level were in the adolescent section. My students were put off by the notion of borrowing books from the adolescent section, and, though they had happily applied for and received library cards that day, many left the library without a book.

Creating an Inclusive Library

I was able to address this situation by writing a proposal to the Winnipeg Public Library Board for a Community Outreach Language and Literacy Grant. I wanted to create an adult literacy section at the public library. This gave me the opportunity to ask why there weren't relevant books available at the library for my students and for other people in the community. I had never written a proposal before and was thrilled when we were chosen as one of the winners of a \$500 grant. My students and I set to work choosing appropriate reading material to order, and they were thrilled to be an important part of building an inclusive section at the library. I learned that there really are grants available to help us meet our students' needs – and that writing a proposal really isn't difficult if you know what you want. I intend to seek out more such opportunities, now that I realize how straightforward the process can be. My students can only benefit in the end.

Sociocultural – Historical Theory involves students in meaningful, interactive use of language. I think that it should be used in every adult literacy classroom, promoting as it does the love of language and reading.

The use of New Literacy Studies, Critical Literacy and Sociocultural – Historical Theory in my classroom, as well as the implementation of technology where possible, helped to bring to life a whole new kind of literacy classroom. It helped to create a space where the students who need the most assistance were acknowledged and ultimately given the power to help themselves. I think that it is of utmost importance that these students be given the opportunity to work together, to realize their strengths and to use them in the community. They need to view literacy as meaningful and purposeful.

Funding might be an issue when it comes to widely offering such a class to students, with the cost of field trips, the dividing of classrooms into levels, etc. but if it helps to move those students forward who might remain indefinitely, unaware of their strengths, I believe it could be well worth it. (Many of the field trips were free while others were very reasonable at the student group rate) I believe that such ideas could also be effectively implemented into a joint Basic Literacy/EAL classroom. Such a forum would undoubtedly benefit level-one readers and EAL students alike.

Literacy is all around us. It is not only found in readings and the inevitable comprehension questions. It does not reside solely in spelling tests and grammar worksheets. It is alive and waiting to be experienced. I want my students to move forward with

confidence. Perhaps through expanding their notions of literacy we can help them to expand their expectations of themselves, expanding ultimately their influence on the world.

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Best Practices: Microchemistry as an Essential Component of the Laboratory Experience

Michael Talgoy
Yellowquill College

Introduction

Chemistry is sometimes called the “central science” because it relates to so many areas of human endeavor and curiosity. An important aspect of a sound chemical education is the laboratory experience. Students must be given the opportunity to conduct experiments themselves, ideally from an inquiry point of view, or at least the more traditional “cookbook” labs. A major difficulty in offering chemistry as a subject in an adult learning center is that dedicated lab facilities are often lacking. The goal of this article is to encourage educators to consider incorporating microchemistry experiments into the chemistry program as the principle laboratory experience.

Essential Characteristics

Essentially, microscale/small scale chemistry uses two basic tools, the microplate and the plastic pipette. A microplate is a sturdy plastic tray that has shallow wells arranged in rows and columns. These wells are used instead of test tubes, flasks, and beakers. Some microplates have 96 wells, and other microplates have 24 larger wells.

The pipette is made of a form of plastic that is soft and very flexible. The most useful property of the pipette is the fact that the stem can be stretched without heating into a thin tube, thus producing a precise delivery mechanism. As well, the pipette can be used over and over again simply by rinsing the stem and bulb between reagents. The plastic inside the pipette is non-wetting and does not hold water or solutions the way glass does.

Another form of microchemistry does away with the microplate completely. All reactions take place on the surface of a non-wetting plastic sheet, better known as the sheet protector. You can see very interesting QuickTime videos using this technique at http://www.smallscalechemistry.colostate.edu/how_to_use.html.

Advantages

One of the principal advantages, particularly for a facility that does not have dedicated lab space, is that almost all microchemistry experiments can be conducted on a

normal work surface. Trays and buckets can be used for cleanup, and you do not need a large source of reagents for the experimental setup.

In addition, small-scale chemistry is safe. Dispensing liquids from plastic dropper bottles greatly reduces many spills. Accidental glass container breakage and fire hazards are virtually eliminated, and air-quality is improved due to smaller amounts of escaping vapor. Hazardous reagents and procedures are minimized, with the plastic thin-stemmed pipettes serving both as liquid storage vessels and transfer devices. Since each pipette delivers only about 20 micrometers of dilute solutions, the potential for major accidents in traditional labs is replaced by infrequent, minor inconveniences in small-scale labs.

Small-scale chemistry labs have less environmental impact than do conventional chemistry labs. Clean up with a paper towel takes seconds, and minute quantities of chemicals can be disposed of safely, often in the wastebasket.

In this way, small-scale chemistry is time efficient. Because smaller amounts of reagent are required, set a time for the teacher is minimized. Although initially there may be a learning curve, generally students spend less time setting up, manipulating and cleaning equipment during the experimental process.

Additionally, the cost to set up a microchemistry laboratory experience is significantly less than traditional laboratory equipment. Microplates will cost from \$2.60 to \$5.00 each. Plastic pipettes cost from \$0.13 to \$0.20 each. Each of these can be reused many times over a number of years. Since we're using significantly less volume of solutions, we have to make up significantly less stock solution and thus save a considerable amount of money in reagent costs.

Limitations

A major cost drawback of microchemistry is the need for a very accurate balance. Since we are weighing out very small quantities of reagent, a balance must be capable of accurately weighing 10 mg at least. A balance that can weigh to 1 mg would be even more useful. An alternative is to weigh out more using less accurate balances, although this becomes somewhat wasteful and negates some of the advantages of microchemistry, or construct a small-scale substitution balance. The design that I have available suggests that the balance is sensitive to 5 mg.

An aspect that will create some frustration for the students is control of the micropipettes. They will take a little time to learn how to moderate pressure on the bulb so

that consistent and discrete drops can be dispensed from the tip. There are a number of simpler experiments that the students should complete initially that will give them confidence in their ability to handle the reagents.

Resources

There are a number of text resources available that introduce microchemistry into the lab. The two new mainline textbooks adopted in Manitoba, *Glencoe Chemistry: Matter and Change* and *Prentice Hall Chemistry* each have a accompanying small-scale laboratory manual that very conveniently introduces the topic and gives the teacher 20 or so experiments to consider. These are of course available at the education library. Addison-Wesley has produced a 340-page laboratory manual called *Small Scale Chemistry* (ISBN 0-201-25007-1) that comprehensively covers the whole topic, introducing 46 experiments to consider.

A Google search of microchemistry laboratory experiments will generate some online resources. One example might be :

<http://dwb.unl.edu/chemistry/MicroScale/mscale00.html>.

Some sample experiments can be seen at:

<http://www.smallscalechemistry.colostate.edu/experiments.html>

Conclusions

I hope that it is clear that a microchemistry lab experience is safe, time efficient, easy to set up, and environmentally sound. It enhances learning outcomes, provides for lab-practical evaluations, and teaches a lot of chemistry through direct, hands on experience. More importantly, this approach creates an environment where students can do serious science.

Historical Perspective
**Brave New Beginnings:
The ASEC Story**

Anna Beauchamp
Adult Learning and Literacy
Branch, Government of Manitoba

Adult education for individuals who did not complete high school has a long history in Manitoba—back to the turn of the century initiatives of Frontier College. In the early 1990s, however, a series of provincial and federal government policy decisions created fertile ground for the growth of an assortment of new adult education programs, in most cases connected with school divisions, offering high school curricula and credentials specific to adults. Many of these precursors to today’s adult learning centres developed across the province in the space of just a few years, with minimal policy direction and no coordination to ensure either consistency of quality or opportunities to share best practice. But they all had one very important thing in common: they were staffed by educators who, either by accident or design, were committed to doing the best job possible of providing their adult learners with a second chance at a high school education.

On February 1, 1996, Anne Longston, who was then the principal of the New Directions Adult Education Centre in Lac du Bonnet, sent a letter to all school divisions with an open invitation to teachers who might be “interested in networking and developing professionally with other teachers that are involved in adult education.” Jeff Kerr, the director of what was then the Brandon Adult Learning Centre (now known as the Assiniboine Community College Adult Collegiate) responded enthusiastically to the invitation and shared it with Anna Beauchamp, then Associate Dean of the University of Winnipeg Collegiate, when she attended a presentation for school counsellors that showcased the new Brandon Adult Learning Centre. By March 22, Anne, Jeff and Anna had met for coffee and arrived at a plan to hold a small forum on Adult Education in Manitoba. Anne sent out a second letter to announce the date.

And so it was that over thirty teachers, administrators, students, and representatives of the Department of Education, gathered on May 13, 1996 in the University of Winnipeg Faculty Club dining room for “Brave New Beginnings: A Forum on High School Education for Adults.” The day began with a keynote address by Tim Sale, then the MLA for Charleswood, and a former Assistant Deputy Minister of Education. Representatives from

Manitoba Education and Training presented a panel on “New Directions” for adult high school students in which they responded to questions about developments in funding policy for adult students and proposed changes to the Mature Student Diploma requirements. The balance of the day consisted of a round-table discussion in which the group brainstormed common issues in high school education for adults. Many of the issues raised at that meeting were precisely the issues that would, in the following years, become the focus of the government’s review and reform of the adult learning centre system, especially concerns about the poor “fit” of applying a funding policy designed for sequential high school students to the unique needs of adult-focused programming. The forum participants appointed an action committee with a three-pronged mandate:

1. We need an association/organization
2. We need to research issues
3. We need to lobby and educate about adult education issues

The action committee met regularly through the remainder of 1996 and 1997, focusing on the development of a more comprehensive list of contacts throughout the province, and lobbying on behalf of adult educators with provincial officials who were busy drafting revisions to the Mature Student Diploma requirements.

On February 17, 1998, a second forum was held, again with about 30 participants. Over the two years since the first meeting, the network of adult learning centres had grown rapidly, and the view that these adult programs ought to be seen as something distinct from the high school system was gaining momentum. Participants in this second forum were clearly past the point of wanting to “research the issues,” and the meeting concluded with an overwhelming mandate that that time had come to organize formally. A working group was given the task of developing a constitution and planning an inaugural conference. A survey was promptly constructed and sent to 128 adult educators across the province, and the response was enthusiastic. Survey results and advance notice of a fall conference were communicated in the first issue of the ASEC Newsletter in June 1998. The drafting of a constitution moved quickly through the spring and summer, and the newly minted Adult Secondary Education Council (ASEC) was incorporated as of August 1998 with a founding board of directors consisting of Anna Beauchamp (President), Jeff Kerr, Ted Franson, Jim Rastel, Jocelyn Starr, Jim York, and Pat Zwolak-Ross.

ASEC formally stepped into the public arena on October 22, 1998 when 120 participants—ASEC’s first formal membership – gathered at the University of Winnipeg for “Connections: A Coming Together of Adult Educators.” The event was boldly identified on the registration brochure as the “1st annual” conference of the new organization. Former Deputy Minister for Higher Education, Tom Carson, provided the keynote address, and then Minister for Education Linda MacIntosh brought greetings and congratulations from the Province.

As it turns out, that historic conference was indeed the “1st annual” of a tradition that is now celebrating a decade of top-notch professional development and networking opportunities for Manitoba’s dedicated community of adult secondary educators. ASEC conferences now gather roughly 200 educators annually, and have featured such leaders in the adult education field as Raymond Wlodkowski, Stephen Brookfield, Kathleen Taylor, Daniel Pratt, and Allan Quigley.

In the fall of 1999, a new government came to power in Manitoba, bringing with it a new sense of urgency for reform of the adult learning centre system. In December of that year, a delegation from the ASEC board met with the new Deputy Minister of Education and Training, Ben Levin. ASEC’s agenda for the meeting was to ask Levin about the government’s plans for adult learning centres, and to make him aware that there was a formal organization that could speak on behalf of the educators who would be impacted by any changes. Levin’s response was empowering – essentially he challenged ASEC to show leadership in advising the government about the needs of adult learning centres. ASEC rose to the challenge by organizing its October 2000 conference to include round-table discussions that focused on the issues raised in a government-issued consultation paper. The results of these discussions were compiled into a report, which was forwarded to the Department of Education and Training to be considered as part of the formal consultation process that was underway. Even more significant, however, was the large number of government personnel – including an Assistant Deputy Minister and an MLA – who attended that conference in person to hear first hand what the field had to say.

Years later, staff members of the Adult Learning and Literacy branch continue to value ASEC gatherings as an opportunity to check in with the adult learning centre community. ASEC has, many times over, fulfilled its original vision of providing networking opportunities for adult educators and being a strong and informed voice for those educators

in shaping government policies. And, it has achieved all of this as a group of dedicated volunteers.

The launch of this journal marks a new and perhaps obvious next step in the evolution of the organization. In the inaugural ASEC newsletter my presidential greeting included a quoted rhyme that seemed to capture the sense of new beginnings that we felt as founding directors:

You cannot choose your battlefield,
The gods do that for you,
But you can plant a standard
Where a standard never flew.
-- Nathalia Crane, *The Colours*

Once again, a small group of adult educators with a vision has “planted a standard where a standard never flew,” this time with the launch of a new academic journal that promises to bring to maturity ASEC’s original vision of providing a research voice for effective theory and practice in adult secondary education.

Peer Reviewed Article
**The History of Manitoba's
Adult Literacy Programs**

Marion Terry, Ph.D.
Brandon University

Abstract

The program model that drives community-based adult literacy education in the province of Manitoba today is the natural outcome of a century of government involvement in adult literacy education in Canada. First, Frontier College's turn-of-the-century efforts to teach bush camp men to read coincided with a newspaper campaign to develop an English-literate urban workforce. Later, the federal government responded to the post-world-war baby boom and immigration surge with a focus on basic education and vocational skills training, followed by a 1986 Throne Speech promise to develop resources for adult literacy instruction. The Throne Speech coincided with support by the Government of Manitoba for a literacy programming initiative that produced the province's community-based adult literacy model. The endurance of this model, which has survived two decades of changes in political leadership, is testimony to its strength and to the wisdom of its creators, Johanna Faulk and Robin Millar.

The program model that drives community-based adult literacy education in the province of Manitoba today is the product of individual innovations and political interventions that span a hundred years. The story begins a century ago, with Alfred Fitzpatrick vying with a newspaper campaign for recognition as the provocateur of literacy instruction, continues through two world wars and post-war responses to the baby boom and an immigration surge, rises in action during federal foci on basic education and vocational skills training in the 1970s, peaks with the addition of literacy to the Adult and Continuing Education Branch of Manitoba Education and Training in 1984, remains high with the impacts of the 1986 Throne Speech, and follows through with the promises made to celebrate 1990, the International Year of Literacy. The history of Manitoba's community-based adult literacy programming model is more than a chronology of events attached to dates: it is a story replete with political drama and the personal tribulations and triumphs of public and private figures.

When Alfred Fitzpatrick “began in 1899 to carry in his back pack reading material for the men of the bush camps” (Cook, 1987, p. 42) in Ontario, he embedded in Frontier College an adult literacy practice that endures as a cornerstone of Canadian volunteer-based literacy education throughout Canada. By ministering to the needs of neglected and exploited “uneducated wage-slaves” (Welton, 1987, p. 13) in labour “so degraded that ‘white men fearing loss of self-respect cannot be induced to perform it’” (Fitzpatrick, 1907, as cited in Cook, p. 37), Fitzpatrick endowed adult literacy education with a responsibility to serve society’s poor and disadvantaged. His deep-seated belief that all men deserve an education (Cook) became a founding principle not only for Frontier College, but for all adult literacy initiatives.

The introduction of Frontier College in Manitoba bush camps coincided with a newspaper campaign to promote literacy in the English language. The bilingual education clause of the 1890 Manitoba Schools Act appealed to the need for a minority English population (16% in 1870) to establish its rights to mother-tongue education, by establishing the rights of all Manitoba citizens (of whom 83% spoke French in 1870) to be schooled in their own language (Millar, 1987). By the early 1900s, however, a surge of English-speaking immigrants from Ontario had tipped the population tables in favour of the English, who embarked on a newspaper campaign to remove the French language option in schools and to recruit non-English immigrants for jobs in English businesses and industries (Millar). Thus, while Fitzpatrick was appealing to the philanthropic yen of Ontario’s better educated to support Frontier College’s efforts to educate (mostly immigrant) camp-men across Ontario and the prairies, English-based Manitoba businesses were involved in a newspaper campaign that used literacy as a drawing card for assimilating new citizens and establishing a skilled workforce.

The concerns of the newspaper campaign were punctuated by a 1911 literacy study that exposed Winnipeg as having the highest illiteracy rates of the eight largest cities in Canada (Millar, 1997). Therefore, literacy needs underscored the agricultural, technical, and vocational education programs that the federal government began to finance in 1913 (Thomas, 1983), and the adult basic reading and writing courses that Winnipeg School Division introduced in 1916 (Millar). When the Province rescinded bilingual education rights in 1916, it appeared that the newspaper campaign had achieved some success. Still, even after the induction of compulsory schooling (to age fourteen) in 1916, by 1933 only 60% of

Manitobans had completed elementary school and only 30% had finished high school (Millar). We have certainly seen improvements in the dropout rate, but the Manitoba government's current commitment to community-based adult literacy programs reflects a still deep-seated concern for the educational needs of adults who did not complete grade twelve.

In its Second World Conference on Adult Education in 1960, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) confirmed the role of adult education as “part of the normal pattern of adult life,” instead of just “a remedial activity” (Selman, Selman, Cooke, & Dampier, 1998, p. 67). By the time the federal government passed the Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act in 1960, Manitoba had established its own community college system. It was soon obvious, however, that many of the adults who sought vocational training lacked prerequisite academic skills (Thomas, 1983). Therefore, the federal Adult Occupational Training Act of 1967, which created the Department of Manpower and Immigration, established the BLADE (Basic Literacy for Adult Development) NewStart program as well as ABE (Adult Basic Education) and BTSD (Basic Training for Skill Development) programs for 0-12 upgrading. Provincial community colleges delivered these programs, but Canada Manpower paid for them by purchasing seats and providing allowances to cover sponsored students' personal expenses. In the eyes of both levels of government and the students, these programs changed the status of program participants from “unemployed” to “trainees” preparing for further post-secondary or trades courses (Darville, 1992, p. 13).

During the 1960s and early 1970s, two distinct groups of adult literacy advocates arose: those who saw literacy in terms of empowering adults to combat poverty and social oppression, and those who saw it in terms of acquiring technical skills (Darville, 1992). UNESCO's replacement of the previous “grade nine education” literacy definition with an all-encompassing definition of the functionally literate adult as someone who “can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his groups and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development” (UNESCO, 1962, as cited in Cairns, 1988, p. 4) appealed to both advocacy groups. This definition is reflected in the mission statements of community-based adult literacy programs funded by the Province of Manitoba. For example,

Swan River Adult Education and Brandon Literacy Council reported the following mission statements in 2003:

The Swan River Adult Education Program will provide adult learners the opportunity to develop life, literacy and employment skills, improve their academic qualifications, and engage in lifelong learning in a supportive and respectful atmosphere. The program will enhance the self-esteem and self-confidence of the adult learners by applying the best practices known to adult education. The program will respond to individual and community needs by establishing partnerships that expand opportunities and outcomes for the learners (Swan River Adult Education Program, n.d.).

The mission of the Brandon Literacy Council is to empower individuals by providing them with the opportunity to improve their literacy skills, thus allowing them to participate more fully in life (Brandon Literacy Council, n.d.).

By the mid-1970s, terms such as “lifelong learning” and “continuing education” (Thomas, 1983, p. 63), which had become entrenched in the educational vernacular during the late 1960s and early 1970s, lost their lustre. In 1973, the federal government introduced what were intended to be shorter-term BJRT (Basic Job Readiness Training) courses, because the longer-term BTSD courses were not serving as an expressway to direct employment or trades training (Darville, 1992), despite consuming about a third of the federal government’s \$100,000,000 Canada Manpower Training Program budget (Thomas). Then, when a 1976 Canada Employment and Immigration (CEIC) review revealed that over a third of BTSD students were grade eleven high school dropouts below the age of twenty who were preparing for post-secondary university education (Selman et al., 1998), the federal government put even more emphasis on BJRT courses, restricted BTSD seat purchases to clients over the age of twenty-one, reduced the number of ABE 11-12 courses to more closely match the number of openings in trades training programs with grade eleven or twelve prerequisites, and began to phase out BTSD 0-8 altogether (Darville, 1992). Thus, by the end of the 1970s, federally funded education for undereducated adults “almost ceased to exist” (Thomas, p. 65).

Adult literacy needs did not disappear from view with the demise of BTSD programs, however. The 1976 Canadian census revealed that of Manitoba residents fifteen years and

older, 6.6% had not completed grade five, and 29.1% had not completed grade nine (Thomas, 1983). Therefore, community organizers, teachers, and “charitably-minded community members” took it upon themselves to provide literacy instruction “in school boards, community colleges, libraries, and volunteer and community organizations” (Darville, 1992, p. 14). Most community-based literacy programs were affiliated with Laubach Literacy of Canada, a non-profit organization founded in the U.S. in 1968, which trains and supports volunteer tutors who use the Laubach phonics-based one-to-one teaching model (Thomas). The few group-based provincially funded adult literacy programs that emerged in Winnipeg and Selkirk school divisions and in community colleges in Winnipeg, Brandon, and The Pas in the 1970s (Millar, 1997) were the forerunners of the community-based adult literacy program model the Province of Manitoba supports today.

Despite the insistence of most newspaper reporters that “There just isn’t a story” in adult literacy (Darville, 1992, p. 16), the late 1970s and early 1980s saw a resurgence, in other formats, of the media campaigns that had brought literacy to the forestage in the early 1900s. Programs such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s *A Fifth Estate*, the National Film Board’s *J’ai pas mes lunettes*, TVOntario’s *Literacy: A Privilege or a Right*, and Access Alberta’s *Safer than a Sock* (Thomas, 1983) gave adult illiteracy a public face as “a source of national embarrassment” (Selman et al., 1998, p. 223). In 1977, a national conference sponsored in part by World Literacy of Canada (a non-profit Canadian organization dedicated to international literacy projects) resulted in the formation of the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL), a national networking organization dedicated to supporting the development of provincial literacy coalitions such as Literacy Partners of Manitoba (Selman et al., 1998) and for fostering links among these coalitions, Frontier College, and Laubach Literacy of Canada (Darville).

In addition, provincial government commitment to adult literacy education was confirmed in 1979 when the Western Canada Post-Secondary Co-ordinating Committee (of Ministers of Education from the four western provinces) established an interprovincial study group on adult literacy (Thomas, 1983). This group was directed to define adult literacy and to identify adult literacy programs and areas of cooperation in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. Manitoba’s background paper, *Educational Attainment in Manitoba: An Overview* (Manitoba Department of Education, 1979), described “the nature and magnitude of the adult illiteracy problem in Manitoba” (Thomas, p. 77) at about the same

time that a Labour Canada report renewed the call for federal commitment to literacy education for adults (Adams, 1979). Thus, by 1980 the political stages were set for the next decade of literacy initiatives.

The story of the Manitoba government's involvement in community-based adult literacy programming peaked in the 1980s. First, a Post-Secondary Task Force examination of Manitoba's dropouts resulted in the establishment of a Post-Secondary Adult and Continuing Education division within the Manitoba Department of Education in 1980 (Millar, 1987). Then, in 1981, the Western Canada Post-Secondary Co-ordinating Committee's interprovincial study group report (as cited in Thomas, 1983) coincided with the release of a Parliamentary Commission on Employment report (Allmand, 1981), which called for renewed federal involvement in adult literacy education. In 1982, after passing the *National Training Act* to endorse centralized and privatized job training (Poonwassie, 2001), the federal government stopped buying seats in BTSD 0-8 programs (Darville, 1997), and then gradually phased out its support of all community college upgrading courses despite CEIC's 1983 Skill Development Task Force report recommending the revitalization of federal support for adult literacy education (CEIC, 1983). Manitoba community colleges continued, however, to offer 0-8 upgrading courses to students who paid for their own tuition and books (Thomas).

By the mid-1980s, illiteracy was perceived as "a social as well as an economic problem" (Millar, 1997, p. 149). MCL, Frontier College, and Laubach Literacy of Canada successfully lobbied provincial governments to officially recognize September 8 as International Literacy Day (Thomas, 1983). Then, hard on the heels of another call for renewed federal participation in literacy education, this time in a report by the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment (Abella, 1984), came the climax in the story of the Government of Manitoba's involvement in community-based adult literacy programming: the hiring of Johanna Faulk as Literacy Programs Officer in the Adult and Continuing Education Branch of Manitoba Education and Training. Faulk was given responsibility for distributing \$100,000 in grants to community-based and school division adult literacy programs (Millar), and for launching the provincial government's New Initiatives Program for literacy education (Darville, 1992).

Faulk first focused on establishing literacy programs in Aboriginal communities, which were home to the highest percentages of undereducated adults. Her initial intention

was to reproduce the one-to-one volunteer literacy-tutoring model that was common – and considered successful – in other provinces, but she soon discovered that this model was inappropriate for several reasons (Millar, 1997). First, the privacy accorded by one-to-one instruction was unnecessary in Aboriginal communities wherein illiteracy was so common that it had no social stigma. Second, the people in these communities preferred to work in small groups “with their friends and neighbours as fellow learners” (Millar, p. 151). Third, people in communities plagued by high rates of unemployment wanted to work, not volunteer. At the same time, Faulk was convinced that adult literacy students deserved the very best instruction available, which meant favouring “gifted teachers” over “well-meaning volunteers” (Millar, p. 151), and then investing heavily in practitioner training. Faulk embarked on a mission to develop a group-based paid-instructor adult literacy model that would work in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal settings.

In 1986, Faulk joined the British Council Tour of literacy programs in London and Northern England, and it was on this tour that she met the woman who would later become her working partner and her close friend, Robin Millar (Millar, personal communication, September 27, 2002). Millar was working in London as a teacher trainer for an adult literacy program funded by the British government. She invited Faulk to preview her program, and Faulk reciprocated by inviting her to come to Manitoba in spring 1987 to deliver a two-week training session for Manitoba adult literacy practitioners. In the 1987-88 program year, Faulk supervised 14 adult literacy programs funded by her New Initiatives Program (Darville, 1992). Then in 1988, when she had the opportunity to hire an Adult Learning Specialist on a term contract for Adult and Continuing Education, Faulk invited Millar to apply, and from that point on, Millar became another prominent figure in the history of Manitoba’s community-based adult literacy education.

Faulk brought more than a teacher trainer home with her from England; she also brought the prototype of the literacy delivery model that she and Millar would develop into the community-based adult literacy program that has become the hallmark of adult literacy provision in Manitoba, notable for its emphasis on small-group instruction by paid practitioners (Manitoba Literacy Office, 1990a). Group learning is not the same as classroom learning: group learning means that more than one student is in attendance at a time, but it does not mean that all students present are working on the same assignments or that the same students will necessarily be present at the same time. Students in learning groups can

work together, or individually, according to their learning goals and attendance patterns. Programs that use paid practitioners can also utilize trained volunteer tutors to work with individuals and small groups, according to their degrees of match with students' learning needs. Although community-based adult literacy programs also exist in other provinces (notably Ontario – see Alkenbrack, 1986), Manitoba's endorsement of this model over all others is "unusual and unique in the Canadian context" (Millar, 1997, p. 152).

Faulk's work to vitalize adult literacy education in Manitoba was reinforced by the October 1986 Speech from the Throne, wherein the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) promised to "work with the provinces, the private sector and voluntary groups to develop resources to ensure that Canadians have access to the literacy skills that are the prerequisite for participation in our advanced economy" (Crombie, 1988, p. 13). Although the Throne Speech introduced no specific policies, it committed the federal government to accept public accountability and financial responsibility for adult literacy training. Whether the federal government was responding to this perceived need for "a 'post-literate' workforce and citizenry" (Millar, 1987, p. 139), to the business community's need for a scapegoat to blame for the economic recession (Darville, 1992), or to a genuine concern over "the still-nagging reality of literacy needs of adults" (Poonwassie, 2001, p. 40), the 1986 Throne Speech galvanized literacy advocates at national, provincial, and local levels (Selman et al., 1998).

First, the Movement for Canadian Literacy formed the Canadian Alliance for Literacy, a coalition of ten non-governmental national organizations that had a particular interest in promoting adult literacy (Selman et al., 1998). Shortly after its first meeting in December 1986, this alliance developed a policy statement called the Cedar Glen Declaration, which it summarized for publication as an open letter to the prime minister, provincial premiers, and territorial government leaders (Canadian Alliance for Literacy, 1987b). When this letter was published as a "Call to Action on Literacy" in *Macleans* and *The Globe and Mail*, it added fuel to the national fires that were already being re-stoked by Frontier College through its connections with the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy and its enthusiastic recruitment of celebrity advocates (Darville, 1992).

Second, the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) undertook its own study in 1987, and concluded that "approximately one-quarter of Canadians over the age of eighteen are inadequately educated in terms of the requirements of an industrialized, high-technology society" (CMEC, 1988, p. 1). CMEC translated these findings into concerns over equity and

the social and economic costs of illiteracy: first, every Canadian has a human right to education, which depends on having available, accessible, and appropriate adult literacy programs; second, basic illiteracy has high social costs related to employment, poor health, lower life expectancy, higher rates of incarceration, and limited leisure-time activities; and third, functional illiteracy poses economic problems for the workplace, including the retraining of workers for new technologies and systems that require higher reading and computational skills. CMEC also reviewed each province's adult literacy programming initiatives, including Manitoba's focus on delivery by community groups, and concluded that increased provincial government involvement was needed.

Third, Peter Calami, a newspaper reporter for *Southam News* in Ontario, embarked on his own media awareness campaign. Calami conducted a survey that tested respondents' abilities to perform "relatively simple tasks" (Darville, 1992, p. 4), such as reading signs, filling out a job application, and reading a human-interest news story. Calami's (1987) findings, published in the *Southam News* report *Broken Words*, astonished the general public: for example, 4% of the respondents needed help reading store product names, 25% had difficulty writing out a cheque, 50% could not find information on a bus schedule, and 50% could not paraphrase a newspaper editorial. Calami concluded that 24% of his respondents were functionally illiterate, and that 8% of these were totally illiterate. Despite criticisms related to data collection (such as limited sampling and faulty test items) and interpretation (such as questionable criterion levels and labeling non-French or English-speaking immigrants as non-literate), the *Southam News Survey* achieved acclaim in literacy and non-literacy circles alike, and was heavily cited by literacy advocates in the general community as well as in national, provincial, and territorial governments (Darville).

Thus, by the time the federal government followed through with its Throne Speech promise by announcing the Department of the Secretary of State's creation of the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) in 1987, adult literacy was an established priority in both public and private sectors. The Progressive Conservatives' initial pledge of \$1 million in September 1987 was raised to a five-year commitment of \$110 million in September 1988, as part of an election platform focus on literacy that was shared by Canada's other political parties (Darville, 1992). After winning the 1988 federal election, the Conservatives moved NLS from the Department of the Secretary of State to Multiculturalism and Citizenship. Later, the Liberals moved it again, to Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

NLS focused exclusively on financing public awareness, research, and program development initiatives such as provincial coalitions (including Literacy Partners of Manitoba), conferences, needs assessments, pilot projects, research studies, materials development, and resource libraries (Department of the Secretary of State, 1988). For example, NLS funded the first Manitoba Learners' Conference in 1986 (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 1988), which drew program participants from every region of the province and has since become an annual tradition. Despite its initial life expectancy of just five years (Darville, 1982), NLS developed such strong partnerships with voluntary associations and provincial governments that it became an integral part of the adult literacy landscape in Canada (Selman et al., 1998) – until 2007, when the Conservatives reconfigured NLS first into the Adult Learning, Literacy, and Essential Skills Program (ALLESPP), and then into the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), within Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) (Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2007a, 2007b).

Manitoba's Progressive Conservative response to the Throne Speech was a pivotal point in the story of its support of community-based literacy education. In October 1988, the Minister of Education and Training announced the appointment of the Manitoba Task Force on Literacy, and gave it responsibility for examining the province's adult illiteracy problem and recommending ways to address it (Manitoba Literacy Office, 1990c). The Task Force took as its first "working principle" that "literacy is a fundamental right of all citizens" in Canada (Manitoba Education and Training, 1989a, p. 9). A major thrust of its 28 recommendations to actualize this principle was the need for more community-based, learner-centred programs similar to those already being funded by Adult and Continuing Education (Manitoba Literacy Office, 1990c). The matched funding agreement struck between the provincial government and NLS meant that the money available for direct funding of programs rose from the \$100,000 that Johanna Faulk had at her disposal in 1988 to \$500,000 for the Manitoba Literacy Office to disperse in 1989.

Another significant Task Force recommendation was the formation of the Manitoba Literacy Office (Manitoba Education and Training, 1989b). At first, the Literacy Office enjoyed a very high profile, as it was its own branch, directly responsible to the Office of the Minister of Education. Then it was reunited with Adult and Continuing Education in 1993 to form a new Literacy and Continuing Education Branch of Manitoba Education, and its

branch and department affiliations have changed several times since due to ministerial reshuffles and post-electoral modifications. Thus, what started as the Manitoba Literacy Office (branch) in 1989 currently comprises the Adult Learning and Literacy Branch within the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy.

The initial efforts of the provincial Literacy Branch were buttressed by two significant national and international events: Canada's 1989 Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA) (Statistics Canada, 1990), and the United Nations' declaration of 1990 as International Literacy Year (ILY) (Evanson, 1990). Sponsored by the National Literacy Secretariat (Jones, 1990) as a deliberate follow-up to the Southam News Survey (Selman, et al., 1998), the LSUDA survey used real-life skill items such as grocery ads, medicine labels, and maps to test respondents' literacy skills. The 1989 survey results, indicating that about 40% of the Canadian population had significant literacy problems (Statistics Canada, 1990), were very similar to the results of Statistics Canada's 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), also sponsored by NLS (Statistics Canada, 1995). When the United Nations declared 1990 as International Literacy Year, and the 1990s as the Decade of Literacy, adult educators around the world were "summoned to build a literate world by the year 2000" (Evanson, 1990, p. 5). Thus, International Literacy Year gave literacy work a new visibility in Canada (Darville, 1992), and drew media attention to the new Manitoba Literacy Office and the community-based programs it sponsored. Although ILY generated high levels of public awareness and political interest, at the end of the year UNESCO concluded that "there is a long way to go if we are to meet the UNESCO goal of eradicating illiteracy in the world by the year 2000" (UNESCO, 1991).

The Government of Manitoba's involvement in community-based adult literacy was therefore accelerated not only by its 1989 Task Force's recommendations, but also by Statistics Canada's 1989 literacy survey and the UN declaration of 1990 as International Literacy Year. The recommendations of the Manitoba Task Force on Literacy, furthermore, reinforced the Literacy Branch's commitment to the community-based delivery model. The Literacy Office's initial *Guidelines for Program Development* (Manitoba Literacy Office, 1990b) has changed little over the years (see *Adult Learning and Literacy*, 2007e). New programs are still required to conduct a community needs assessment (*Adult Learning and Literacy*, 2007d) as part of their application for funding. They are also encouraged to identify individuals from the community who are willing to volunteer in the program itself (*Adult*

Learning and Literacy, 2007d) and in its Literacy Working Group (LWG) (Adult Learning and Literacy, 2007e). LWG members are expected to monitor, advocate and publicize the program (Adult Learning and Literacy, 2007d); and to complete – in collaboration with program coordinators, instructors, and learners – accountability documents (Adult Learning and Literacy, 2007b) such as the annual *Good Practice Guide* (Adult Learning and Literacy, 2007c) and semi-annual statistical forms (Adult Learning and Literacy, 2007a). The titles for the Literacy Office itself, and for the staff members assigned to community-based adult literacy programming, have changed somewhat since 1990, as the Literacy Office is now part of Adult Learning and Literacy, and the positions that used to be known as community developers for literacy are now adult literacy coordinators. Nevertheless, the roles assigned to these staff members are very like what they were initially: to train practitioners, assist in program development, and foster community advocacy and awareness (Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy, 2007; Manitoba Literacy Office, 1990c).

Today's provincially funded community-based adult literacy programs in Manitoba (39 in 2007-08) are the natural outcome of a century of government involvement in adult literacy education in Canada. They owe their existence not only to the Adult Learning and Literacy Branch from whom they receive their current allotments of funding, but to prior federal and provincial political commitments made between 1986 and 1989, and to the 1980s partnership of Johanna Faulk and Robin Millar, which implanted the community-based program model in Manitoba's adult literacy movement. Adult literacy programming in Manitoba has come a long way since Alfred Fitzpatrick's Frontier College volunteers first read to men in railway camps and Winnipeg newspapers decried the need for an English-literate workforce in the early 1900s, but it has a long way to go yet before the 1991 Throne Speech's (2000) goal of "cutting illiteracy rates in half" (as cited in White & Hoddinot, 1991, p. 4) can be realized.

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