literacy link

Developing our strategic objectives

On behalf of ACAL, I welcome all *Literacy Link* readers and ACAL members to 2004.

The ACAL executive has recently formed a group to examine and develop its strategic objectives. Rod McDonald, a highly regarded and well-connected consultant in vocational education and training (VET) and adult education, has been contracted to work with the strategy group.

The work of the strategy group has been influenced by the following broad social issues that have increasing currency in Australian society:

* greater emphasis on community capacity building, active citizenship and collaborative approaches to building the nation's social capital
* growing awareness of the importance of health issues, including a focus on prevention and the needs of an aging population
* the significance of personal financial management, managing debt and planning for the future

Jim Thompson
ACAL President

* a continuing focus on the importance of education and community involvement in promoting a pre-emptive approach to law and order
* the increasing reference to generic skills by business and industry.

The strategy group has been consistent in its view that there is potential in exploring the notion of extending the integrated approach characteristic of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs to a broader community base. The case for an extended 'built-in not bolted-on' approach builds on the success of the VET strategy initially started in the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Programme.

The strategy group believes that it can go far beyond that context and enable an overall approach leading to improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for individuals and the nation. *(continued over)*

contents—

dickson

Relevant, student-centred, real-world learning activities—literacy in the electrical trades class

Outcomes of the 'built-in not bolted-on' approach will include:

- more effective collaboration across sectors
- greater connectedness with communities
- greater responsiveness to needs of individuals (solutions-oriented)
- extended sense of possibilities by developing social capital
- greater self- and collective management
- more opportunities for learning engagement
- multi-disciplined approaches.

These are likely to be achieved though:

- expanding and reworking the notion of what counts as successful adult literacy and numeracy provision
- shifting discourses away from teaching, to literacy working as a community resource that works with others in many and varied ways
- a broader funding base,

In addition to the approach outlined above, ACAL will in 2004 continue to actively pursue:

- assuring the quality of adult literacy and numeracy education
- supporting the development of the ANTA strategy regarding literacy and numeracy .

The proposed strategic direction for ACAL has direct links with the ANTA consultation document, *Diversity Management: Ideas for Action*. The document supports the ANTA National Strategy, 'Shaping Our Future'. It recognises the current limitations of the 'bolted-on' only approach to diversity and equity, and proposes an integrated diversity management approach.

The document can be found at—
http://www.anta.gov.au/dapStrategy.asp
The closing date for comment is February 25 but the document may still be available for reading after that date.

The group is pleased to receive feedback on any of the planned 2004 strategic directions either on the ACAL web site www.acal.edu.au or by contacting—

Jim Thompson
jim.thompson@challengertafe.wa.edu.au

Changes to structure of industry advisory arrangements

In a previous edition of *Literacy Link* we reported that the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) is revising the structure of its industry advisory arrangements so that industry training advisory boards (ITABs) and other recognised bodies are clustered into broader industry groups. The intention of the new Skills Councils is to channel industry information about training needs into the vocational education and training system and to boost training in industry.

Of the ten planned councils that will represent industry nationally, those currently declared are the Transport Council, Services Industries Skills Australia, the Resources and Infrastructure Skills Council, and the ElectroComms and Energy Utilities Industry Skills Council.

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Literacy Link is published six times a year by ACAL with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training.

Literacy Link is available FREE to any practitioner, student or researcher in the area of adult literacy and numeracy

Literacy Link is also available FREE to interested parties in related areas of vocational education and training, and adult and community education.

ACAL is endeavouring to see that everyone who should be reading *Literacy Link* receives their own copy. If you know someone who would appreciate receiving *Literacy Link*, please suggest they write their contact details on the back of an envelope and post it to—

Literacy Link
1 Abinger St
Richmond VIC 3121

dickson

Consistency for *PRE*-prevocational programs— ACE delivery and evaluation framework project

by Wing-Yin Chan Lee & Midge Wallace

Research undertaken in Adult Community Education (ACE) South Australia in 2000 highlighted the 'hidden curriculum' of ACE language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) programs, and confirmed that many of the community-based programs were invaluable in meeting the life and learning needs of the learners and were the first step in a learning pathway, although these programs delivered non-formal, non-accredited and non-assessed adult literacy at a PRE-prevocational or introductory level.

In recent years there has been a growth in demand for these pre-prevocational programs from a growing number of learners who do not fit into accredited adult literacy courses. This could have funding implications for the allocation of funds between accredited and non-accredited courses.

The project

In the second half of 2003, a project was undertaken by Adelaide Institute of TAFE to survey educators and students in community-based LLN programs to establish best practice methodologies. From these surveys, together with the gathering of samples of tools used by educators, a draft Framework for conducting community-based adult LLN programs has been developed to provide models for:

* skills assessment of learners
* program planning
* delivery
* monitoring progress
* evaluation
* reporting
* pathway options for learners.

Outcomes

A diverse range of programs can utilise the Framework, and it is hoped that it will be particularly useful for educators:

* new to the field
* with limited access to delivery tools and resources
* with limited paid time to source and/or develop useful delivery tools and resources
* working in isolation (either in physical isolation in the community, or in isolation from other programs in their centre).

This Framework will also assist in moving community-based LLN programs towards a more consistent practice and structured model of planning, pre- and post assessment, evaluation and reporting. As such it will also serve to raise awareness of the practices and outcomes of these programs and their profile within ACE, Adult Literacy and the broader VET sectors.

The Framework will provide guidelines to explore and develop learning pathways for each learner in a multi-faceted learning environment. It highlights that pathways for the learners are not limited to further studies, but involve processes that will empower and motivate individual learners to extend their language and literacy abilities and apply their skills in an ever widening and deepening capacity.

Next stage

The Framework will be trialled by ACE educators in the first half of 2004. Feedback from the educators will further inform the project officer to review the Framework, with the final product available by July 2004. For further information about the project and the Framework, please contact

*Wing-Yin Chan Lee
or Midge Wallace:
winglee@adel.tafe.sa.edu.au or
mwallace@adel.tafe.sa.edu.au*

ABE teacher assists electrical trades students to fail!

by Catherine Brown and Bill Ebzery

At the end of Semester I, 2003, a number of Stage I Electrical Trades students had failed to pass the module Applied Electricity DC. It was decided to conduct a remedial class in Semester II, to provide an opportunity for those students to pass and so proceed in their trade course. Catherine was asked to provide in-class literacy and numeracy support by working with Bill Ebzery, an electro-technology and instrumentation teacher, in a team delivery mode.

Catherine and Bill conducted an action research project where they documented observations, student profiles, expectations and the final results, with the aim of establishing guiding rules for delivery to lower aptitude students studying electro-technology.

Bill and I decided that I would assist the students with maths (including using a calculator), literacy (reading exam questions and writing responses), and study and learning techniques. We would work as team, supporting each other in the teaching and learning going on in the classroom. We shared a philosophy of student-centred teaching and were both committed to the students getting through the module with increased understanding of the technical material and a positive attitude to their studies.

My previous experience providing tutorial support in Electrical Trades had been with overseas-qualified electricians who primarily required assistance with the English language. All were highly motivated and had no problems identifying their own learning needs and asking for assistance. This was in stark contrast to the majority of the Stage One students.

At the outset I decided to listen and learn. I treated the material as if I was a student—listening, taking notes, asking questions. This might provide a model of learning for the students. Alongside this I researched supporting materials and handed out photocopies to students on a regular basis. In the early stages I provided assistance only when it was asked for. Holding back in this way meant that the students could reach a level of comfort necessary to ask for help.

As the semester progressed interaction between students and myself increased. A relaxed atmosphere developed and the students interacted with each other without feeling they had to protect me from their 'boy talk'. I had to establish my own place in the class. This ultimately led to the other students saying something if a student appeared to be acting unreasonably.

By term IV the students were all regularly asking for assistance from both teachers, and the swearing had decreased significantly. Classroom banter changed from sharing 'escapades' to sharing knowledge..

What happened?

At the end of the semester the students sat an externally set exam. The exam was not unlike other exams the (failing) students had previously undertaken. During the semester the students had completed in-class exams using the same exam terminology encountered in the final exam, and had all done reasonably well. However, when we received the final results all the students did badly. We were shocked. The class progress, attitude to the subject, questions and answers in class, help given, and problems solved all pointed to a better result than that actually achieved. Even the best performing students achieved well below our expectations.

What had gone wrong?

The answer to this question was difficult to identify and led to further questions: Were the exam conditions stressful? Did the students bring a sense of failure to the exam from past experience? Were they 'lost' without the support experienced over the semester? Was the language of the exam questions confusing?

What had gone right?

Attendance had generally improved. All the students were engaged in the classroom and appeared to like coming. The end-of-semester survey about ABE support in the classroom was very positive. There had been a good atmosphere in the class. Results in class tests had been good and improving. Students helped each other in class.

As a final chapter in our involvement with the students we invited every student to return to sit for two parts of the exam: section B, re-written in plain English; and section D, re-written identifying the technical nature of the question. This would not affect the outcome of their test but would give some indication as to whether the language of the exam had been a factor in the very low results. We concluded that language had been a factor as almost all of the students did better (see Table 1 opposite). However, since they had already seen the exam questions, we could not isolate the language as

the main influence on their poor results.

What do we do now?
Though extremely disheartened by the results of the final exam we also felt that overall the classroom experience had been a very positive one. We identified areas for both of us to develop when we next conducted such a class. From the ABE perspective I identified the following areas:
- individual half hour appointments for all students at least once during the semester and outside class time
- more emphasis on literacy as it relates to reading and writing questions and answers
- conducting mock exams exactly as an externally set exam would be conducted
- setting homework, the results and completion of which would form part of the ongoing assessment.

Teaching maths by using everyday English key words and phrases
Our work showed that many of the problems associated with maths delivery in the trade classroom were centred on the students having had little or no prior success in maths examinations. Further, the indications were that this lack of success was almost exclusively because of lack of skill in understanding the *language* used in maths.

We felt that by creating everyday language relevance between the language of mathematics and the actual numbers the problems in mathematics would look after themselves. For example—
question:
  Find the equivalent resistance of three 10-ohm resistors in series
teacher:
  'All we need to do since the resistors are in series is add them up. The answer is thirty.'

In the above example, the mathematics understanding is that the student knows the meaning of the words *equivalent* and *series*. This may seem the case in a classroom but is not always the case when the student comes to a similar question later. *Equivalent* for instance is seldom used in everyday language and *series* is more likely to be associated with football or cricket.

Questions re-written in plain English
original question:
  When purchasing a specific resistor, the two main characteristics that must be stated are:
re-written question:
  If you were buying a resistor, what are the two main features you would want the resistor to have?

original question:

Table 1

Code	Result during semester%	Final exam result %	SECTION B RESULTS FROM FINAL EXAM	SECTION B RESULTS AFTER PLAIN ENGLISH RE-SIT	SECTION D RESULTS FROM FINAL EXAM	SECTION D RESULTS AFTER RE-SIT
1	45%	17%				
2	67%	45%	8	17	18	18
3	74%	30%				
4	69%	Absent				
5	58%	Absent				
6	2%	Absent				
7	0%	Absent				
8	0%	Absent				
9	72%	36%	13	17	16	18
10	57%	34%				
11	55%	29%	5	16	4	7
12	5%	13%	3	14	0	2
13	57%	Absent				
14	51%	27%	10	13	9	13
15	8%	36%				
16	70%	51%				
17	83%	56%				
18	60%	36%	11	16	12	17

  If all other factors remain unchanged, what would happen to the resistance of a conductor, if the conductor's diameter is halved.
re-written question:
  What would happen to the resistance of a conductor, if the diameter of the conductor is halved? (Note: everything else stays the same)

original question:
  Define the term 'Inductance'
re-written question:
  Write a few lines describing what we mean by 'Inductance'.

original question:
  Which one of the four effects of current covers the effect of electrocution on the human body?
re-written question:
  Electric current has four effects. Which one causes electrocution?

Some extracts from the action research report
The researchers made four decisions early in discussions about the project methodology and from this a teaching and delivery philosophy was developed supported by seven key delivery features:
- a strong element of indirect discipline.
- an encouragement of peer pressure learning.
- high levels of repartition using rough short hand written tests and sketches.
- continual suggestion of basic principles tied to new material
- emphasis on trade skill rather than correct answers
- a reasonably lenient attitude to common vulgar language
- the encouragement of 'collaboration'.

Catherine Brown & Bill Ebzery
Petersham TAFE, NSW

Here, there and everywhere
—the place for literacy in the next national strategy for VET

by Louise Wignall

W e have today placed Australia on the path to a high skill workforce, competitive industry and strong communities by endorsing the next national strategy for vocational education and training (VET).

Shaping our Future—Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2004-2010 sets a vision and four objectives for VET at the national level until the end of the decade. It also lists 12 specific strategies for achieving the objectives. An action plan is being developed and will be updated as needed. The four objectives are:

• Industry will have a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy.

• Employers and individuals will be at the centre of vocational education and training.

• Communities and regions will be strengthened economically and socially through learning and employment.

• Indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs and their learning culture will be shared.

More than one in eight working-age Australians is now enrolled in vocational education and training—a huge commitment by individuals, employers, communities, and governments to skill development.

Shaping our Future draws on extensive research and consultation about the economy, industry, and society and sets out how VET can help build the nation we want into the future.

Press release from the Australian National Training Authority Ministerial Council (MINCO) 24.11.2003

Literacy and the National Training Framework

Language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector cannot be defined as occurring in only specific work competencies delivered in Training Packages. LLN are crucial underpinnings to all generic employability skills and accredited content on the National Training and Information Service (NTIS). LLN in VET is a part of all delivery whether this is through Training Packages in large public or private providers and enterprise Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) or through Adult Basic and General Education curriculum delivered in the community sector.

The paradox posed by applications of literacy practice that make it clearly defined and measurable on the one hand, and deeply embedded in a range of more abstract generic skills on the other, creates significant challenges for the development of effective policy.

Literacy is no longer defined only as a set of particular programs for groups with low-level skills—it is about the quality assurance and expansiveness of a range of education and training provision nationally. Language, literacy and numeracy are key underpinning skills for generic employability and learning-to-learn skills that are required by all trainees at all levels. Therefore the National Strategy for VET recognises that LLN has to be *here, there, and everywhere*—in the vision statement, in the objectives and in the twelve sub-strategies so that subsequent action plans for the strategy to convert into literacy provision for the population will mean that all adults can fully participate in the labour force, use literacy skills at work, participate in education and training, and use literacy at home and in the community.

Features of Shaping our Future

The strategy is more far-reaching than previous national strategies and reaches beyond education and training to employment, regional development, environmental sustainability, innovation, social inclusion and portfolios other than education. It recognises that for change to occur VET cannot achieve the objectives on its own and that partnerships between government, non-government and private organisations are crucial to achieving outcomes.

It's more clearly focused on clients, and the ability of VET to better respond to the multiple and diverse needs of businesses, individuals, and communities and Indigenous learners. Finally the strategy is more inclusive—it recognises explicitly that people facing barriers to learning due to disability, age, gender, cultural difference, language, literacy, numeracy, cost, unemployment, imprisonment or isolation have particular needs. It challenges the system to position equity as a responsibility for all and to get rid of approaches that add to marginalisation.

Built-in not bolted on

Therefore, language, literacy and numeracy have deliberately not only been positioned as a clear issue of equity but also as an issue of quality in all training products and services. Given that language, literacy and numeracy are key skills needed by all people across all Australian Quality Framework (AQF) levels and all areas of VET it is important that *'skill standards and other products reflect emerging skill sets as well as employability, language, literacy, numeracy and cross-cultural skills.'* (strategy 9)

Because LLN are defined in the strategy as a particular focus for people with particular needs and at the same time as an integral part of all provision, the scope for attention to literacy is opened up considerably. Effective action plans for all 12 sub-strategies will need to consider

the place for LLN in the 'unpacking' of terms such as *learning/learner needs, transition, access, cross-cultural, skill-sets* and *community responses.*

The policy of 'building in' language, literacy and numeracy has been expanded from attending specifically to Training Package content to a whole-of-system approach.

Development of Action Plans
A session at the ACAL conference *Metropolis to Desert Sands—Literacy in Multiple Environments* in September last year posed a series of questions to participants about each of the four objectives of the draft national strategy and the types of policy decisions that might need to be made to implement them. The summary of responses to this consultation session have been forwarded to the ANTA team working on the national strategy action plan. The four categories and questions, with a selection of participant responses, follow:

1.Industry will have a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy
How do we build the right skill sets for the future given expanding definitions of literacy? What do VET products look like that would deliver these skills?
• increase attention to effective soft-skills development
• harmonise the dual training and regulatory systems for occupational licensing purposes to avoid training fatigue or anomalies
• increase general literacy awareness training for all assessors
• increase consultation with learners and educators when reviewing VET training products.

2. Employers and individuals will be at the centre of vocational education and training
How can the VET sector partner more effectively with industry to open up opportunities for workers to upgrade their literacy skills and have existing skills recognised?
What would system-wide VET products look like that would serve all learner needs?
• effective incentives for addressing LLN of all trainees need to be identified and applied in a nationally consistent way to ensure equity across the system
• encourage partnerships of VET and LLN trainers across all departments within large RTOs. Must include all learners but focus on at-risk learners
• map all AQF curriculum to National Reporting System levels
• develop a process to prevent low-level LLN skilled people being 'screened out' and provide incentives to retain and train them
• provide access to traineeship for all ages.

3. Communities and regions will be strengthened economically and socially through learning and employment
What factors do we need to build into the system to build resilience, help communities adapt to change, and encourage lifelong learning? What strategies will best engage the disengaged?
• full examination of the *E* in VET
• consultation about community learning needs at a grass roots level
• linking the national ACE strategy to the national VET strategy
• recognition by funding bodies that quality options may exist outside 'accredited curriculum or Training Packages'.

4. Indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs and their learning culture will be shared
What are the short-term actions required to move towards this objective?
How do we build mechanisms for strategic partnerships to deliver this outcome?
• develop incentives for cross-agency delivery.
• expand government definitions of 'remote' and provide incentives to deliver within really remote communities
• remove funding being connected to student contact hours—make it project based
• cultural Awareness programs to be funded nationally
• cross-mentoring encouraged between community and outside workers
• inter-agency outcomes to become measures of success.

What's happening now?
An action plan and a key performance measure implementation plan for the national strategy are being developed collaboratively by governments, industry and other stakeholders for ministers' consideration. Following the endorsement of the national strategy document in November 2003, the action plan will be presented to ministers in June 2004.

Roundtable debates are being held around key issues to be considered through the action plan. An outcome of these discussions is 'Ideas for action' papers which will be posted on the ANTA web site after each roundtable. All interested people are asked to comment on these papers. Visit the ANTA web site for details at— www.anta.gov.au

Watch this space
A series of strategic conversations about literacy and the national strategy will be held in 2004 as part of the Adult Literacy National Project. Watch for further details in *Literacy Link*.
(First published in *Fine Print*, Vol 26 No 4)

Louise Wignall
Senior Project Officer
Australian National Training Authority

Rethinking literacy models for the 21st century

by Robyn Jay

As a Flexible Learning Leader, Robyn Jay's investigations have focused on a) what a multi-literacies model of literacy provision might look like, b) how new technologies can be used to add value to teaching programs, and c) how new technologies might be used to re-engage marginalised learners. Robyn's research outside the education/VET sectors has identified a range of successful programs that are doing much to engage individuals and communities in innovative projects that start with the learner's particular interests and needs.

In the past 'literacy' was linked to reading and writing skills. In this article this will be referred to as 'alphabetical literacy'. As our lives become more complex, what it means to be 'literate' and what is encompassed in literacy provision become more difficult to define.

The introduction of the concept of 'Multi-literacies' (New London Group,1996) supports an expanded view, and with this as a theoretical framework three questions guided my Flexible Learning Leader research:

Firstly, what does a multi-modal/multi-literacy model of teaching/learning actually look like? Is such a model possible within the current Australian program?

Secondly I was keen to explore how new technologies can be used to add value to teaching/ learning programs, and enhance the development of all 'literacies' now required. My emphasis needed to be on how well technology could be used rather than on how much—it was a matter of quality not quantity.

Finally, I was keen to consider how new technologies might be used to re-engage marginalised learners—those whom traditional educational approaches have failed.

What's happening in the field?

An informal survey of participants at the 2003 ACAL national conference found that a number of issues were repeatedly raised that are seen to impede progress:

- Teachers often feel they have insufficient skills and confidence to add new technologies to their repertoire of teaching practices
- Many teachers lack ready access to effective technical support
- A lack of access to appropriate equipment largely due to insufficient funding or outdated views by management of what literacy and literacy provision should entail
- Teachers feel that they lack time to engage with the opportunities that technologies present due to the increasing casualisation of the literacy workforce and a perceived dramatic increase in administrative and reporting requirements that detract from their core business: student needs, curriculum design and teaching/learning issues
- Current program structures and funding models are seen to restrict program options and innovation.

A fresh viewpoint

Throughout the year I made an effort to explore what is happening outside the education and VET sectors. Conferences such as the OZeCulture conference in Brisbane provided an exciting peek into state of the art technology and cutting edge work such as virtual reality. While expecting to locate new and interesting ways of using technology, I was surprised to discover a wide range of effective learning programs particularly in areas such as Indigenous health, cultural and community development programs and Youth at Risk initiatives.

So what is it that makes these programs work? While I can offer only tentative conclusions a number of factors do appear common among these successful programs. Each of these is explored more fully in the following section with some interesting links for further exploration.

Project based learning: real tasks in real contexts

One of the most difficult tasks for teachers and trainers seems to be grappling with competency

Figure 1: Common success factors in innovative program models

standards. Too often we teach to the competency standards or learning outcomes with little consideration for the learners' interests, needs and existing knowledge and experiences.

What project based learning programs prove is that we are able to provide relevant, student-centred, authentic, complex learning activities. The projects I have visited this year are typically interdisciplinary, focus on real world issues and practices and as a result have immediate relevance and interest for individuals and communities. To achieve this a multidisciplinary facilitation and learning support team is needed.

While the need for multidisciplinary teams is well accepted in the development and functioning of online learning systems, it seems that in face to face blended learning environments we are expecting teachers to have broader, more complex skills. A good example of a team-based project is *Moving Memories*. In 2002/3 Louisa Ellum and SkillsPlus Peninsula Inc in Victoria obtained literacy Innovative funding to pilot the project. (See page 11 of this issue of *Literacy Link*.)

Lifewide learning: blurring educational boundaries
There now exists a strong call for educational institutions to become more open and more closely connected with wider communities and for educators to operate in this more complex environment as mediators and collaborators.

In Wales I met Sue Williams from the educational arts organisation, HyperAction. Her focus is helping schools and community groups make good use of the resources they have available to ensure sustainability and to give a social, creative, learning experience using technologies that individuals would not otherwise have. See—www.hyperaction.org.uk/

Sue, who has an education background, works with a variety of artists and media experts. One project, *The Bont* involved a team which included Sue, a Year 5 teacher and class, and a tapestry expert on a project that took learning out into the local town where the children worked with community members to capture the essence of their local community and its history. Via a process of recorded interviews and sound, animation, and art work the team developed a multilayered 'map' of the village.

Narrative
So often the people who have limited English language or alphabetical literacy skills are not given a voice. The combination of narrative with new technologies allows a wide range of creative, engaging experiences and projects that are relevant for oral based cultural traditions and those lacking confidence with written text.

The growing Digital Storytelling movement is a perfect example of the power of the narrative. Digital Stories are short movies (usually about 2-3 minutes in length) which combine images, a narrated story and audio.

In Cardiff, Wales, Daniel Meadows at the BBC Capture Wales project runs monthly workshops in local communities where digital stories are created and edited by community members using cameras, computers, scanners and their own photo albums. See—www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales/about/webguide

A back door approach: learning by stealth
In a disadvantaged area of Bristol in the UK, the Knowle West Media Centre is having success re-engaging young people who have left school early or are at risk of doing so as well as disadvantaged members of the local community, in a wide range of multimedia projects including newsletters, short films, photography and community regeneration projects. See—http://www.kwmc.co.uk/index2.htm

In Darwin at the Don Dale Juvenile Justice Centre, the Big hART Project *Nuff Stuff* offers workshops and projects based around the use of non-literacy based visual languages such as animation, claymation, static image and film, that are generated from the young people's personal narratives. See—www.acmi.net.au/bighart/nuffstuff/nuffsite.htm

A multi-modal approach
As well as being a vital component of multi-literacy development, digital technologies offer exciting new ways to enrich teaching/learning opportunities generally. For many students they are the key for re-engaging individuals in more formal learning processes and a means by which they can communicate without the need for advanced written skills.

Feral Arts in Brisbane used state of the art digital equipment–computer, video, camera and editing software. They have been working with the Dajarra community in western Queensland to capture oral traditions and community histories. Material includes photos, videos, songs, interviews, paintings, and digital images. See—http://www.feralarts.com.au/

Placeworks software 'operates as a digital museum or keeping place for personal and community histories'. It uses maps of local places to interface with a database containing material gathered through the oral and community history program. The software enables control of images, etc. which can be masked or removed to meet with cultural protocols.
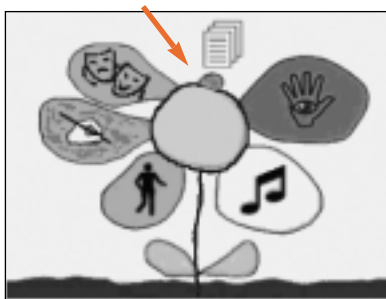
Reproduced with permission from Christopher Brocklebank The Text Petal image illustrates the place of text as children enter school. While they are experts at movement, song, drama, manipulation of the environment and art, their grasp of written text is minimal.

In central Australia, Christopher Brocklebank with the team from Isee-Ilearn: Multilingual Multimedia is developing a range of visual learning resources which extend beyond written text for Indigenous and cross-cultural learning and communication. Christopher's philosophy is that information should be presented firstly in the known media of image and voice, providing a space of common ground on which 'all parties can stand and share important information' without the power imbalances that English written text invariably creates. See— www.isee-ilearn.com/

Providing a human face
Technology can alienate or connect us as a community; make learning profoundly authentic and relevant to contexts, or totally removed.

Also in Alice Springs, J Easterby-Wood, with his team from the NT Department of Health and Disabilities and the IT company, Inchain, is doing some remarkable work to re-humanise e-learning. Over the past three years they have been working to develop resources that can break down the barriers that existed for Indigenous health workers in the local communities surrounding Alice Springs. Their products enable voice recognition and the conversion of text into sound files (in English and 27 other languages) in a matter of seconds.

Conclusions
What we offer and how we offer it must focus on the learners and their interests and needs if we are serious about providing quality flexible learning opportunities. Unless we include digital technologies in our literacy programs we will further marginalise those individuals already marginalised in society.

We need to adopt a revised constructivist approach that focuses on 'designing for learning' rather than the 'planning for teaching' models so often employed in our VET organisations. We also need to look beyond traditional teaching approaches to community based options that will better engage all learners.

Finally it is important to remember that the real issue continues to be the quality of teaching, not the amount of technology. In our push for flexible learning solutions we need to focus on the learner and the community. Through effective blended learning strategies we can give all members of society a voice in the ever increasing global community.

Robyn Jay
Gecko Education Services

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new resource

Read Series 1 are innovative books for adult literacy. The project has been developed by Melbourne writer/educator Rachel Flynn and writer Tracey Lennon with the help of Robiny Stricker at Swinburne University, and Sandra Lansdell at Ballarat University.

'The project began as a request from adult literacy teachers to write a series that was geared towards adults, particularly men who make up the majority of learners,' said Rachel.

There are seven titles: *Sports Stuff, In The City, Men At Work, At Luna Park, Phil Goes Sailing,* *On Your Bike* and *Sausages For Lunch.* The books range from very simple, with photographs and captions, to more complex stories with a variety of text styles.

There is also a resource book for students and teachers comprising word lists and activities relating to all seven titles. The activities involve reading and writing, speaking and listening, comprehension and interpretation.

The series will be available in early March and enquiries can be made on (03) 9523 8787 or online at— www.smithandwilson.com.au
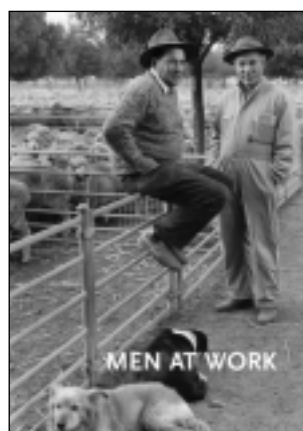
Moving memories—an innovative and successful literacy project for youth

by Louisa Ellum

Since finishing this project Louisa Ellum finds herself still enthusiastic, passionate and driven to see elements of the project built upon and used by other organisations. 'What has been made clear to me... is that the scope of both digital storytelling and the creation of purposeful project work with the CGEA is enormous, though challenging, and has the potential to engage learners in ways that many mediums struggle with'.

*M*oving Memories was a pilot project with the aim to develop reading, writing and oral communication skills in a participative learning environment, which focused on young people's developing technological literacy skills. The group of participants was made up of eight young people between the ages of 15 and 20 who have had negative experiences of learning, and required support to develop their literacy skills. Participants engaged in the project for 20 hours per week over three days, for 20 weeks.

The major objectives were to promote the growth of community connections, and a feeling of empowerment and the desire to continue learning through a two-way mentoring system where older people were assisted to share their stories through the digital medium. The project was broken into three main units of study which focused on the creation of digital stories, integration of learning circles, effective working with mentors, self-facilitated work and the implementation of the CGEA.

Unit 1 - Moving Memories - a digital enterprise
This unit relied on the participation of the mentors to create the end product, a digital story of their life.

Unit 2 - Taking risks, taking action, taking charge
This unit involved a lot of flexibility, choices and the need for self-motivation. It involved research and the production of a final product such as a magazine, a proposal or a book.

Unit 3 - Living and learning outside the square
This unit involved the participation of the students and mentors in Learning Circles on a regular basis.

Digital Storytelling
The creation of a digital story on the life of the mentors was one of the main aims of the whole project, and the part of the project that has created the most interest. What was challenging about this was that I started the development of the project with a copy of a CD from America with examples of digital stories from a literacy perspective. The product was impressive and demonstrated to me that digital storytelling was surely an exciting new tool literacy facilitators could use within their classrooms to engage the disengaged.

Digital stories are like videos with voice-overs, audio, captions and special effects. They can be created using moving video footage but for our purposes, we decided to use still images - photographs and pictures from the mentors' lives. Each story was limited to five minutes in length and had to focus on an element of the mentor's life - not attempt to tell their whole life story. The creation was to be a collaboration between the mentor and the participant, but the final decisions about how the product would look and sound, and its focus were up to the participant.

'I now know I can achieve whatever I put my mind to and I believe in myself.'

The challenge for both mentors and participants was that they only met for no more than twelve weeks for half a day per week. Organisation, planning and effective communication wereextremely important. The participants became experts (to the degree they needed to be) in the programs Adobe Premiere and PhotoShop and the mentors had to look, learn and listen when the participants had to explain what they could do with the photos and what their limitations were as well.

Participants and mentors had to decide on a focus for the story and this was the most time-consuming part of the venture. Within this venture, the participants learnt not only about their mentor's life, but their families, friends and bits of history about Australia and other countries as well. Connections, understandings and communication were developed through this entire process. It was a chance for the participants to also open up and talk about their life.

The sharing of the mentors' photos was exciting for the whole group. Often everyone huddled around a table to look at each other's photos and the participants enjoyed looking at the different fashion, hair styles and how

good-looking and young the mentors once were. The stories that circulated using the photos as prompts were amusing and engaging for all.

When the mentors were not with the participants, the participants would storyboard the order of the photos and voice-overs, create ideas for special effects and write captions or search for music to suit the story. They would then create it in video format and 'play' with the types of special effects that they thought suited the story. Often the mentors were surprised by the progress made with their stories between their visits.

The literacy challenges presented by the digital storytelling clearly demonstrated the potential such a medium has in engaging, challenging and opening doors for the disengaged and isolated learner. The elements that I focused on from a literacy perspective in relation to the learning were:
- learning complex software
- reading instructions
- interviewing and recording information
- transcribing material
- researching, sorting and reflecting on material
- storyboarding
- editing—hardcopy and on the computer.

Outcomes of the Project
It is often difficult to quantitatively measure outcomes of such a course—that's often why in our profession we rely on the qualitative way of measuring. The following are summary points of the project outcomes:
1 All participants increased their reading, writing, oral communication and computer skills. Participation in the Learning Circle with the mentors enabled this group of young people to develop feelings of empowerment through gaining the ability to express their opinions eloquently and confidently in a public arena. This also had a positive impact on their written expression in relation to purpose, audience, structure and opinion.
2 Working with the mentors one-on-one made a great impact on the way the participants interacted within the group and with each other. They developed a sense of self-esteem and self-worth, a sense of purpose, and were empowered by the fact that they had a support base that was 'theirs' and someone who would assist with their progress other than the facilitator. Strong relationships developed and some have been maintained since the project finished.
3 Creating the mentors' digital stories was the highlight and the greatest challenge of the project. Using the computer software Adobe Premiere and Photoshop was a challenge but one well worth the time and effort. It was exciting (daunting at times) and required all participants and mentors to work collaboratively. It relied on effective running of computer software, negotiating extra times for the mentors and participants to work together, planning, scheduling times, rescheduling times, interviewing, planning and storyboarding material, drafting voice-overs, scanning pictures and finding a theme or focus for each story, sharing resources, deciding on music, captions and special effects to use, sharing ideas and strategies and aiming for it all to come together by the end of the project. All stories were completed professionally, on time and were exhibited with pride by all participants at the final presentation.
4 The overall commitment from the participants was exceptional. Some of the participants were school refusers or so disengaged with 'learning' that they would rarely partake in school activities. Attendance was generally outstanding and there was an overwhelming feeling that there was a purpose in attending, they didn't want to miss out on anything and let the others down.

The young participants made very positive and encouraging progress in many areas. They learnt to use quite complex computer software to create the digital stories. This was difficult but all participants were able to grapple with the demands, quickly make progress and gain confidence, producing very high quality work. Their attitudes to learning changed greatly and their interaction with each other, their facilitator and the mentors developed in mature and supportive ways and demonstrated evidence of greater self-esteem and empowerment. Some of the comments the participants made in their final week of the course highlight the impact the project as a whole had on them:

'I now know I can achieve whatever I put my mind to and I believe in myself.'

'I knew I could do what I did on the computer but never had the opportunity to do it at school. I felt like I could do anything and produce quality work in my own time and pushing myself at my own pace.'

'Learning should not be associated with just school because it makes it sound negative. Learning is about making your life better, moving on and making changes to become a better person so you can work, live and enjoy life and it is something that everyone does, or should do, everyday.'

Louisa Ellum
SkillsPlus Peninsula Inc

Aboriginal English—an Aboriginal perspective

by Bridget Priman

Bridget Priman was born in Bundaberg, Queensland, but is working on her mother's language, Warrgamay, spoken in the Ingham area. She now lives in Townsville, and works for the Indigenous 'Shalom Village', a unique combination of an old people's home and a school where the elderly and the young interact daily. She has nine children and eighteen grandchildren. Bridget presented a paper at the ACAL conference in Alice Springs last year. This article was adapted from a paper first published in 'Ngoonjook: A Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues' No. 21, July 2002.

Since invasion, Indigenous people have manipulated the English language for their own purposes and this has contributed to maintaining their own identity. Standard English mixed with parts of their own language has created the Aboriginal English they speak today. While Aboriginal English is the Indigenous peoples' way of speaking it does create problems for them in mainstream education, in law and in health. In this article I will discuss this language, its history and some of its linguistic and social aspects. I will also touch on some of the issues of Aboriginal English that have brought heartache to our people in the form of poor education, misrepresentation in law courts and problems in health.

History

The history of Aboriginal English begins with the invaders and our people's clever manipulation of the English language. During and after the invasion of our land our people suffered terrible atrocities. They lost their culture. They lost their lives. They lost their land. Their children were stolen. They even lost the colour of their skin, because of the raping of our women or the white men intermarrying with the black women. The last link was their language and many lost that too. The one thing they would not lose was their identity: who they were and still are today.

They fought to keep their identity and in a sense isolate themselves from the outsiders or invaders. The Indigenous peoples' lives and languages may be controlled but the white people could not control their secret language. The English language was manipulated to suit their own needs. This language set them apart from Standard English. This Standard English, with parts of their own language, created Aboriginal English which they could identify with. Aboriginal English is a powerful vehicle for the expression of Aboriginal Identity.

All over the English-speaking world there are varieties and dialects of English. We have American English and New Zealand English. In Australia the original language contact between Aboriginals and the British invaders was Pidgin English. Within a few generations the pidgin developed into more communicatively rich languages such as Aboriginal English and the three Creole languages in the northern areas. These are Kriol in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley, Torres Strait Creole and Cape York Creole. Aboriginal English in some parts of Australia did not develop from Pidgin English but from Aboriginalisation of English. The speakers brought words, grammar and ways of speaking from their Aboriginal Languages into English.

"The one thing they (Indigenous people) would not lose was their identity: who they were and still are today."

Aspects of Aboriginal English

The features of Aboriginal English can be seen in the vocabulary, the sounds, grammar and pragmatics.

Vocabulary

Aboriginal English has its own vocabulary. Some words are unique to Aboriginal English, others are English words with a special meaning and there are also phrases that would not be understood by a Standard English speaker. There are different Aboriginal English words for 'black fellow', such as Gurri, Kurri, Koori and Murri. The words for 'white fellow' are Duggai, Migaloo.

These are the Aboriginal English words in some of the areas of Australia. However, different areas have their own Aboriginal words for these terms. The Aboriginal English word 'mother' means the birth mother and also the mother's sister. This is in keeping with the way kinship is expressed in Aboriginal languages. 'Camp' is the Aboriginal English word for 'home'.

Another Aboriginal English word commonly used is the 'shame' word. It is used to express shyness and embarrassment. For example, 'Aw, shame', the girl said when she won best player in netball.

The word 'deadly' means 'great', 'the best' or words similar to them. It is widely used in most parts of Australia. In Townsville '4K1G 107.1 Too Deadly' is the Indigenous radio station, and this phrase can be seen on the advertisement board when entering the city from the south. The phrase 'make me slack', which means 'I've had enough of this' is immortalised in the song 'Bran Nue Dae'. 'Reared' is a common word Indigenous people use when they talk about raising up children. 'They reared you up' means 'they raised you'.

Sounds

Speakers of Aboriginal English pronounce words differently because some sounds are not in their first language. Words such as ' 'ome' and ' 'ouse' are used in Murri talk because in some Aboriginal languages there is no 'h' sound. The 'p' and 'b' sound in Aboriginal English substitute for the 'v' and 'f' sound in Standard English. For example, 'bight' in Aboriginal English is substituted for 'fight' in Standard English, because these sounds are not found in most Indigenous languages.

Grammar

The grammatical features of Aboriginal English also differ from the grammar of Standard English. In her book *Bridging Two Worlds*, Jean Harkins discusses the use of grammar in Aboriginal English, and uses the following example:
We was taken away when we was little bit young
'Was' instead of 'were' is used. 'Little bit young' is used instead of 'quite young'. A word commonly heard in much of Australia is the tag 'eh'. 'They bite, eh?' is used in Aboriginal English, whereas in Standard English this would be 'They bite, don't they?'.

Pragmatics

Linguists use the term 'pragmatics' to describe the way language is used rather than how it is structured. In Aboriginal English people use indirect ways to find out information. Silence is important in Indigenous society's interactions, and lengthy silent periods are the norm, whereas this is seen as a sign of communication breakdown in non-Indigenous society.

Code switching

Indigenous people were great experts at code switching, because they were multilinguals. Because of intermarriage, trade, ceremonial gatherings and settling disputes with the neighbours, they could speak in their own language and the languages of the neighbouring tribes. This ability has been put to good use in order to function in the white society as well as in their community. An example of this is illustrated by my sister's story of our journey to and from school. As children, we learnt to adapt to the English school environment by metaphorically 'putting on a cloak' when we went to school. When coming out of the swamp the 'cloak went on' and away we went to school to try and learn Standard English. In the afternoon when we returned home we 'cast the cloak away' and spoke Aboriginal English. This was the way we learnt to code switch, switching from Aboriginal English when speaking to family, and then switching to Standard English when talking to non-Indigenous people.

Another example of code switching is shown in a work environment where there are non-Indigenous and Indigenous co-workers. The communication will usually be in Standard English between the non-Indigenous and Indigenous work mates, and then the Indigenous colleagues will switch to Aboriginal English when they are talking to each other. The younger generation have a new twist on the use of Aboriginal English, for example, my niece speaks 'posh talk' (which is a closer to Standard English), but can switch to Aboriginal English when talking with Indigenous family, although she still sounds posh!

The Heartache of Aboriginal English

Aboriginal English, while it is a powerful vehicle for expressing Aboriginal identity, has brought heartache for the people who speak it. This heartache situation can be seen in education, in law and in health.

Schools are constantly stereotyping Aboriginal children as having 'bad English' and behaving badly, and thinking they must be in need of remedial teaching, when it is really the teachers who must learn Aboriginal English or at least recognise it as a valid dialect of English. One of the problems is how the child is asked a question. As discussed earlier, silence is not a problem among Indigenous people. However, among non-Indigenous people silence can be taken to mean a person does not know the answer.

The problems in the legal system have been horrendous. Language barriers include the different way that silence is viewed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Another barrier is created by the use of direct questions that need a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Aboriginal people are more inclined to say 'yes' to please the person asking the question, especially if the person is in an authoritative position. The question of time also creates communication barriers. Indigenous people describe time by saying it was 'after Dave left' not a specific time such as 3.00pm.

Breakfast with ANTA—equity and diversity in VET

by Helen Foley

Helen Foley attended an Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Equity Breakfast briefing in Brisbane in December and was provided with a strong sense that vocational education and training (VET) knows that it is now time to be more outward looking. This is the theme taken up by the new ANTA strategy for 2004 to 2010.

Those attending the ANTA breakfast were given a preview of an upcoming book *Equity in vocational education and training: Research readings.* NCVER, 2004 (Available soon. Individual papers can be accessed on the internet at— www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr2201index.htm)

Among issues revealed by the NCVER data was the concern that socio-economic factors are not measured for any equity group. This raises the question: Are the equity groupings we collect data for the right ones? The chapter on people in corrective institutions argues that the prison population is too small and diverse to be properly considered as an equity group. This is disturbing as people in corrective institutions are frequently also part of other named equity groups: indigenous, NESB and disability (especially drug issues). Additionally, they frequently have literacy issues and are in dire socioeconomic straits. It seems indefensible not to view this group as having multiple disadvantage as regards the VET system.

Of the proposed groupings, that of people with poor literacy and numeracy skills seems to be much in favour. It may come as a surprise to many in the literacy field to find that while the system acknowledges the disadvantage this group faces, statistics are collected only those attending specific literacy programs. If those with poor language, literacy or numeracy did become an equity group, what would that mean for mainstreaming LLN? Would it be useful to define such a group and to what purpose?

Many would argue that VET is in many ways an entire equity sector. It is for many people a second chance at education—a pathway towards or re-engagement with learning. However vocational training also provides ongoing learning to many who have no need for 'equity' as a way in. Indeed, the socio-economic status of the whole VET population appears to be very similar to the general population of Australia.

Those with an 'empowerment' rather than a 'welfare' model of inclusiveness may find the focus of the new ANTA strategy around equity more attractive, although it does raise real questions about how the most disadvantaged can be catered for. I would urge members of the literacy and numeracy field to read the final chapter to gain a conceptual understanding of where the equity flavour is coming from.

Following the breakfast there was an ANTA roundtable where groups were asked to devise responses to questions about equity, mainstreaming and so forth, and to come up with critical issues and potential actions. Many interesting and far-ranging conversations were captured by ANTA scribes and can be found in the ANTA Equity discussion paper entitled Diversity Management which can be found at: http://www.anta.gov.au/dapStrategy.asp

I would encourage all who are interested in equity in VET to read and comment on the paper as this is a unique opportunity to get progressive ideas into the ANTA action plan for the new strategy. Those interested in reading other ANTA discussion papers as they are released can subscribe to the fortnightly email alert *fast facts* at www.anta.gov.au/pubFast.asp Papers that arose from similar consultations, one on mature-aged workers and another on innovation, are already out.

The consultation for the high-level review of Training Packages is also out so if you have ideas for improvements for these, especially around equity aspects or accessibility of pathways this is a good opportunity to have your say. This review is in the third phase and is genuinely looking for ideas to improve Training Packages.

The high level review of the Training Packages paper can be found at— www.anta.gov.au/publication.asp?qsID=578

Those who have been following the development of the new ANTA Strategy will recognise that equity now has a stronger presence in the ANTA leading documents that will guide VET for the remainder of the decade. We all need to be actively engaged in how the next round of struggles with equity is played out in the policy and action plans for our sector.

Helen Foley
A/Senior Executive Officer
Recognition of Prior Learning, DET Qld
helen.foley@det.qld.gov.au

ACAL contact details

Different rules about eye contact create problems in the legal system. In the Indigenous way of life, it is considered rude to make eye contact whereas in non-Indigenous society non-eye contact is a sign of having something to hide.

One of the major problems in health is the ear problem. 'Otitis media', an infection of the middle ear, is a common ear condition. If children develop this problem in the first five years of their lives they will have trouble hearing all of their first language. This loss of first language makes literacy acquisition difficult because they do not have the basic foundations of their first language to build on.

In my generation Aboriginal English has shifted along the continuum to more Standard English. By the same token, words such as 'deadly' have been adopted by mainstream Australia. The terms 'Murri' and 'Koori' are more widely used in mainstream society. When a prominent Elder passed away two years ago, the news media apologised for using his first name and he was given a respectful traditional name for an Indigenous person who has passed on. This is of great significance because the media has a big impact on the way non-Indigenous people view Indigenous ways of language and culture.

Speakers who are multilingual have what Mandawuy Yunupingu calls 'double power', a concept of keeping their own language and using the English language in mainstream Australia. Most speakers of the English language in Australia are monolingual, whereas many Indigenous speakers are multilingual. Criticism of Aboriginal English is a sign of a narrow view from monolingual society, and attitudes need to change so Aboriginal English can take its rightful place among the rest of the Australian languages, which include Indigenous languages and Standard Australian English.

Bridget Priman