

MAACE TOPICS / SPRING, 2005

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A Message from the President

MAACE is a professional association for practitioners providing quality and enriching adult and continuing education programs throughout the State of Michigan. Our members are characterized by their unfailing enthusiasm and commitment about the field of lifelong learning as well as their willingness to share new ideas and innovations with colleagues.

With that said, many things have occurred during the last year that exemplifies that commitment and enthusiasm to adult and continuing education. First, we held our 2005 Annual Conference, ***MAACE: Celebrating Tradition, Valuing Innovation***, March 17-18, 2005 at WSU's Oakland Center in Farmington Hills. Over 100 practitioners and educators attended the conference. They brought with them a wealth of knowledge to share among everyone. Participants were welcomed by **Dianne Duthie**, State Director of Adult Education from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth and learned about the status of adult education in Michigan and its relationship to economic growth. We also had two wonderful luncheon speakers. On Thursday, Dr. Curtis L. Ivery, Chancellor of Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD), addressed the group on issues affecting community colleges and how WCCCD has managed to increase enrollment while meeting those challenges. On Friday, the Honorable Judge Cynthia Gray Hathaway addressed the group and discussed the relationship between a lack of education and crime. Participants were provided with evidence to support the importance of adult and continuing education in Michigan and beyond.

Second, we held elections. We welcome to the Executive Board a new president (myself), vice-president Julie Brockman from Michigan State University, and secretary Ruthie Flowers from Wayne State University. We also invited additional members to

join the **MAACE** Board as Directors. These changes have continued to strengthen the organization and I only expect great things to continue.

Third, the organization has continued to increase participation and membership base from diverse groups representing adult and continuing education in the State of Michigan. This is important because we as an organization is only as strong as our members and their commitment to MAACE. I thank each and everyone for continued support and look forward to the next year!

2005 Conference Report

Michigan Association of Adult and Continuing Education Facilitator Chair 2005 Conference Report

Conference Chair: Kelli Pugh
Conference Co Chair: Ruthie Flowers

Facilitator Chair: Ruthie Flowers
Facilitators: Cheryl Aubuchon, Julie Brockman, Darrell Brockway, Adrienne Brown, Pynthia Caffee, Laura Corrunker, Dawn Dolly, Cheryl Dove, Felicia Grace, Ellen Holmes, Carole Keller, Frank Koscielski, Thomas Moeller, Frank Williams

The primary responsibilities as Co Chair and Facilitator Chair for the 2005 conference were getting volunteers to serve as facilitators; creating pocket portfolios for the facilitators to include the "Facilitators Handbook," with the list of duties and responsibilities and their assigned concurrent; creating the registration and evaluation forms; collecting evaluations and submitting a report for the grant proposal to be forward to Dianne Duthie, State Director for Adult Education, Department of Labor and Economic Growth. Other duties consisted of purchasing gift plaques for the keynote speakers and label ribbons for name tags (the cost will appear in the treasurer's report); making certificates of appreciations for the facilitators; staffing and manning the Registration Desk; giving a brief orientation of duties for volunteers, Dr. Trudy Green, and Bernice Ratcliff, who assisted with registration.

Registration Activities

May 17, 2005 There were 63 attendees/sign-ins
May 18, 2005 There were 54 attendees/sign-ins

MAACE Conference Report Continued:

All attendees were provided a conference bag that included a program, conference evaluation form, pen and writing pad.

There were a total of 30 presenters and co-presenters, 14 facilitators and three exhibitors. Each received a name badge including the name of the institution/organization they represented with a ribbon label of their role titles.

Conference Evaluations Results

There were 24 scheduled workshop/training sessions. Evaluations for 23 sessions were collected. The scorecard results were as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Fair	Need Improvement
70.8%	28.4%	00.8%	0

The overall conference comments were repeats or a combination of the following remarks: "excellent/exceptional job/discussion," "great session," "very informative," "interactive involvement very well received," "extremely valuable," "very student-need orientated!" "Super," "related well to my program needs," "...the presenters were good at keeping us engaged," "wonderful presentation!" "I hope to adopt and use some of these strategies with my second language learners," "I loved being here with you. You answered dramatic questions I have had for the last 10 years- probably more-" "enthusiastic!" "Well spoken, very comfortable with information and class!" "So enjoyed it!"

"Although there was good group participation, I was really turned off at the beginning of the seminar. I did not like the test. It's ok to have a[n] ice breaker - but I feel one should be more selective. Due to the test - I lost interest in the presentation." "Speaker needed to be louder, voice too soft, good participant interaction."

Report Respectfully Submitted by Ruthie Flowers
June 15, 2005

Talking about Board Members...

Two MAACE Officers, Katrina Vanderwoude, Past President of the MAACE Board, and Kelli Pugh, President of the MAACE Board, received their doctoral degrees. Congratulations Katrina and Kelli!

Member News

MAACE members! Please feel free to send information and material you would like to share with other MAACE members! You can send information electronically to Julie Brockman at brockma4@msu.edu or by mail to: 110 Linton Hall, The Graduate School, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI 48824.

Committee Reports

Options, the MAACE journal, is being reorganized as an electronic journal that has a strong research to practice orientation. Charlie Baker-Clark is currently assembling an editorial board and is seeking articles from both practitioners and scholars.

Topics, the MAACE newsletter, is seeking input from MAACE members to help this newsletter become an important site for news about adult education in Michigan. Please feel free to send information and material you would like to share with other MAACE members! You can send information electronically to Julie Brockman at brockma4@msu.edu or by mail to: 110 Linton Hall, The Graduate School, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI 48824.

The MAACE Scholarship Committee plans to offer a partial scholarship at the Annual conference, the selection process and criteria for recipients has not been decided as of yet.

MAACE Officers and Directors

Kelli Pugh	President
Julie Brockman	Vice President, Conference Co-Chair, and Editor of Topics
Ruthie Flowers	Secretary and Conference Chair
Cynthia Ward	Treasurer
Sandra E. Alford	Director and Chair of Membership

Cheryl Aubuchon	Director
Charles Baker-Clark	Director and AAACE Liaison
Darrell Brockway	Director
Diane Duthie	Director
Howard Finley	Director and Chair of Scholarships
Ruthie Flowers	Director and Co-Chair of 2005 Conference
Lois Hazell	Director
Ken Walsh	Director and Chair of Nominations and Elections
Katrina Vanderwoude	Past-President

Editor's Choice

ERIC Digest # 193

Work Force Education or Literacy Development: Which Road Should Adult Education Take?

Susan Imel
1998

The world of work continues to change rapidly. Many workers will need to upgrade their skills and some will need to be retrained for entirely new jobs. Providing educational opportunities to these adult workers will lengthen their productive years and will also benefit the economy by creating a more flexible and more highly trained workforce. (U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan, 1998-2002, 1997, p. 39)

Our democratic institutions depend upon and are sustained by an educated citizenry. While moving from welfare to the workforce and creating economic advancement are valid outcomes of education, democracy demands much more. Democratic life requires critical inquiry, civic participation, and a commitment to the common good. (Auchter 1998, p. 2)

During the past few years, the nations economic needs have driven many of the policy discussions within education. At the federal level, Congress has considered and debated bills that would consolidate a number of educational programs—including adult basic education and vocational education—into omnibus work force development and training bills. Provisions for block grants that would allow states greater autonomy and latitude in making decisions about how the funds are used have been included in these proposed acts. None of these education bills has passed, but the debate continues. In 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. More commonly known as the Welfare Reform Act, this legislation not only created sweeping changes in welfare policies that affected education and training, it also provided block grants that give states greater flexibility (Nathan 1997). A number of states have responded to the

move at the federal level toward greater state autonomy and control by merging education, human services, and employment service agencies to create "super agencies" to oversee state work force development efforts, including adult basic education, welfare reform, and vocational education (Jurmo 1996).

The increasing emphasis on work force development as a policy goal is bringing to the forefront a continuing debate within the field of adult basic education. Although adults frequently enroll in adult basic education for job-related reasons, the programs themselves have always had broader goals. In an effort to shed light on current perspectives about the goals and purposes of adult basic education, this *Digest* reviews recent literature and suggests solutions to what frequently becomes an "either-or" debate.

The Current Context: Its Impact on Adult Basic Education

The current context is shaped not only by the policy emphasis on education for work-related reasons but also by changes brought about by the Welfare Reform Act. The new law changes the focus of welfare reform from an approach that invests in building basic and job skills to an approach that emphasizes quick job placement. As a result, many states are reevaluating the role of education and training (Strawn 1997). Although adult educators previously may have worked closely with human services agencies to provide basic skills training, they may now feel "out of the loop" because they are "being left out of the bureaucratic spider web resulting from welfare reform" (Fluke 1998, p. 4).

According to Fluke, across Pennsylvania there are stories "about some of the better-prepared, motivated adult students, forced to drop out of literacy, numeracy, and writing classes to enter 20-hour-per week jobs" (ibid., p. 4). In one case, because she could not manage the multiple demands of her family, the job requirement, and college, a student dropped out of a 2-year postsecondary training program (ibid.). In a similar vein, Reuys (1996) reports on a Massachusetts program that previously had no difficulty in attracting and retraining students, but is now being affected negatively by changes in the welfare and work force development systems, including the 20-hour per week work requirement, restrictions on funding for education, and reductions in funding for basic and prevocational education from sources such as the Job Training Partnership Act. Although anecdotal in nature, these reports are indicative of how legislative and policy changes are affecting adult learners and providers of adult basic education.

In the current context, adult educators may feel caught in the middle. If they want to be participants in the policy discussions at the state level and partners at the local level in providing educational services to the broad spectrum of work force

development customers, they may be excluded by funders if their programs cannot meet the goals of work force development. How can they defend the need for their programs to have broader goals yet still meet the needs of funders? Evidence from adult learners themselves and from research on welfare-to-work programs provides helpful information.

Broadening the Debate

Other factors in the current context can help adult educators broaden the debate about the goals and purposes of literacy education. Two that are discussed here are what adult learners themselves want from education and the results of research on welfare-to-work programs.

In 1993, the National Institute for Literacy initiated an effort to develop a "customer-driven, standards-based reform process" called *Equipped for the Future* (EFF) (Stein 1997, p. 1). EFF began by asking adult learners the following question: "What is it that adults need to know and be able to do in order to be literate, compete in the global economy, and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship?" (ibid., p. 2). Using the responses of more than 1,500 adults, the EFF project is currently developing standards grouped around three major adult roles—worker, citizen, and family member—based on four fundamental purposes for adult learning: the ability to (1) access information, (2) express ideas and opinions confidently, (3) take independent action, and (4) learn how to learn in order to keep up with the changing world. The adult learners responding to the survey clearly saw the role of education as much broader than only preparation for work.

Increasingly, evidence demonstrates that the emphasis on just getting people into employment will not result in employment for self-sufficiency. Baldwin (1998) used the term "low-road strategies" (p. 60) to refer to policies that merely focus on expanding the low-wage labor supply without attention to raising living standards through opportunities for the development of skills that can be transferred to multiple employment settings. A synthesis of research on welfare-to-work programs (Strawn 1997) revealed that neither programs emphasizing job-search strategies nor those focusing on adult education had long-term effectiveness in increasing participants earnings and job tenure. Instead, "the most effective welfare-to-work programs share a balanced approach that mixes job search, education, job training, and paid and unpaid work experience" (ibid., p. [2]).

Narrowing the focus of adult basic education to job development activities does not make sense. Although participants in programs focusing on job-search methods may have initial success in the current labor market, in the long term they may be stuck in dead-end jobs or become unemployed in economic downturns. Adult educators must

become advocates for programs that will support the goals of all their customers as well as those of funders.

"Either/Or" or "Both"

Based on the information in the literature, the question should not be "Should adult education focus on either work force education or literacy development?" but rather "Is it possible to combine both literacy development and work force education?" Learners come to adult basic education and literacy programs with many different goals. Although programs need to focus on how they can serve these goals, they should not try to be all things to all people (Quigley 1997). Some programs may decide, therefore, that providing work force education does not fit with their philosophy and purpose. That does not mean, however, that work force education is not a valid goal and purpose for adult education. In fact, many programs successfully engage in both literacy development and work force education.

The Goodwill Literacy Initiative (GLI) in Pittsburgh is an example of a program that combines adult basic education with work force development. GLI believes that for their students, "work often provides self-esteem, and even for those who have few immediate job prospects, a job-related curriculum and learning environment may provide intrinsic rewards and progressive achievements that are sufficient to keep students in class until they can find appropriate employment" (Hopkins, Aaronson, and Yenerall 1995, p. 5). Even with a mission related to work force and literacy development, GLI implemented a number of changes that improved overall retention. These enhancements included adding a formal orientation, assigning a case manager to each student to provide emotional and structural support, and providing career exploration and development services.

Philadelphias Community Womens Education Project (CWEP) is an example of a program whose philosophy emphasizes the questioning of existing political and social conditions but that also provides education within the work force education system. The CWEP program features a feminist and multicultural ideology, emphasizes the personal and political empowerment of participants, employs a participatory approach to teaching and learning, and promotes the value of postsecondary education rather than short-term skills training. According to DAmico (1997), "CWEP has been able to convince [its funders] of the validity of its approach despite ideological opposition" (p. 47).

Adult education programs wishing to combine work force education and literacy development can also learn from a study (Quint, forthcoming, cited in DAmico 1997) of adult education programs that provide work force development for welfare reform clients. Among the promising practices identified were the following: a well-defined

mission; separate classes specifically for welfare reform clients; skilled, experienced teachers; an emphasis on staff development; varied instructional approaches that involve active learning; frequent communication about students progress between educators and human service staff; a stress on regular attendance, with aggressive follow-up for absences; relatively intensive class schedules; and a high degree of teacher-student and student-student interaction (p. 41). This study concluded that successful programs shared the following attributes: a clear concept of participants education and other needs, support for teachers efforts to innovate and experiment in the classroom, and sufficient funding to implement innovative ideas.

Information on programs that have successfully combined work force education and literacy development demonstrates that adult educators can take both roads. They do not have to choose either/or but, indeed, can do both.

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