

MAACCE MATTERS

Fall 2009

Volume 8, Issue 1

President's letter – Fall 2009

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Ok, this is cliché, but I'm going to do it anyway: Webster's Dictionary defines "association" as "an organization of persons having a common interest". It's natural that professionals of the same ilk band together to form a cohesive group, one that can speak for their interests and speak with one voice. MAACCE was formed with that intent, and today we stand 450+ strong.

Your 2009-2010 Board of Directors has been working diligently on a variety of topics this fall.

- **Professional development workshops.** In addition to spreading training opportunities beyond the May conference, our ultimate plans – with your help – are to create a "speakers' bureau" of those participating presenters. These new initiatives promise to establish regular opportunities for our colleagues to share their expertise more than one time a year.
- **Revised by-laws:** certainly not the most exciting item here, but one of the most important. Our by-laws govern how we function and guide us in developing plans and moving forward. This first review tightened some of the language we wrote last year, particularly around Board member nominations.
- **Reaching out to new partners:** There is great diversity in adult education programming around Maryland, and this year we will endeavor to reach more providers in our efforts. If you know a colleague in the profession or an organization that you think could benefit from MAACCE membership, let us know or pass along our contact information.





President's letter continued

- **Improved communications & outreach:** When it comes down to it, MAACCE is the most vocal supporter in Maryland for adult education and literacy, with strong lines of communication for state-wide advocacy for our efforts. Our website will soon be undergoing revision to better communicate our work. And we will develop new strategies with current and additional partners, including the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation; the Correctional Education Association; the Governor's Workforce Investment Board; and new MAACCE members.

So as you can see there is a lot going on, with many details still to be worked out. MAACCE as an "association" can really only be as strong as our members, and we need your help. We encourage you to be part of our discussions, our activities, and most of all in working for stronger programs to serve our learners.

Talk to you soon.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd".

Todd Elliott
MAACCE President
maacce@gmail.com

Save The Date

Mark your calendars now for our annual conference. It will be held Thursday and Friday, May 6 and May 7 at the Best Western in Baltimore. Our theme this year is **Recharge, Refocus, RESULTS!**

The call for proposals is now available (see page 9 in this newsletter); the deadline for submitting is February 15. Our conference is strong because of your participation and willingness to share your ideas. We look forward to seeing you there!

SARBANES CELEBRATES ADULT LITERACY WEEK



Baltimore – Congressman John Sarbanes held a press conference October 19, marking the start of Adult Education and Family Literacy Week at the South Baltimore Learning Center (SBLC) to recognize the national effort to raise public awareness of adult education and literacy. The Congressman was joined by several people receiving literacy services.

Congressman Sarbanes stated, “Organizations such as SBLC are vital to helping reverse the alarming rate of illiteracy in this nation,” said Congressman Sarbanes. “Adult education services are necessary to help people take the next step to obtain their high school diploma and advance their career.”

In Maryland working-aged residents with college degrees are 30 percent more likely be employed than those with less than a high school diploma. More than 140,000 adults in Baltimore City do not have a high school diploma, and yet 44 percent of the jobs in Maryland require at least a high school diploma.

This is not a local problem: it’s a national concern facing many adults across the country. To place a spotlight on this issue, the U.S. House of Representatives designated October 18 – 23, 2009 as National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week. House Resolution 707 states “literacy of its citizens is essential for the economic well-being of the United States, our society and the individuals who can benefit from full participation therein.”

Organizations like SBLC support adult education initiatives and provide increased access to employment opportunities through individual tutoring, classroom programs, computer training and career and higher education counseling. Literacy programs not only improve the earning potential and lives of those they serve but positively impact the entire community.

Math Matters

Math Matters

Is 0 (Zero) a number?

From our math learning early in life we learn that 1 is the first number in the ‘number alphabet’ and that introduces the counting numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5... These counting numbers count real things – boxes, apples, toys, money. Only later can we count the number of cookies on a plate when there are none.

The early Greeks, who advanced science and mathematics by quantum leaps, and the Romans, renowned for their feats of engineering, lacked an effective way of dealing with ‘nothing’. They had their ways of combining I, V, X, L, etc, but where was 0?

The use of a symbol designating ‘nothingness’ is thought to have originated thousands of years ago when the Mayan civilization, in what is now Mexico, used zero in various forms to show ‘nothing’. As long ago as 700 BC the Babylonians used zero as a placeholder in their number system. Astronomer Claudius Ptolemy, influenced by the Babylonians, used a symbol similar to our modern 0 as a placeholder in his number system. Zero could now be used to distinguish between examples such as 93 and 903, instead of relying on context as the Babylonians had done.

Seventh-century Indian mathematician Brahmagupta treated zero as a ‘number’, not merely as a placeholder, and set out rules for dealing with it: “the sum of a positive number and zero is positive”, etc. In thinking of zero as a number rather than a placeholder, he was quite advanced. The Hindu-Arabic numbering system used zero in this way and was promulgated by Fibonacci and published first in 1202. He recognized the power of using the extra sign 0 combined with the Hindu symbols 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

However, the inclusion of zero into the number system posed some problems, and how was zero to be integrated into the existing system of arithmetic in a more precise way? Meanings were needed to ensure that 0 harmonized with the rest of accepted arithmetic. Adding and multiplying with zero fit in neatly.

$$17 + 0 = 17 \quad a + 0 = a \quad (\text{Adding } 0 \text{ to any number leaves that number unchanged})$$

$$17 \times 0 = 0 \quad a \times 0 = 0 \quad (\text{Multiplying any number by } 0 \text{ always gives } 0 \text{ as the answer})$$

$$9 - 0 = 9 \quad 0 - 9 = -9 \quad (\text{Subtraction is a simple operation but can lead to negatives})$$

Division with zero raises difficulties. $\frac{30}{5} = 6$ Ck: $5 \times 6 = 30$ $\frac{0}{7} = 0$ Ck: $7 \times 0 = 0$ $\frac{7}{0} = 0?$ Ck: $0 \times 0 \neq 7$

The way out of this potential for numerical mayhem on a grand scale is to say that division by zero is undefined.

We simply cannot do without 0. We have zero degrees longitude and temperature, zero gravity, and even in the non-scientific language with such comments as zero-tolerance.

We could not function in mathematics without zero:

- The number line uses 0 to separate the positive and negative numbers.
- Zeros used as placeholders with whole numbers allows us to demonstrate huge numbers.
- Zeros used in the decimal system as placeholders allows us to use very small numbers.

So, is ZERO a number? Try this problem – you will be timed: $14 \times 5.35 \div 0.478002 \times 0 + 15.3 \times 0 \div \frac{12}{13} = \underline{\quad}$

J B Willetts
jaywilletts@comcast.net
Board of Directors
Adult Education Math Specialist
410-952-6724

*This mathematics article was penned by J B Willetts and is a regular feature in the MAACCE newsletter. Mr. Willetts is often called upon to present informative math workshops for instructors and students. The math seminars are appropriate for the GED, EDP, SAT, and Accuplacer Math tests. He has presented at the local, state and national levels, and has authored numerous worksheets and a workbook on GED Math.

Reflections on Learner Intake

--Barbara Denman, Board Director

What is 'intake', anyway? Is it just a fancy name for registration? The answer may depend on your point of view. Many adult education programs now use the term 'intake' in-house to refer to the process that, to learners, is still 'registration'. The broader term 'intake' acknowledges that there is more to the process than simply registering a student. Successful intake is frequently tied to learner persistence. And as with everything else, budgets and staffing are considerations. This article looks at some of the considerations program administrators need to take into account when looking at intake.

What exactly should be included in intake? A search of pertinent documents yielded a wide range of suggestions. NCSALL's *Program Administrators' Sourcebook* (2005) is a good place to start. The *Sourcebook* does not include a specific section on intake, but many of its recommendations on program design and procedures include suggestions for intake. A search of the document brings up this list of suggestions for intake:

- assess ... every student's strengths and needs in the four component [reading] skills [vocabulary, fluency, decoding, and comprehension] not just in comprehension
- help students understand what skills comprise reading ability, where their strengths are, and how the program will help them with the skills they would like to develop
- identify students for whom improving literacy practices is important and assess their literacy
- add activities ... that help students to identify their [multiple] intelligences
- design ... a process that identifies tryout students [not yet ready to commit to participation]. Counsel them to delay entry and help them design plans to address barriers
- find out about students' purposes for attending, and connect these purposes to their specific and broad goals
- help potential adult students consider goals and life demands that might stand in the way of reaching their goals. Discuss plans they feel they need to make in order to participate.
- arrange for students to have contact with role models who have succeeded in ABE, ESOL, or GED class ... as guest speakers at intake
- at intake, make a clear statement that GED is not the terminal goal of the program. Share implications of the GED research... Help students see how your program is prepared to help them not only attain the GED, but go on to further education
-

The *Maryland Adult ESL Program Standards* include this standard for intake of students in ESL programs:

The program has an orientation and intake process that provides appropriate assessment of the learners' needs, goals and language proficiency levels and which provides the learner information about the program, including information for special needs learners regarding their rights to accommodations.

Finally, the article *Outreach and Retention in Adult ESL Literacy Programs* (1995) by Shirley Brod has this:

Attrition often begins at enrollment. Intake that is slow, cumbersome, and impersonal, and that may include an intimidating test, can discourage learners before they begin (Brod, 1990). All staff at the learning site (testers, registrars, office personnel, teachers) need to facilitate smooth and speedy enrollment, underscore learners' abilities, and show them what the program can do for them (Silver, 1986). Bilingual intake can accurately assess learners' wants and needs, uncover

impediments to attendance (e.g., transportation or childcare), and make registrants comfortable and ready to return to the learning site for classes.

While all of these are excellent suggestions, funding and staffing intake that addresses all of them could be challenging, especially since intake must also include the collection of learner data. From an administrative point of view, choices have to be made.

One question of interest is how long potential students should/are willing to spend at intake. Factors to consider include which activities to cover, the number of learners a program intakes, the frequency with which a program needs to/can do intake, and the program's size and population. Smaller programs may be able to spend more time with each learner; larger programs may be able to do larger intakes less often. Native and fluent speakers of English can be given an oral orientation in a group, using just English. Written materials, however, need to be at the appropriate reading level. Orientation for English language learners needs to take language barriers into consideration, and is most efficient when they are grouped by language level (i.e. after placement or pre-testing). At the lower levels simpler materials and possibly translation are needed.

At Prince George's Community College's Adult Education Program, this year brought changes to both ABE and ESL intake, but in opposite directions. The ABE program moved from a one-day intake to two days, and the ESL program moved from two days to one.



On the ABE/GED side at PGCC this fall, with nearly a 900 student intake, the first visit included orientation and program information, enrollment forms, brief placement tests in reading and math, and an appointment to return for pre-testing. At the second visit, students took pre-tests, and then met individually with an adviser for an interpretation of their pre-test results and to choose a class site. A plus to this plan is that family members can participate in the information session to learn about the program; another is that those who find that the program is not for them have an 'out' to not return for pre-testing, saving time and resources for those who are not yet ready. Scheduling pre-testing by appointment also allows the testing of appropriately-sized groups, in a very large program. Linda Cheek, Intake Assessment Specialist for ABE/GED at PGCC, says, "The two-day intake slows down the process for the better. It allows us to treat the student as an individual, and to do a better job of placement. Students say, "I feel like you know who I am," and they leave with a bounce! At the first class, they're happier and less confused. It's better for the student and for the program, and I think it's going to have a positive effect on retention."

The ESL program at PGCC, with some 1,800 enrollments per semester, switched from a two-day intake process to a one-day process this year. Intake included an oral screen, enrollment forms, orientation information, and pre-testing, all in about 3 hours. The former two-day process had students pre-test on the first day, then return for orientation and re-testing (for those scoring out of accurate range) on the second day. In an attempt to reduce the amount of time intake took for both students and staff, and to reduce costs, ESL program staff decided to work towards making the initial more accurate, with the goal of eliminating the re-testing. So far, this has been successful. According to Jennifer Kubit, Intake Assessment Specialist for PGCC, "This year's one-day registration was easier on the students. The oral screen gives us a snapshot of which the remains to be seen. Whether or not it's a better plan



screening need for ESL at easier on of which the remains to

be seen until we look at data, but overall the one-day process seems to be placing students as accurately as the two-day process but with less time and expense.“ Jacqui Walpole, ESL Specialist at PGCC, said, “Refining our oral screening instrument has allowed us to predict the correct pre-test more accurately, saving time for students and staff alike. It’s a good example of how a program can reap big benefits from a small improvement.”

Good intake planning requires thought, data and teamwork. Questions program administrators may want to try to answer as they plan intake include:

- What do you want the end result of intake to be for learners?
- What do you want the end result to be for program staff?
- What funding and personnel resources can you afford to dedicate to intake?
- Who should participate? Should all instructors help out? Or should intake be a specialized skill?
- What skills does intake staff need? Will you provide training? If so, how often?
- How will you collect enrollment data efficiently?

Successful intake meets the needs of both the learners and the program. While the basic goals of welcoming learners, assessing skills, and collecting and giving information may be constants, making the choices that work for a program requires taking many factors into consideration, monitoring outcomes, and keeping an open mind.

References:

The Maryland Adult ESL Program Standards: DLLR, www.umbc.edu/alrc/esl_standards.pdf.

Outreach and Retention in Adult ESL Literacy Programs: S Brod, Spring Institute for International Studies, 1995. www.cal.org/Caela/esl_resources/digests/BROD.html

Program Administrators’ Sourcebook: A Resource on NCSALL’s Research for Adult Education Program Administrators: J Taylor, C Smith, B Bingman, 2005. www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/pasourcebook.pdf

Maryland Selected to Participate in National Project to Support Learners

**Adult Education Program Specialist
Professional Development
Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulations
Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning**

Twenty-four instructional specialists or lead instructors, from across Maryland, applied and were selected by the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning to participate in a national pilot project, *Learning to Achieve*, on September 21 – 25, 2009 at the Sheraton BWI.



The *Learning to Achieve* training, sponsored by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) was designed to improve services to adults with learning disabilities and to increase the knowledge of the adult practitioners on adult learning disability issues and teaching strategies. Participants learned and practiced strategies that effectively and actively support adults with learning disabilities in an educational setting and were provided information about how learning disabilities may

Learning to Achieve (NIFL)

affect an individual's work environment. The pilot training was also designed to prepare participants to be state trainers. As state trainers, they will share information with interested instructors and local partners. The *Learning to Achieve* state trainers will provide training to others in four of the nine training modules by October 2010. In addition, the Maryland adult education program providers are encouraged to share this information and invite their partners and other stakeholders to the training sessions. After completing the trainings, evaluations will be provided to NIFL to assist in revising materials and training guides.

The National Institute for Literacy developed *Learning to Achieve* based on the latest rigorous research to increase practitioners' knowledge of learning disabilities. The six topics covered in the literature review were assessment, English language learners, accommodations, teaching methods, transition, and impact of learning disabilities. The program was launched in July 2009, and six (five-day) training sessions were offered across the nation over the course of the summer. Approximately 200 practitioners from 17 different states were invited to participate. Maryland was one of the states selected to participate and plans to continue training new instructional specialists each year on the *Learning to Achieve* materials. *Learning to Achieve* will replace the Bridges to Practices training on the state professional development calendar.



Call for Presenters
MAACCE Spring 2010 Conference
May 6-7, 2010
Baltimore, Maryland
Due: **February 15, 2010** to maacce2010@gmail.com

Primary Contact and Title:

Organization/Affiliation:

E-mail:

Day phone:

Evening phone:

Other presenters and their titles:

Is this session a vendor presentation? (please underline) Y N

Session Title:

Session Objectives:

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- 1.
- 2.

Session description for the program booklet (limited to 75 words):

Short biography of each presenter(s) (limited to 50 words for each presenter):

Most appropriate audience (Please underline all that apply):

Basic Skills/Literacy	GED	ESL/ESOL	Workforce
Correctional Education	Family Literacy	Program Administration	EDP

Date preference: (Please underline)

Thursday	Friday	No Preference
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Important Notes:

Contact Information: Unless otherwise requested, presenters' contact information will be included in the printed program.

Evaluation Criteria: Proposals will be evaluated on the clarity of objectives; timeliness of topic; connections to best/practices or research; overall clarity of written proposal (including grammar and spelling); and potential for contribution to the conference and field.

Session Length: This year all sessions will be 60 minutes. No double sessions will be available.

Equipment: Given the prohibitive cost of equipment rentals, presenters should plan to provide their own equipment and handouts. All rooms will be provided with screens, white board and markers, and electrical outlets.

Registration: Presenters who plan to attend any part of the conference must register. Presenters will receive the early registration rate regardless of the date registration is received. Presenters who wish to stay for lunch should pre-register at least two weeks in advance. Lunch is not guaranteed for walk-in registrants.

Submissions: E-mail your completed form as an attachment to maacce2010@gmail.com by **February 15, 2010**. The primary contact person noted above will be notified of the status of the proposal.

MAACCE

C/O Becca Swick
Howard Community
College
10650 Hickory Ridge Rd.
Columbia, MD 21044

E-MAIL:
maacce@gmail.com

We're on the web!

See us at:
<http://www.maaccemd.org>

About Our Organization...

The Maryland Association for Adult Community and Continuing Education is a non-profit organization providing leadership in Maryland for those interested in advancing education as a lifelong process. MAACCE provides a central forum for a wide variety of adult, community and continuing education groups and encourages organizations and agencies in Maryland to cooperate in a broad spectrum of educational programs and activities in support of the lifelong learning concept.

MAACCE

Becca Swick
Howard Community College
10650 Hickory Ridge Road
Columbia, MD 21044