



# MPAEA Newsletter

September 2014



## Post-Conference Newsletter President's Message By Kathleen Jameson

I would like to thank MPAEA for the wonderful scholarship opportunity that helped me to attend the outstanding MPAEA Annual Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I am now retired and all expenses come directly from my own pocket and this \$250.00 scholarship for the registration fee for the conference enabled me to attend the MPAEA conference. As MPAEA President-Elect and now President of MPAEA, I was greatly impressed by the caliber and quality of the conference. The opportunity for professional development offered to adult educators at this conference was excellent.

The first session that I attended was the **ETS High School Equivalency Testing (HiSET) Program**. Amy Riker from ETS ran an excellent breakout session. Nevada, my home state, has adopted three tests designated to be used as a high school equivalency exam and the HiSET is one of them. The HiSET is an alternative to the GED Exam. I find that ETS is user friendly and willing to assist in any part of the process to enable one to administer the HiSET. I also find that the cost to take the HiSET for an adult student is very reasonable and affordable for our adult students, most on very limited budgets.

The session entitled, **“Leveraging Public Library Resources for Purposeful Reading Instruction”**, was led by Shelley Sullivan from BoulderReads! at the Boulder Public Library. Ms. Sullivan discussed accessing free customized resources for learners at all levels through the public library in your own neighborhood. She talked about utilizing learners’ goals and assessment scores to locate customized materials at specific reading levels, using e-books to support literacy acquisition and digital literacy skills, and ways to request various adult reading materials be purchased for your own library. I found her session to be very helpful. Prior to her presentation, I did not know how to locate customized materials at a specific reading level for an adult student that many times reads at a low reading level. I truly believe that public libraries are hidden gems and they offer many services to people of all ages and all reading levels!

During my time at the conference, I was able to network with Mr. Tom Nash, President-Elect of COABE. We met at different times to discuss the role MPAEA and COABE will have at the upcoming COABE Conference in Denver. Hopefully all of this networking with Mr. Nash will benefit MPAEA. I could go on and on about the workshops and their benefits, but instead I would just like to close by saying the conference not only had great sessions, it also let me reach a deeper connection with my own colleagues and that is a very appreciated opportunity.

Thank you again. The MPAEA conference scholarship is just one way that MPAEA supports members. See you in Colorado!

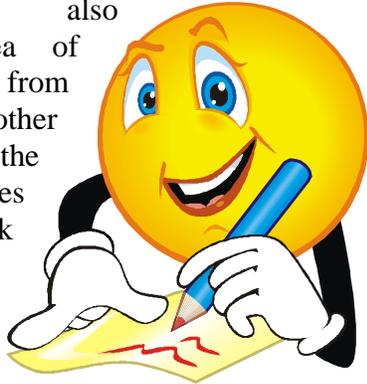
## The 2014 GED Test: Teaching Extended Response

By Carie Hayhurst

Ms. Shannon Sims combined high energy with some great ideas. She really pushed the idea of *Writing to Learn vs. Learning to Write*. She stated that if we start teaching our students to write to learn, it changes how they process the information as well as how well they retain it. It is basically a form of giving our students more ownership over their learning; they are more in control of what they are learning. Of course some guidance is needed to ensure they are learning useful information.

Ms. Sims also emphasized the idea of working and learning from our peers. This is another great idea to take into the classroom. Most times when a student is stuck and I have explained the same thing to them three times in three different ways, one of the students can tell them how to do it in a manner that the student understands. Also, sometimes our students are embarrassed to admit to the teacher that they don't know how to do something, but are more comfortable discussing the problem with their friend in class.

My Math, Science, and Social Studies classes are different now after attending this session. Wanting to help my students write to learn, I recently gave them an assignment to teach a five-minute Science lesson to the class. Students were allowed to pick their own topic and were asked to teach the lesson and provide an activity or have something to visually represent what they were teaching. In my Social Studies class, students have been partnered together where they have to research a controversial topic from history. Each student is to represent a side of the argument and debate the topic. I believe that due to the shift in my thinking, my class is better and my students will be writing to learn.



## Evidence-Based Writing Instruction: Helping Learners

### Meet 21st Century Demands

By Glenda Sinks

Mary Ann Corley, Ph.D. presented a double breakout session. Five of the eleven recommendations from a list of *Research-Based Instructional Practices in Writing* (Graham and Perin) are cited below:

1. Set specific product goals for students.
2. Use word processing as instructional support for writing assignments.
3. Use inquiry activities which help students in analyzing concrete data so they can develop ideas and content for a particular writing task.
4. Use a process writing approach that provides extended writing opportunities, writing for authentic audiences, personalized instruction.
5. Teach sentence combining, which teaches students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences.

Dr. Corley also emphasized the use of writing frames in her workshop. A sample writing frame for Problem/Solution would be the following:

“I want to explain why \_\_\_\_\_. There are several reasons for this. The chief is \_\_\_\_\_. Another reason is \_\_\_\_\_. A further reason is \_\_\_\_\_. So now you can see why \_\_\_\_\_.”

Sample writing frame for Compare/Contrast:

“\_\_\_\_\_ are different from \_\_\_\_\_ in several ways. First, \_\_\_\_\_. While \_\_\_\_\_. Additionally \_\_\_\_\_, whereas \_\_\_\_\_. They are alike in that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. So, it is evident that \_\_\_\_\_.”

The excellence of this session characterized the entire conference. Thank you.

# Evidence-Based Writing Instruction

By Susie Morss

As a program director, I was interested in this workshop because it was described as a train-the-trainer model. I was looking for new material to present to my instructors at Cochise College Adult Education as part of next year's professional development. These sessions were amazingly full of practical and research-based writing strategies. The focus of the sessions was to assist all adult education instructors in shifting the writing instruction to meet the College and Career Readiness Standards.

One of the most interesting parts of the first day's session was the findings from three meta-analyses research findings on writing instruction. The three studies are as follows: Writing Next, Writing to Read and Informing Writing: The Benefits of Formative Assessment. All three are available at this website <https://teal.ed.gov/>. Dr. Corley shared the common findings from all three studies and designed the rest of the workshop around teaching these skills.

An important research-based finding is the fact that teaching grammar out of context is not an effective writing strategy, as grammar practice in isolation does not transfer to one's writing. Dr. Corley instead presented how teaching the various ways to combine sentences is a more effective and contextualized way to teach writing conventions. Another important aspect of the research is the understanding of how complex the writing process is and why. Writing requires multiple brain functions and abilities operating simultaneously. The writer must formulate ideas, organize, and sequence points in logical order, select vocabulary, check for grammatical correctness, spell words correctly, punctuate and write legibly. According to Corley (2014), "Writing requires simultaneous and sequential integration of attention, language, long-term memory and working memory, motor skills, higher-order thinking, and metacognition." Whew! I am thanking every teacher I ever had right now!



The rest of Day 1 of this session covered strategies to motivate students to write and ways to increase writing fluency, encouraging collaboration and writing communities, explicitly teaching the writing process and strategies to teach sentence combining and summarizing. Some of the strategies to increase writing fluency include Quick Writes, One-Minute Essays, Journaling, and Bio-Poems. Dr. Corley suggests using one of these strategies for an extended period of time to develop students' comfort, ease, and writing fluidity. She also suggests having students keep these writings in a bound notebook, so they can see their progress over time and the teacher does not need to correct these writings. I left Day One fully energized and ready to take this material back to my program in Arizona and share it with my instructors.

Day Two did not disappoint and went on to emphasize how to teach students to distinguish text types, use writing frames, write strong thesis statements, and how to cite evidence from text in their own writing. Dr. Corley presented the constructed response requirements of the new GED test and showed how to teach these types of responses.

The workshop was an excellent balance of research findings, addressing student needs, and strategic practices all very clearly explained and presented. At the end of the session, Dr. Corley asked each participant to commit to making one change in our practice. I vowed to use this workshop framework to focus on writing instruction next year. I will present this workshop to my instructors over the course of next year's professional learning meetings. Dr. Corley has years of experience in adult education in multiple roles. If you ever have a chance to attend one of her workshops, jump in with both feet and dedicate the time to learn from her.

Dr. Corley's (2014) final slide asks us to always remember,

*"There is a vast difference between causing writing and teaching writing. We must explicitly teach writing."*

**An excellent mantra for all educators!**

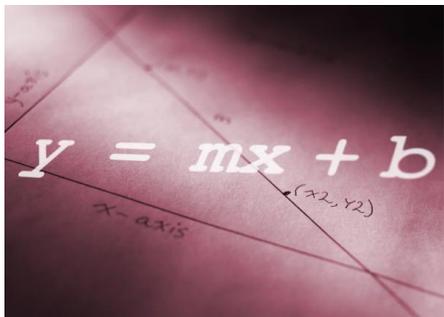
## Finding Everyday Opportunities to Think Algebraically

by Sean O'Leary

The new high school equivalency tests place a much greater emphasis on algebra. Teachers who want to help their students succeed on these tests should start weaving algebraic concepts throughout their instruction. Do not delay algebra! There is no need to wait until students are finished with fractions or other basic math concepts. Students need to start implementing higher levels of strategic and extended thinking. The presenter, Lynda Ginsburg, recommends taking a situation and “mathematizing” it, modeling activities from work and other aspects of life.

Adult students have often said that they never use algebra. However, employees often use the problem-solving and mathematical reasoning skills in the workplace without even realizing it. Some researchers have found, for example, that proportions are used in practically every observed workplace. New technologies are changing the way math is used on the job. Employers increasingly need workers who have the ability to think critically and problem-solve more than the ability to follow rote procedures.

In response to workplace demands, school curricula have changed and the three main high school equivalency tests have an increased algebraic focus. As an example, approximately 55% of the content for the GED Mathematical Reasoning Test focuses on algebraic problem solving. The HiSET Mathematics subtest has “practical problems” which are “based on realistic situations and may test abstract concepts such as algebraic patterns, precision in measurement, and probability.” TASC Mathematics Test has questions that “require the examinee to apply algebraic rules to solve a linear equation, and learn how to use these functions to model real-life situations.”



The eight Common Core Mathematical Practice Standards were also reviewed:

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.



These practice standards can be put into place in the adult education setting by providing more focus on algebra. There are many ways that adult educators can start building algebra into the earlier stages of the learning of their students. As an example, the presenter shared some pictures she had taken in the grocery store. A picture of candy bars on sale for \$0.75 each becomes a lesson in setting up a chart with the quantity of candy bars in the first column and the cost in the second column. From there, the lesson moves to graphing the relationship and setting up an equation. If another store has a different price of 3 candy bars for \$2.00, then a different table, graph, and equation emerge. Students can then compare the two graphs and start discussing the concept of slopes.

Another example started with a picture of a shopping cart and a picture of two nested shopping carts. Given some dimensions on the pictures, students were able to figure out the length of a line of 50 nested shopping carts and develop an equation for any given number of carts.

In summary, K-12 instruction has changed to start introducing algebraic concepts earlier and throughout the mathematical learning of students. Adult education also needs to change to allow students to develop critical mathematical reasoning and problem-solving strategies for the new tests, for their employment, and for their personal benefit.

# Teaching Mathematical Reasoning

By April Elliot

Shannon Sims was loud and full of energy! I loved it, as she kept it exciting the whole time. In this workshop I learned to break information down into chunks. Our working memory can only handle so much at one time; therefore, by breaking down the information into “steps” and naming each step, the student has a far better chance of remembering it. I really did appreciate her energy and pizzazz as she kept us hands-on involved through the whole workshop.

## Teaching Totems

By April Elliot

I learned many things from the workshops. My favorite was Teaching Totems done by Dr. Kevin M. Laughlin from Idaho. This man was very inspiring. He had so many ideas integrating teaching with nature. He did part of his presentation outside and part inside. I have used some of his skills recently in my classroom. Most students lose their focus and become very bored, or have trouble concentrating after about an hour. Honestly, I do not blame them (as I am a current student at UNR). However, moving from the classroom and getting some fresh air while utilizing nature within my lesson plans is a refreshing way to learn and to teach.

## From The Raven's Perspective...

### We Exceeded the Limits

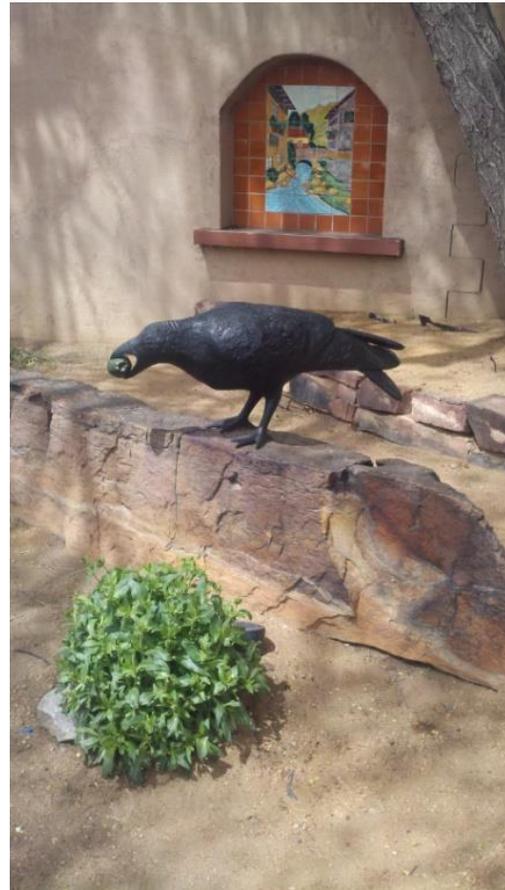
Excerpts from Article

By Kevin Laughlin

Many tribal and spiritual traditions use the things of nature as metaphor in their storytelling, scriptures, liturgies and rituals. Honoring nature’s aspects in culture in our own communities is a first step toward using the animals, plants and things of the earth to amplify understanding. Totems can be a fun 'cultural' portal, lintel or framework to greater appreciation, knowledge, awareness, and skills.

Totem activities suggest powerfully how to engage in reflection about self, nature, and our place in the world. They can connect children and adults with nature in unique ways. In the workshop, I helped participants increase awareness of three or more outdoor and indoor ‘Totem’ activities to apply to life, leadership and teaching. Ideas for children, and children at heart, to draw, build, journal, picture and/or express how their personal totems have come about at individual, group, classroom, and community levels.

At the surface level, totem activities can be used as an icebreaker for new groups or to start any class or course. For team building, totems are rich in creating context. For your personal, professional, and educational goals, ‘Totem’ activities apply...to life and leadership, your family, community and they can transform your teaching! From the Raven's perspective, he put the sun and moon in the sky for others... as teachers we can use the totems learned in Santa Fe to light and to transform our world!



## Redesigning Service Delivery

By Rachelle Simpson



Dr. Laura Weisel,  
PowerPath and National

Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs (NAASLN), kicked off 1 of 4 preconference sessions for the 4 day MPAEA conference. In this interactive session, participants joined together via phases: ‘sowing the ground’ via group circle; ‘planting the seed’ via café style group work; ‘harvesting’ via group discussion; ‘feasting’ via group circle. The underlying theme that I perceived from this session was Education as a Cycle. Personally, as a Native American woman, I found the cyclical approach relative culturally and in certain aspects—sacred. For our communities, especially Native country, it is important to see the value in education and the empowerment and healing that it brings forth. It was very refreshing and inspiring to listen and learn from fellow instructors and administrators as they shared their successes and challenges. I am grateful for the opportunity to have participated and be guided by Dr. Weisel and the attendees.

## Design, Development, and Research on Workforce Readiness Training System

By Katya Arpon Marandino Irish

The information presented was so clearly, so well organized, and so straightforward that when they were finished, I felt I could do it in my own program. Jane R. from ETS started talking about recent changes in the economy that have made employers begin to realize that they must assist their current and future workers in achieving competency in workplace basics if they are to be competitive. Employers have come to realize the undeniable linkage between workforce skills and the competitive cycle as well as the importance of basic skills in the face of rapid technical change.

The session described the design, development, and research of a 'soft-skills' workforce readiness training system, which included an assessment, score reports, individualized learning plans and training materials.

The handouts, freely given, were a valuable tool to bring back to my program and share with my colleagues.

Employers want employees who can learn the particular skills of an available job who have "learned how to learn." Employers want employees who will hear the key points that make up a customer's concerns (listening) and who can convey an adequate response (oral communications).

Employers want employees who can think on their feet (problem-solving) and who can come up with innovative solutions when needed (creative thinking). Employers want employees who have pride in themselves and their potential to be successful (self-esteem); who know how to get things done (goal setting/motivation); and who have some sense of the skills needed to perform well in the workplace (personal and career development). Employers want employees who can get along with customers, suppliers and co-workers (inter-personal and negotiation skills); who can work with others to achieve a goal (teamwork); who have some sense of where the organization is headed and what they must do to make a contribution (organizational effectiveness); and who can assume responsibility and motivate co-workers when necessary (leadership).

Jane brought to her presentation employees of a business as witnesses of the possibilities available when workforce readiness training system is implemented based on what employers want. It was obvious, during the testimony of the employee guests, the changes that occurred for the success of both employees and employers.



## Integrating Career Awareness to Enhance College and Career Pathways Programs

By Susie Morss

The presenter, Priyanka Sharma, provided strategies from the curriculum guide, *“Integrating Career Awareness into ABE and ESOL Classrooms.”* The design of this curriculum guide centers on four areas: Self-Exploration, Occupational Exploration, Career Planning and the overarching theme of Cultural Context. One of the many excellent activities is an Informational Interview, where students interview professionals working in various fields. Two other useful activities presented were a lesson planning template to guide the integration of Career and College lessons into classroom settings and a planning worksheet for students to use as a record of their explorations and findings. The four hour session was full of information and useful resources. The ICA curriculum guide can be downloaded in pdf form from the website <http://collegetransition.org/publications.icacurriculum.html>. There are also Word versions of the handouts on that website so that teachers can modify the pages to fit their needs.

## High-Impact ABE Strategies for GED 2014

### Basic Skills Fluency Still Matters Most by Cera Wilmeth

I was able to attend a workshop by Susan McKee of Pace Learning Systems that reminded educators and program administrators the importance of basic skills. It seems the new push for common core instruction and the high school equivalency exams that are much more difficult have educators stressed out. Dr. McKee calmed our fears by reminding us that basic skills are still important and that a strong foundation makes all the difference in fluency.

What really stuck out to me during the course of the presentation was the importance of individualized instruction. The changes that are taking place make adult education programs feel compelled to change curriculum and instructional design, each change making programs more and more like K-12 programs. However, to be effective, programs cannot be run like cookie cutter models with a one size fits all plan. Our students have already been failed by a very similar system. One of the key components that make adult education programs so special is their ability to provide individual instruction and really help the students meet their goals.

To reinforce the individualized instruction, Dr. McKee reminded us that all students have different needs; however, all students have in common the need to feel success. She recommends setting goals that can be tracked and showed us how PACE Learning helps the student to feel success and see success while allowing independence and feedback. The program I work with does not use PACE Learning Systems, but we do utilize similar themed strategies in the classroom regarding self-pacing, self-instruction, self-assessment, and self-reinforcement. It’s essential to allow adult learners to control their education with proper support for learning and the appropriate degree of success to support persistence.

In closing, individualized instruction used during the development of the basic skills is essential to developing the lifelong learner. Utilizing this approach develops basic skills and supports persistence in programs, which is a huge benefit to program performance. More importantly, however, we are teaching the student to learn and teaching the student to teach themselves. This is a skill that they will utilize throughout life.



## Rarefied Air in Santa Fe

By Lori McKearney

The annual MPAEA Conference held recently in partnership with NMAEA in Santa Fe, was an excellent event on many levels. The appeal of the venue, the depth and wisdom of the keynote speakers, the quality and diversity of presenters, and the generous participation of vendors was first-rate. Having been involved in a supporting role to the conference planners makes me only slightly biased as I am repeating what I heard from many satisfied attendees who passed by the registration desk for information and to leave feedback.

INSTEAD OF CONTINUING WITH THE OBVIOUS... and rather than talk about what all of us in Adult Ed already know – that is, the wide range of insight, information, and ideas available to us at conferences like this – I would like to describe something rarely documented and much in abundance at MPAEA 2014. The thing I refer to is *encouragement*; inspiration, consolation, stimulation, confidence, relief, reward. Simply put, a lot of tired teachers and administrators got a good old shot in the arm.

In this context, the word *encouragement* sounds fluffy, insubstantial, and unprofessional. I understand, but let me support it. From Chris Abeyta's Ceremonia de la Tierra, with its accompanying liturgy and song, to Art Ellison's passionate advocacy for Adult Ed, to the tears of a teacher who was so hopeful for a \$250 Teacher's Innovation Award (to provide gas and meals for a few of her students who needed that support to complete their high school equivalency), this conference overflowed with a stirring energy. In concurrent sessions, no matter what the topic, people were asking for support, admitting shortcomings, identifying with others, brainstorming ideas, and placing value on the experiences of their peers. By

the end of the conference, I lost count of the times I felt humbled by the passion to see students' lives changed in the people around me.

If you are a logical, not necessarily demonstrative professional who does not appreciate the emotionalism I may have portrayed, do not be put off. You could not have found a better organized regional conference worth your time. But add to that a few hundred talented colleagues whose common desire is to *serve*. Where, besides perhaps a gospel singin', stompin', and preachin' church, could you go to get your head filled with fresh ideas and your spirits recharged at the same time?

## Leadership and Partnership

By Tracy Moore

Assistant Education Secretary Brenda Dann-Messier's leadership and advocacy for adult education is unparalleled. She spoke of the strength of our nation and how it depends on the combined efforts of all educators in preparing our students for a future tied to technology and innovation. She stated that adult education plays a vital role in maintaining a workforce that is career ready and that education is in essence freedom: freedom to pursue a career path of our choosing, freedom to attend institutions of higher education and freedom to raise our children in a country full of opportunities.

COABE President-Elect Thomas Nash brought great insight and direction to the MPAEA board. We hope to maintain the strong relationship with our national organization and be the link between state and national programs that we have developed over the last three years. Currently, we are partnered with COABE in 2015 as Colorado is host to the national COABE conference April 21-24 in Denver. Thomas shared with us the opportunity to apply for grant to host a regional COABE conferences within our region.

*See you in Denver next spring!*