

# MPAEA NEWS

## Post-Conference 2012

SEPTEMBER 24, 2012

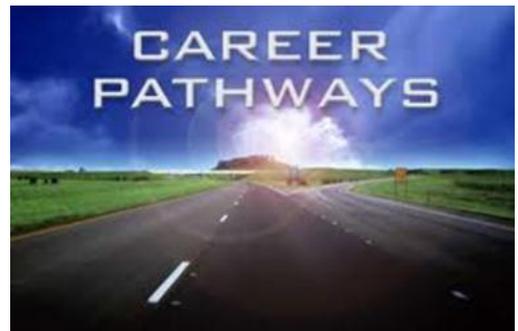
ELECTRONIC VOLUME 70, NUMBER 4

## MPAEA Conference ReCap

### *Implementing Career Pathways*

The following excerpts from scholarship reports were prepared by conference attendees. Read closely to sample a taste of the conference in Helena, MT., and to glean more resources and ideas for your classroom. Thank you, Mountain Plains Board, for providing scholarships to assist members with conference registration fees! ~*Newsletter Editor*

Members of the Crow Tribe and several Montana dignitaries kicked off the *Mountain Plains Adult Education Association's 70th Annual Conference, "Implementing Career Pathways in Adult Education,"* in Helena April 11-14. More than 200 people attended!



Read what attendees are saying about the conference and plan to travel to ***Cheyenne, Wyoming, April 9-12, 2013!!! Visit [mpaea.org](http://mpaea.org) for more information about "Winds of Change".....***

## First MPAEA Conference – A Great Experience!

As a first year ABE Instructor, I was totally excited to attend my first Mountain Plains Adult Education Association (MPAEA) Conference. As I looked over all the choices for workshops, I found myself wondering just how I was going to get to them all! So much experience was represented here – how was I to choose? So, as I perused my choices I did what most other ABE teachers did: I based my choices on what might help my students most.

The MPEAE conference held in Helena, Montana in April, 2012 was a great experience. It was fun, informative, and many ideas were presented in a professional and pleasing format. Keynote speakers welcomed us each morning and each afternoon, and there was an atmosphere of partners-in-adult-education and friendship.

One of the best parts of the conference, of course, is the fun that we had. While in Helena, we visited some of the local sites. We went to the Capitol and downtown Helena's Last Chance Gulch where we found different shops, bars, and churches. We ate at some local eateries, saw "Hunger Games" and shopped a little. We saw old town Helena and new Helena. I was (and am) fascinated with some of the architecture that Helena has to offer; my favorite is the Cathedral of St. Helena. It is a beautiful and amazing structure worth visiting again and again.

Great Conference in Helena, MT!  
More to Come in Cheyenne, WY!

## Helena, MT – A Historic Host City for MPAEA 2012



If you have never visited Helena, the city itself is worth your time. The name alone invites you: The Queen City of the Rockies. Founded in 1864, after gold was discovered in what today is called "Last Chance Gulch." By 1888, 50 millionaires lived in Helena, more per capita than any other city in the world. 3.6 billion dollars of gold were mined from the area over a twenty year period. These valuable placer deposits helped fund and support Helena's diverse and beautiful architecture and vibrant culture still in evidence today.

This year's MPAEA Conference was the organization's 70<sup>th</sup> Annual event! These folks know how to put on a conference. I am honored to be able to represent New Mexico on the MPAEA Board.

This year's conference entitled, "Implementing Career Pathways in Adult Education," was very timely in regards to the direction that ABE is taking. As the economy has changed, adult education's focus has shifted to not just build basic skills, teach English, and prepare for GED tests, but to incorporate college and career readiness. Many workshops at the conference highlighted what some of our neighbor states are doing.

I thought the facilities used for the conference were adequate with respect to space and layout. The breakfasts and lunches were completely satisfactory and the rooms used for presentations were always prepared and comfortable. The conference was well organized with meetings well identified, scheduled, and started on time.

I found the breakfast, luncheon, and keynote speakers to be informative, inspiring, and appreciative of the challenges facing adult educators. Having breakfast and luncheon speakers provided a nice balance to the technical presentations, giving attendees a chance to mentally relax and take in and reflect on a variety of information and issues related to being an adult educator.

## MPAEA – Together Again!

After MPAEA being out of the eight-state region last year and kind of lost in the crowd, it was wonderful to be back in Montana. The entire group just seemed more congenial, and I loved catching up with old friends and making new friends. I think the board (and others) pulled together so well to make this work. It will be great to have Kelly and her committee doing most of the work in Wyoming, but it was so great to see the Board more involved and taking responsibility for the conference this year. We've had a hard-working group of board members this year, and I think next year we'll see a lot of strength with our new board members. When we all work together, it's more fun for everyone, and we learn more.



## Adult Education – Serving Diverse Learners

This conference is attended by adult educators from across the nation including educators from GED centers, ESL programs, adult basic education programs, adult high school diploma programs, and community colleges. This year's conference allowed me to continue to learn more about the diverse population we serve. I absorbed new ideas to improve our service to adult learners through innovative learning opportunities. As more and more students enter adult education with varying needs, it is important to be able to meet each person's unique needs. Our adult programs need to provide an educated workforce for our county and state.

## Keynote Speaker - Brenda Dann-Messier (OVAE)

I was pleasantly surprised to listen to Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education. Her speech about the importance of equipping adult learners with higher education and professional skills to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century confirmed my belief that I, as an adult ESL instructor, must teach my students not only the basic English literacy, but also the transitional skills and knowledge for higher education.

In her luncheon presentation, Dr. Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), shared what OVAE is doing to promote youth and adult career and job skill development. I was glad to hear she is aware of the impact the loss of Federal funding has had on the post-secondary education of inmates in correctional institutions. In the correctional setting where I work, the viability of our associate degree program has been dependent on the aid of a Federal grant program. Dr. Dann-Messier commented on her efforts to initiate government agencies working together (e.g. OVAE and the Department of Justice) to foster adult education as it relates to achieving each agency's goals. In a private meeting after her talk, I asked her where a correctional education administrator could look for college funding resources for inmate students. She suggested first looking locally for aid from state foundations, but also offered to facilitate contact with the correctional education coordinator within OVAE.



## The 2014 GED Test- A First Look

The GED 2014 Assessment is coming soon, so it is a good idea to learn how it will be structured, implemented and evaluated. This presentation on the GED 2014 Assessment helped clarify some of the speculation about what the test will look like and how it will be implemented.

The overarching theme of the presentation focused on the computer delivery and the time table for the initial roll out in 2014 as well as the reasoning behind computer based testing (CBT). Reasons for CBT include: increased and improved access to GED testing, similar standard for testing as many other assessments, and the need for familiarity with technology.

So far, only a few states are applying a computer-based version of the current 2002 test in order to beta test the software that the 2014 test will be built on. In those states, there has been great success for both the students and the states delivering the test. The software allows for students to register and pay for the test online with various payment options. This also allows the student to register for only certain sections of the test if they wish. Essentially, the students will see a schedule of testing times available and will be able to select which days and what times they want to take the test. The testing schedule will be determined by each official testing site as well as times and rules set by each state. Details about becoming an official qualifying GED testing center are available at:

<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/faqs-educator>

One question that was answered by the presenter was how similar the new 2014 test will be to the current 2002 series. The answer given was that test takers will be tested in the same five content areas; however, the Reading portion will be combined with the Language and Writing portions. The test will remain the same length overall.

Another question brought up and partially answered was the cost of the test to individuals. The cost most definitely will increase, but that increase largely will be defined on a state-by-state basis. In other words, each state will decide what to charge individuals to take the GED test. Currently, Pearson-Vue, the publisher of the GED test, has set a recommended cost at approximately \$120. This would be the cost of leasing the test battery and software.

A final bit of information presented on the new GED assessment involved the test battery itself. Initially, the 2014 GED test will have only one "form", but as each month goes by, additional questions will be added to the item bank ensuring that the test taker does not re-test with the same questions. Eventually, a very large item bank will be established to ensure test takers never see the same questions on a retest.

In essence, the new 2014 GED test will be here sooner than we realize. It was a great presentation, trying to dispel speculation and rumors. I, for one, look forward to learning more about how the new test is progressing in order to best prepare myself and my students for what's to come.

I was glad to get GED 2014 updates. This information-packed session will help us tweak some of our teaching strategies based on anticipated changes.



## Concerns About 2014 GED Testing

1. **New Common Core Curriculum**
2. **Online Testing Only – Pearson Vue Testing Centers**
3. **Costs**

The new GED will present challenges to our learners and teaching professionals alike. Besides purchasing new curriculum and support for our staff and students that cover the Common Core Standards, we will have to deal with the changes in costs and technology requirements. For over 17 years, my Program has provided space for GED testing once a month in our centers. This may not be an option in the future. In addition, we often lose students between the parking lot and the classroom. If our students are required to travel to different locations for the GED test, I predict our numbers will drop. In addition, no one knows where the GED price increases will stop. For our under-educated and under-employed students, price is a definite concern.

I attended as many sessions on this subject as possible, and I walked away from all of them feeling quite frustrated, as no apparent attention had been given to the problem of implementing and administering the new exam in a correctional facility, which is where I happen to work. A "fix" has been promised, but whether it will actually work given all of the proscriptions associated with a prison setting remains to be seen.

The cost of the new GED is also a great concern, especially in a correctional setting. Budgets for our program have continued to be reduced each year, and we will not be able to afford the cost of the exam for those inmates eligible to take it. Since the majority of inmates have very limited personal funds, it is highly unlikely that they will be able to pay for the exam either. So many of our adult students who are not incarcerated are barely making ends meet.

I can only hope that all of the issues and problems related to the new GED will be worked out in short order, as 2014 is rapidly approaching and many of our adult education programs will need to decide if the GED is going to continue to be viable option for us to offer to our students.

This workshop did an excellent job explaining some of the changes in the GED test. This is such a debated issue right now, so it was interesting to learn what impact the online test will have on our students, staff, and community. Even though so many aspects of the test remain uncertain, it is obvious that the new test and testing format will greatly impact our GED programs.

No longer will the GED Exam be available as a paper and pencil test.

The GED exam will also have to be given at an approved Pearson VUE testing center. This means that our current GED testing center will need to update and upgrade to become an approved Pearson VUE testing center.

The GED exam is also becoming a more rigorous test and bringing on board the new common core standards.





## Reading

From the *Comprehension* segment of Kathy St. John's *Teaching Adults to Read* series of presentations, I was able to gain information and ideas on Reading for Adult Learners.

Jane Hugo in her *Proliteracy Education Network* presentation made adult literacy instructors aware of the wealth of literacy instruction resources available through the Proliteracy Network. The Proliteracy Network seeks to promote contextualized literacy and provides a Website with downloadable literacy activities, one of which she demonstrated in her presentation.

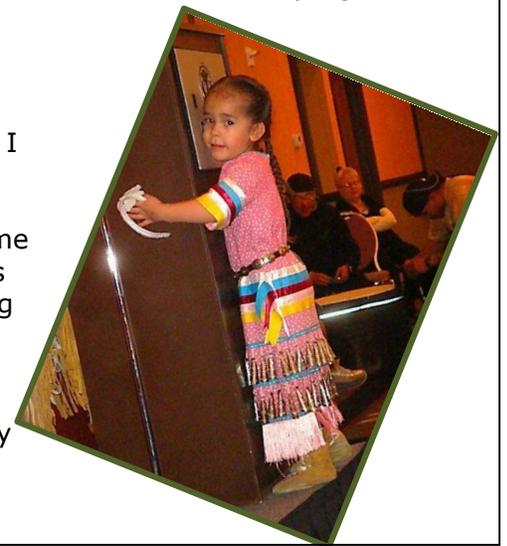
The reading classes that I attended presented many ideas on how to help adult readers. In several of the classes, we worked in groups. In one reading class, a *group* activity was modeled. We did a prior knowledge exercise, a pre-reading exercise, and an after-reading exercise. The information gathered through this activity tripled. It was a fun activity that involved each attendee.

I learned of the research-based reading education strategies being made available by OVAE's LINC (Literacy Information and Communication System). The session included active practicing of instructional strategies and a very complete handout.

I was able to gather some very timely and useful information from the conference which will help me and my colleagues in improving the delivery of our service here in southern Nevada. One in particular is the workshop on integrating education and training through **contextualized instruction**. It is an idea my department has been looking into recently and the timing could not have been better. The workshop was full of information and links to resources that we can use to help us incorporate that into our practice. The presenters did an excellent job of providing resources that we can use every step of the way in designing and implementing instructional programs that will enable our students to progress on a career pathway and prepare for post-secondary success.

## Native American Literature

Although exploring Helena was fun, so was the MPEAE conference. I attended many classes that were useful, informative, and often entertaining. I went to a class on Native American Literature, presented by Dorthea Susag. It was interesting to hear her read some Native American writings. The writings touched my heart. There was a sense of voice coming from a culture that is rising again and taking its place in our America. In truth, our America is full of many cultures, so I would like the ability to give the students in my classes who come from diverse backgrounds their own voice through writing, and hope to implement some of Susag's ideas in my classes.



## Multiple Intelligences

I attended the session "Teaching Strategies with Insights to Multiple Intelligences" taught by Kevin Laughlin. He utilized fun interactive activities to demonstrate Multiple Intelligences, which are the different ways people learn information and solve problems effectively. There are eight intelligences: verbal-linguistic (word smart), visual-spatial (picture smart), bodily-kinesthetic (body smart), intrapersonal (self smart), logical-mathematical (detail smart), musical-rhythmic (music smart), interpersonal (people smart), and naturalistic-spiritualistic (earth and spirit smart). These are different ways that people feel the most comfortable learning and learn the most effectively.

Information about learning styles and multiple intelligences is helpful for everyone, especially for people with learning disabilities and ADD. Knowing your learning style will help you develop coping strategies to compensate for your weaknesses and capitalize on your strengths. For example, someone who has Interpersonal Intelligence is social, comfortable as a leader, and loves group sports and activities, so this is the type of person who excels as a group leader or the person in charge of a project. On the other hand, someone who has intrapersonal intelligence likes to spend time alone or work independently and doesn't like or excel in group activities; therefore, this person wouldn't feel comfortable as a group or team leader. Knowing your own preferred intelligences and the preferred intelligences of friends, students, or co-workers enables you to assign duties or roles to people in a way that they will be the most successful, comfortable and effective.

We also discussed two types of teaching strategies. The first is exposition, which is teacher or leader-centered instruction with the focus on content delivery. The teacher or leader speaks, and the students or followers passively listen. This method is the more traditional method and is the most widely used. The second teaching strategy is inquiry, which is learner-centered and participatory with the focus on the process of learning. It is the method that utilizes more of the Multiple Intelligences and allows the students to learn in different and numerous ways.



## Quick, Easy and Free Resources for Financial Literacy

I have a clear memory of the first financial planning seminar that I went to. It was in 1982 and I was a newlywed and fresh out of college. The presenter was offering a free dinner if we would sit down with him and listen to his presentation on money management. At the time, a free dinner was too good to pass up. As is the case for most young couples, we had no resources to manage; however, what I learned that day I have never forgotten.

Money, and the knowledge of how to management it, is a very powerful tool. It controls where we live, where our children go to school, our ability to earn a living, and even who we may marry someday. That is why it was rewarding to find that Wells Fargo has developed a program to help us teach financial literacy. Their program, called "Hands on Banking", is a user friendly application that can be tailored to any age group. It can be used as standalone curriculum or is the perfect companion software to add a little zing to an already existing lesson.

This may sound like an advertisement for Wells Fargo (WF), but I assure you I have no affiliation with them and what impresses me most is that they really don't want credit for the development of this software. Once you enter the program, you would never know who sponsored it. AND IT'S FREE. That's right, WF will send out as many copies for the program as you would like.

The program is available online, on CDs and in printed guides. Within the program are lessons suited for young kids, teens, younger adults and adults. The lessons range in content from car shopping (my favorite) to budgeting, from credit card management to reverse mortgages. After each lesson, there are assessments to gauge a student's level of understanding. The program even keeps track of what lessons have been completed. Each lesson allows you to work at your own pace and is aligned with individual state standards.

For information on how to get a hard copy of this program, you can contact any of the Wells Fargo representatives listed below or you can log onto <http://www.handsonbanking.org/en/> . I hope you give it a try. You will be richly rewarded.



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## Bridge Curriculum

This powerful, and fun, workshop helped us on our "Route 66" journey into building bridges between our students in ABE/GED and the many programs and partnerships that will add depth and skills to our programs. Especially interesting was the 6 Key Elements of a Career Pathway:

1. Build cross-agency partnerships
2. Engage employers and conduct gap analysis
3. Clearly define roles and responsibilities
4. Design programs
5. Identify funding needs and sources
6. Align policies and programs

Suzette Fox of Billings Adult Education gave an informative presentation on *Bridge Curriculum* in which she discussed the resources and ideas used to get young adults from whatever point of high school/GED education to a point of having training or certifications that will lead to employment opportunities that meet their individual goals. From her discussion and my perusal of the Web resources that she pointed out, I'm impressed by Montana's advancement of programs and curriculum for career development.

## Integrating Career Awareness at Lower Levels of ESL

by Jenny Wong

This presentation was very practical and learner-centered. Jenny started with a discussion about the difference between a job and a career. And she gave us a lesson plan and materials on how to integrate career awareness into activities for beginning-level students. We discussed "transferable job skills" and matched those skills with occupations as we pretended to be students. I've already used "Find someone who..." activities with job skills in my class. My students will be able to discuss those skills and make a connection to occupations/careers that they might consider in the future.

She strongly recommended collaboration among beginning-level and advanced-level teachers. They can plan lessons on careers in which beginning-level students can work with advanced students. Advanced students can help to teach the beginning students. They play a role as a teacher, mentor, and someone to look up to. It is very important that the teachers at each level have a connection to each other so that when the students make a transition from one level to the other, they feel comfortable working with the teacher or the students in that level. She stated that on the Nevada Adult Education website under the educator categories, there are some lesson plans that instructors can use for teaching careers. It is crucial for beginning students to be aware of careers for their long-term goals. Teachers need to give them the opportunity to do that so they can target not only learning English, but also see their career path in the long-term.

I was also interested in learning more about Career Pathways and enjoyed Bill Walker's session concerning this topic. My program exists in a community action agency which is different from most other programs, but places us in a unique position to work on career pathways. Our program also oversees the WIA youth and WIA Adult programs, helping individuals with barriers to employment find careers. The focus on career pathways is a natural for our program by helping all ABE students set goals, just as our other clients, in order to achieve their desired career. I plan to begin integrating our programs together in the next few months for the betterment of all clients.





## PEP Talk....

Wednesday afternoon, I heard the word for the first time..."PEP Talk." I knew I had to learn more. Naturally, I attended the workshop of the final day. It is fair to say, I had a "reality check" and I believe my state needs a "PEP Talk." The program is a collaborative effort between the Montana Department of Labor and the Office of Public Instruction. PEP means

**Personalized Employment Plan.** The program uses a handout called a blueprint and an online component to help clients develop their plan. Clients learn by exploring their existing interests, in order to determine existing skills, which strengthen employability.

The components found in Unit 2 are outstanding. Anyone can benefit from the activities. I encourage everyone to request a copy of the PEP Talk blueprint from the Montana Department of Labor. Once you have your copy, complete the skills worksheet. It will be an eye opening experience. We all have so many skills that we don't ever consider when looking for employment. This incredible program is being utilized in schools, adult education programs, colleges, and workforce solutions offices. Everyone can benefit, and the benefits carryover.

One of the most exciting workshops I attended was jointly presented by Montana's ABE State Director and a Department of Labor and Industry Supervisor. The program called PEP talk was co-created by ABE, WIA, and Department of Labor personnel with the common goal of helping their clientele create a Personalized Employment Plan or PEP that is a portable blueprint or portfolio of a person's career goals. The curriculum starts with building self-awareness of one's skills. Next, the client examines personal barriers, completes a reality check which helps determine how much income he/she needs to earn. Then he/she engages in career exploration and finally sets goals and creates the PLAN. The blueprint is kept in both an online portfolio and paper booklet for ease of transport. The presenters and other Montana ABE programs who participated spoke highly of the curriculum and its ease of use and relevancy for students. Most exciting was the way that PEP Talk is becoming part of the vernacular for all Montanans. What resonated for me were the strong partnerships that created a model program to meet agency goals and most importantly adult learner needs.

Montana has created a great tool. So let's get on pace by further developing relationships between the State Department of Labor and State Departments of Education and Higher Education in other states. I encourage each of you to learn more about PEP Talk and share the new information with the leaders in your state. Please visit <http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/?pageId=287> to learn more!

## Soft Skills

"Soft Skills" seemed to be a new (new to me) buzzword that I heard several presenters mention or discuss in detail and that represents the habits, social skills, study skills, and system familiarity that a student needs to make it through a career readiness program (college or training). Cecelia Gallagher and Donna Bakke's *From Academics to Soft Skills* presentation was a good overview of the soft skills students need for college and is a useful resource for adult educators counseling students about career pathways.

## Job Search

Besides attending the GED presentations, I also attended the series of workshops offered by Suzette Fox. All of these sessions focused on the different skills needed to find employment, most specifically resume writing, cover letter writing, and interview skills. Given the employment situation in Nevada, especially for inmates re-entering society, I felt that all of Suzette's workshops offered valuable information and materials that I can take back to my classroom.

## Goal Setting

"Gaining Entry to Career Pathways: Goal Setting with Adult ESL Students."

We discussed the importance of goal setting from the very beginning and intermediate level students who are not familiar with the concept of a goal and procedures. We shared various practical and adoptable activities with specific lesson plans that have been successful in our classroom. The attendees of our presentation gave us positive feedback. They commented that the presentation and the materials were informative and they appreciated the actual lesson plans and activities that they can take with them. One of the attendees mentioned that she would implement the lessons immediately and inform us of the progress. One said that she learned a lot from us. Also, Lilybeth Brazones, the new President of MPAEA, requested an electronic copy of our presentation commenting that she was planning to create a program which could lead adult learners for post-secondary education at her school.

The best value of presenting at the conference is the fact that I have now gained more confidence in pursuing my own professional goals as an educator. Frankly speaking, I have been appreciated by my students for excellent teaching. Nevertheless, I knew I needed more than appreciation. As I would say to my students, they need to come out of the comfort zone for better learning. This presentation was one of my short-term goals that I have promised to my students and myself. Now, I have achieved the goal and I can be the authentic role model for my students for how to plan, to overcome obstacles, etc. I am now stepping forward to achieve another professional goal. I am planning to give a presentation to other instructors in Northern Nevada at the AAACE conference in November. Also, I will be continuously developing easy-to-adopt activities and lessons based on the target subjects in teaching adult learners.



## Off to Work We Go – Offender Re-Entry in the Workforce

Since one of my responsibilities with Billings Adult Education is to assist students with computer and workplace skills, the sectional entitled "Off to Work We Go" presented by Lindell Rhodes, Kristi Wimmer, and Dan Sitzler was of particular interest. Kevin Laughlin procured a packet of information from this presentation that included some resources I can tweak for use at Billings Adult Education. In particular, many of their exercises apply directly to our work assisting inmates at the Montana Women's Prison.

First of all, the job skills folder is full of handouts and information specific to persons with a criminal record who may still be on probation. The handout describing the Federal Bonding Program, an insurance policy to protect employers in the case of "theft, forgery, larceny, or embezzlement", outlined both program requirements and who is eligible for the program. The four-step strategy to answering the felony question assists ex-felons with thinking through answers to interview questions about their crime. I particularly appreciate the emphasis this packet provides for always telling the truth. The sample letter of explanation regarding a felony conviction was both positive and informative.

Job Searching Dos and Don'ts brought out some interesting issues for potential workers with or without criminal backgrounds. As a positive role model, I like to emphasize the positive and minimize the negative discussed in my classes. It seems that I can usually develop a "do" to counter every "don't" and role model both positive behavior and conversation with my students. However, I appreciate the list of don'ts in this packet and will use it to develop discussion questions to make my students think. Asking a question they answer for themselves seems to work better than telling adults what they should do.

## Online Learning

For those interested in or concerned about the ramifications of online learning for our adult learners, Crystal Hack's presentation, "Are Adult Learners Ready for Online Learning," offered some sobering facts as well as hope for improvement in this quickly changing but important area of education. To begin, Ms. Hack asked those in attendance to provide anecdotal evidence of what they had been experiencing in their attempts at online education. The overall reaction was that while the online classroom did provide many benefits, there are some issues that keep cropping up.

One of those issues was student retention. Ms. Hack laid out several steps that she follows in her online classes, the rationale behind each of them, and the results of each. One such step is to provide the students with individualized retention plans, in which each student is informed up front what steps the teacher will and will not take to ensure that students continue to participate in the online class. The teacher explains in the introduction to the course, as well as in the syllabus, how many phone calls, emails, etc., the teacher will attempt in his effort to retain a student.

The instructor also provides the student with several key dates throughout the semester at which point students can opt out of the class once they realize the amount of effort required to take online courses. Other helpful ideas included using popular social media, such as Facebook, where instructors could create pages for their courses on sites that many of the students may already feel at ease.

Finally, recognizing the fact that most students drop online courses because they feel overwhelmed by the process, Ms. Hack suggested that an introductory course to online classes would help ease many students who are unfamiliar with online education into what seems at first to them to be a nearly insurmountable obstacle.

## Stress- New Findings & Its Impact on our Lives

What a wealth of information from this speaker. He explained in great detail what stress IS, how stress impacts our lives, and suggestions of ways to decrease our stress. He shared statistics and factual data in an interesting format, so it was engaging and helpful. He provided suggestions to alleviate stress, while enjoying life more.

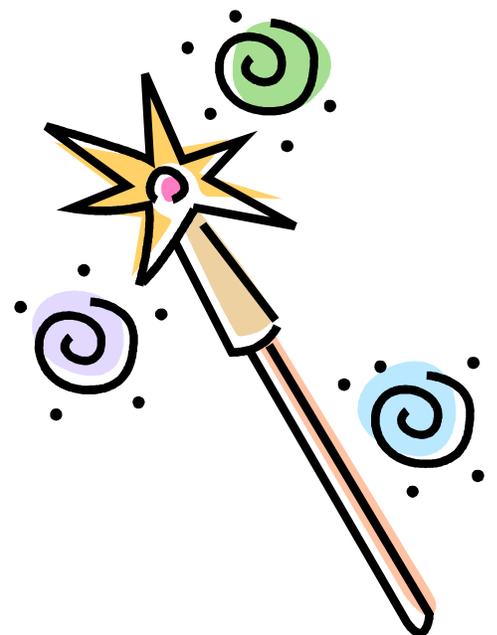
## Lois

I have to say, my favorite speaker was Lois McElvray. She was funny, yet had a powerful message to share. She touched my heart, and inspired me. Her story of courage, humor, and strength helped me so much. She taught me to appreciate what I CAN do, and to not sweat what I CAN'T do. And above all...when life gets tough...to laugh. It really does help☺. What an amazing lady.

I especially enjoyed listening to Lois McElvray experiences about coping with brain damage, and how she has learned to laugh through, or even AT, many hardships. She is evidence that *laughter* truly can be *the best medicine*. Her experiences made my little corner of the world seem a little more manageable.

Lois McElvray's quote, "Hangin' on with humor when life looks ugly..."

*Lessons from Lois* [ [www.lessonsfromlois.com](http://www.lessonsfromlois.com) ]. We can live in love, or fear; these speakers modeled love, humor, joy, and hope!





## Troy Christensen – Humor & Insight

Leaving the online world of education, Troy Christensen's presentation, "Color Me Crazy," focused on how educators can use a basic understanding of colors, and the meanings and emotions behind them, as well as an understanding of classroom design, to enhance not only the learning experience for the student, but the teaching experience for the instructor.

One area in which instructors can have a positive influence over their students' learning environment is what Mr. Christensen calls Educational Design. By simply creating a classroom that has the right "feel," students will become more receptive to new information, will be more attentive and less disruptive, and will retain the information they receive. Use the right colors, in the right places, and in the right amounts, and a teacher can produce an atmosphere of energy, creativity, respect, or peace.

One of my favorite presentations was the light and humor filled class taught by Troy Christensen. It was relaxing and enjoyable and felt like a retreat from the all the brain food. Although it fed the mind, it fed the soul as well. It's interesting how powerful a presentation or lesson can be when it touches the intellect, the heart, and the funny bone.

Finally, I found Troy Christensen to be a dynamic and entertaining speaker and attended both *Color Me Crazy* and "I couldn't fix the brakes, so I made the horn louder". His practical tips and entertaining style were a great end to the conference for me. He was motivational and provided great information on practical ideas for looking at problems and programs in different ways.

I was able to end the conference on a very positive note by attending Troy Christensen's session on attitude and morale improvement for both the workplace and everyday life. Such a session should be included at all conferences as a welcome break from bad news and negative morale issues.



The entire program was well thought out. The keynote speakers gave us everything from Helena, Montana, history to goal setting to magic wands and words of encouragement. Troy Christensen's "Color Me Crazy" workshop showed how color affects almost every aspect of our lives in subconscious ways. He demonstrated this by wearing t-shirts in 6 different colors. It was also educational to listen to others talk about the workshops they attended.

# Be Happy

## Smile, Laugh and Joke

### Your Way to Ideas & Encouragement



Wandering into almost 15 years of attending MPAEA conferences, I asked myself, "Why do you keep coming back?" The answer is for inspiration, ideas and ongoing encouragement that I receive at this gentle conference that is not too small... and not too big... but just right! It is filled with compassion, action, and professional adult educators. I am always reminded that I am responsible for my own professional development. I continue to come on my own dime because of the return on investment the rest of the year.

While sharing workshops, networking with vendors, renewing friendships with Idaho Lifelong Learning Association (ILLA) and MPAEA members, I marvel at how essential this part of life is. For me, the synergy between ideas and encouragement is the best! This year, I particularly enjoyed the positive presentations one always finds at MPAEA Conferences: Troy Christensen's workshops, *Color Me Crazy* and *I Couldn't Fix the Brakes, So I made the Horn Louder*; and our Friday morning Keynote, *Lessons from Lois* [ [www.lessonsfromlois.com](http://www.lessonsfromlois.com) ]. We can live in love, or fear; these speakers modeled love, humor, joy, and hope! Just the tools we need to add to the every day of the rest of our lives.

Troy noted in his rules for the day that we, "*Catch someone doing good, right, appropriate, or pleasant and acknowledge it.*" Lois suggested that, "*The last thing before we go to bed (or at the end of work), recall three good things for that day. These can be accomplishments, nice surprises, or even things that didn't go well, but turned out better than usual.*" She follows with, "*You're not allowed to recall disappointments, nor things that didn't get done.*" If I just put these two ideas into practice I will be a better person the rest of the year. Perhaps you will too!

I am reminded that we can't fix anyone else, only do our own work and journey with companions on the way. In our vocation and avocations, we can foster each others' gifts. MPAEA is a sure way to surround yourself with great people, release yourself from fear, and listen for inner wisdom! Hope you will come to Cheyenne next year!

## MPAEA Journal - Benefits Members in Many Ways

MPAEA's *Journal of Adult Education* is a refereed journal serving as a voice for the translation of theory. It (along with MPAEA's newsletter) is now distributed electronically at no charge to MPAEA members. Co-editor Gary Conti encourages submissions: "Our goal as editors is to help you get your ideas into publishable form."

## Scholarship

First of all, as a scholarship recipient, I would like to thank the board for making it possible for me to attend the conference. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to meet and share information with colleagues from around the region.

By receiving a scholarship from MPAEA, I had the privilege of attending the 2012 MPAEA conference in Helena, Montana. Since the training budget for my school program has been cut completely, the scholarship funds helped offset some of the costs I had to pay on my own to attend the conference. As has been my experience with prior MPAEA conferences I have attended, the one in Helena proved to be very informative and helpful for my professional development.

## Ending the Tobacco Epidemic

This informative and enlightening workshop was so helpful! He had actual samples of products, and shared several terrific web sites. His wealth of knowledge was amazing. He answered so many of our questions, and never made anyone feel uncomfortable about asking questions. I appreciated his candid approach. In addition to sharing his experiences, he gave us suggestions of how to tackle the tobacco epidemic in our communities.

## Networking with Adult Ed Professionals

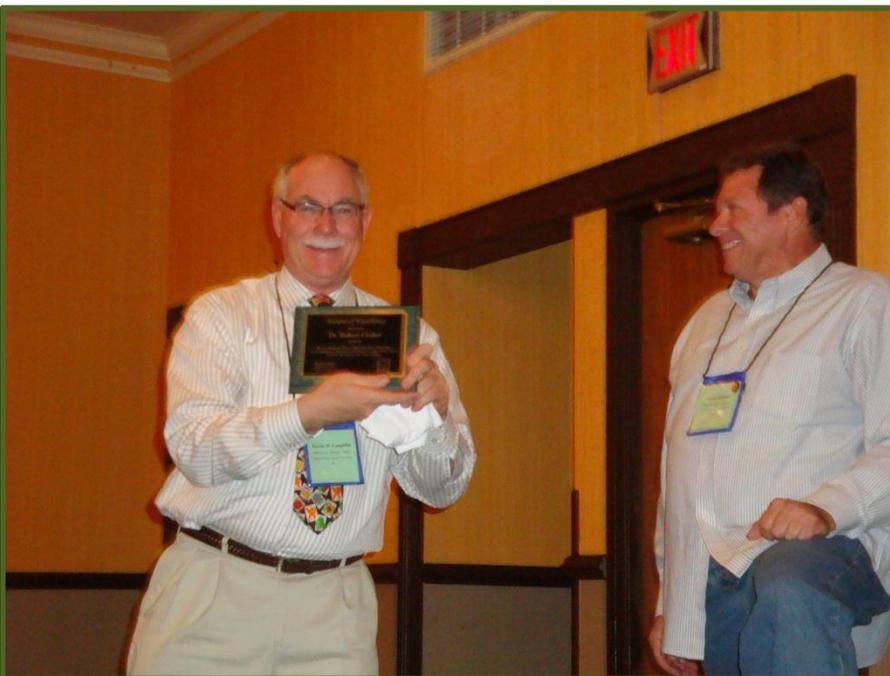
I was fortunate to meet so many wonderful people involved in ABE/GED. Sharing our successes and struggles, and gaining powerful tools to try with my students, was wonderful. The new friends I made, the new skills I learned, and the new enthusiasm I gained truly made this a special conference that I am thankful to have attended.

I thought there was a good range of topics covered in the conference presentations. Overall, I felt the quality was good. The presenters sincerely wanted to help adult educators become more informed and better at their trade.

While we are contemplating the changes and challenges of Adult Education, it is good to remember that Adult Education is often referred to as the educational frontier. John W. Studebaker, former United States Commissioner of Education, referred to *life-long learning* in 1934 as the only sound way of preserving democracy. John proposed in his 1936 book *Plain Talk* to "save democracy through education". We need to remember Adult Education is as vital and essential for the success of our nation today as it was in the 1930's.

The 2012 MPAEA Conference provided a variety of proven methods for success in the ABE classroom. I am looking forward to next year in Wyoming already!

A heart-felt thanks goes out to all the people who helped put the conference together: each person on the committee, the presenters, the Hotel staff, all of the vendors, and all the participants who helped increase our educator's network. It was a useful and rewarding conference.



Overall, I found the time I spent at the Helena conference to be both valuable and informative. MPAEA always offers a premium conference for those of us in adult education. I would encourage all in the field to make an effort to attend a future MPAEA conference and to get involved in the organization.

From valuable tips and ideas for retention in online education, to creating the perfect environment in live classrooms, the 2012 Mountain Plains Adult Education Association conference provided ample opportunities to anyone interested in improving or expanding their teaching skills and techniques.

## Then I Shall Feel that I Have Won and I Have Filled my Place

As a first year member of MPAEA, and a first year elementary school teacher, I went into the Helena Conference with zero expectations and not a lot of knowledge about the organization itself. A little nervous, hesitant, and not knowing anyone, I poked around the conference site with the curiosity, excitement, and uncertainty of a kindergarten student. What was this all about and why had I become a member of this organization if I was teaching fifth graders? Well, this conference was where I would give my first professional presentation. It would mark my first professional development opportunity, and was my introduction to a fresh community of people who are similarly inspired by and dedicated to the profession of education. A lot of firsts.

Onto the business about this being my first ever professional presentation. Now that is scary; or at least it should have been. However, each member of MPAEA was so welcoming, so warm and compassionate, that I found presenting to be much easier than I had anticipated. As my time at the conference wound into the weekend, I was overwhelmed with the number of truly kind and caring people I had met along my way. And I'll admit that that is not always easy for me because I am a true introvert who quickly prefers a quiet space away from an excited buzz of individuals.

Having the opportunity to present at and attend the conference was a unique learning experience. On the surface level, I learned about community and the ways in which an organization can cultivate and improve upon the horizon for a certain ideal. In this case, that ideal is adult education and a better future for our country by way of getting people employed and creating healthy families and individuals through that employment. I learned that this requires a team effort filled with care, laughter, patience, and acceptance.

MPAEA is a pillar on which better families, local communities, states, and our nation is built, and I am proud to be a part of that. Catching onto that mission of MPAEA may be one of the most enriching aspects of my time at the conference. I felt comfort knowing that I was surrounded with good people who genuinely care about other people. There is a feeling we get when we know something is righteous, fruitful, strengthening, and inherently good. This was how I felt as a new member of MPAEA. I can attest that the members of MPAEA are all of these things, as is the organization as a whole. And thus, my new membership in MPAEA is something I cherish and value as a part of my identity.

Because I teach at a Catholic, Lasallian school and because that was a part of the presentation that I gave at the conference, I would like to end with a little meditation from De La Salle which is for teachers seeking strength and guidance in their profession:



I want to teach my students how to live this life on earth,  
to face its struggles and its strife and worth.  
Not just the lesson in a book or how the rivers flow,  
but how to choose the proper path wherever they may go.  
To understand eternal truth and know right from wrong,  
and gather all the beauty of a flower and a song.  
For if I help the world to grow in wisdom and in grace,  
then I shall feel that I have won and I have filled my place.

## Arizona Quality Alliance (AQA) "Showcase in Excellence Award"

After 4 ½ months of being inspected, examined and judged, the Maricopa County Adult Probation Department's (MCAPD) Adult Education Program was awarded The Arizona Quality Alliance (AQA) "Showcase In Excellence Award". This award is based on the nationally recognized Malcolm Baldrige criteria. A main goal of AQA is to assist organizations in finding and implementing proven best practices and to achieve a cost effective competitive advantage.

I want to thank Karen Liersch and her staff from the Arizona Dept. of Education, Adult Education Services

Division, for providing us with proven research-based principles. We combined those principles with the Adult Probation Department's Evidence Based Principals and Maricopa County's requirement of Managing For Results. We use those tools daily and it was evident to the AQA inspection team that we have created and are sustaining a successful, award-winning program.

We keep busy—our Education Program assists 1000 to 2000 adults per year in reaching their education goals. And even with all the help I described, if it were not for the hard-working, dedicated teaching staff in the MCAPD Education Program, we would not have received the AQA "Showcase in Excellence Award." The students' lives have been positively affected and I wish to extend a big thank you to all the Probation Department's teachers.

The vast majority of AQA competing programs were Arizona for-profit businesses. So, at the award ceremony, I informed the attendees of a few facts: 1 in 5 high school diplomas issued by the AZ Dept. of Education is a GED. A high school graduate earns almost \$10,000 a year more than a person who did not finish high school and there are 825,000 Arizona citizens that do not have a High School Diploma or GED. Many in the audience were heard making statements like, "I did not know that!" and "Oh, wow, that many?"

Let's keep the message going. Inform your state and local businesses as well as legislators of Adult Education's fantastic work.

Lindell W. Rhodes, MA, CMPI  
Director Education Programs  
Maricopa county Adult Probation



## Awards

### Award of Merit:

Margaret Bowles, Montana OPI  
Director of Adult Basic & Literacy  
Education

### Lay Leader of the Year:

Carol Flynn

### Legislator of the Year:

Senator Jon Tester, Montana

### Educator of the Year:

Ellen Guettler  
Bozeman Adult Learning Center

### State Awards of Excellence:

Arizona – Dr. Jessica Dilworth  
Colorado – Jolene Goerend  
Idaho – Dr. Robert Croker  
Montana – Detlef Johl  
Nevada – Brad Deeds  
New Mexico – Susan Morss  
Utah – Heather Young  
Wyoming – Rick Burgin

### Learner of the Year:

Anaconda Literacy Program – Darian Brown  
Bozeman Adult Learning Center – Annika Pike  
Dawson Community College – Karen Lovejoy  
Great Falls ABLE – Randy Haber  
Lewistown ABLE – Darrell Howard  
Missoula Emma Dickenson Life-Long Learning Center – Robert Cheeseman



## Bridge Curriculum to Career Pathways and MORE...



The MPAEA Annual Conference was truly a 'learning experience' for me this year. I arrived early so I could attend the pre-conference. I attended the afternoon session entitled "*Bridge Curriculum*", presented by Suzette Fox, Instructor Billings ABE and Michelle Gasek, EOC Counselor/TRIO. The information presented was so clear, so well organized, and so straightforward that when they were finished I felt I could do it in my own program. Their Bridge Program covers the various avenues our adult students must navigate in order to be successful, whether planning a career, learning study skills, or pursuing post-secondary education.

Our Montana Hosts planned the sessions so well that I was able to follow this strand throughout the Conference. I picked up valuable ideas, handouts, and basic training in *Integrating Education and Training through Contextualized Instruction*, *Create Your Functional Resume*, *Strategy for Writing a Letter of Application*, *PEP Talk*, *The Career Pathways Model*, and even attended a session by Ann Harris of Teknemedica Corporation. As extras, There was no shortage of interesting sessions to attend and I only wished there was either more time or more of me to attend them all.

The handouts, freely given, were a valuable tool to bring back to my program and share with my colleagues. This is the first conference that I have attended where I was able to follow a 'theme' and gather many pieces that together can be used as a basis for furthering the goals of our local ABE Program. I'm hoping that next year's program in Wyoming will also be set up where there are several strands available and we're able to get many different pieces that together, make a whole. It's like training – without the hard work!



# Winds of Change

2013 MPAEA Conference

April 10-12 Cheyenne, Wyoming  
Preconference April 9

Scholarships available at [MPAEA.org](http://MPAEA.org)

Save the  
Date!

Brought to you by



Three state scholarships will be available for NMAEA members. Stay tuned to the [mpaea.org](http://mpaea.org) website for updates on "Winds of Change," the 71<sup>st</sup> Annual MPAEA Conference.

Mark your calendar! Submit your presentation proposals! Make your reservations! See you there!

