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all write news

## I'VE GOT THOSE WRITIN' BLOCK BLUES: A CURRICULUM PROJECT

by Anna Yangco

*[This past year the author, a teacher at Project Hope, received a mini-grant from the A.L.R.I. to work on this project to develop a curriculum integrating blues, rap/hip-hop, and reggae music with writing. This article is an abridged version of her final report.—Ed.]*

I hate writing and I'm no good at it!" The familiar moans and groans filled the writing and grammar classroom every time I gave an assignment to the women at Project Hope. I was perplexed as to why our learners could talk for hours on any subject from the weather to the subtle diversity of mangoes from different countries, but once ideas had to be transferred onto paper, a huge mental block was formed. I was equally astonished how every song on the radio could be effortlessly memorized, but the powers of selective memory made it impossible for many to recall that a "noun is a person, place, or thing" (despite the hundreds of times I have said it in class). Music is familiar to everyone because it is part of our everyday lives. It is a useful tool for extracting voice in writing from our students. If I integrated music into our writing/grammar class curriculum, would it help the learners overcome those "writin' block blues"?

Blues, spirituals, jazz, rap, hip-hop, and rhythm/blues music were my intended media for the curriculum of this mini-grant. To begin the brainstorming process for this curriculum, I searched the Internet to see if any previous experimentation with music and creative writing had been done. The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute's Curricular Resources site (<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum>) produced several articles regarding curricula on the history of various genres of music, including blues, spirituals, and rap. Although these lessons are focused on K-12 or college levels, I generated many new ideas based on them for our adult basic education

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## BUILDING ON CULTURAL STRENGTHS: A CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO FAMILY LITERACY

by Marguerite Lukes

*[This article first appeared in the November/December, 2000, issue of Literacy Update, a publication of the Literacy Assistance Center in New York City, and is reprinted here with their permission.—Ed.]*

Parents are a child's first and most important teacher." While this phrase may have seemed radical only a decade ago, popularly held perspectives on the role of the parent have come a long way. Now this phrase has even found its way into legislation, as family literacy has become a key component of adult and workforce education.

Despite the popularity of the rhetoric, however, what family literacy has meant in many contexts is a structured model that combines education and training for the parent, education for the child, and educational activities for parent and child together. This model, designed to help parents become better caregivers and educators, espouses a fairly rigid school-based paradigm

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Please share this newsletter  
with others at your program.  
The deadline for submitting  
material for the next issue is:  
Feb. 15.

## I've Got Those Writin' Block Blues

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classes. A few useful independent websites were found by entering queries such as “music in the classroom,” “teaching blues and rap,” or “writing and music” on a search engine. For background knowledge for specific performers, general books on jazz, blues, and rap were obtained from the library.

My original strategy was that this course would be centered primarily on blues music. Since the blues are essentially a “musical story” of a person’s troubles and survivals, I felt the learners in my writing class might find similarities between the music and their own personal stories. But problems arose from the first lesson, called “Argh! I’ve Got the Blues!” (see Sample Lesson, below). The women complained that the music was too old and boring. “That music puts me to sleep,” a few women remarked. Even the older women (thirties through fifties), who I thought would enjoy the blues more than rap, did not have positive reactions to the songs. Most griped because the songs were “not only slow, but they are making me more depressed than I already was!” The women were, however, able to analyze

Bessie Smith’s and T-Bone Walker’s blues quite well. The brainstorm exercises we did were successful—many women were able to verbally express what they thought the blues are. On the other hand, I am not sure the women felt blues music to be a means of overcoming troubles or quite the “therapeutic” device that blues musicians feel it is. Regardless of the objections to the music, some women produced blues that were very impressive. One woman wrote “GED Blues,” a short essay on the trouble she was having trying to pass the test. Another wrote about the hardships of living in a shelter with other women who have very different backgrounds along with shelter rules that restrict her from leading a “normal” life. A woman distraught from the obstacles to losing weight wrote a poem entitled “Weight Blues.”

Given the responses to the blues music, I decided to experiment with rap/hip-hop music. I chose Digable Planets because they have a clear, jazzy, relaxed, hip-hop sound that is more accessible than many of the rap artists today. They are an older hip-hop group that began producing albums in the early '90s. Reactions of the women were, again, of disappointment. The younger women (18 to 30) laughed

and said, “This is old school!” A few older women shook their heads and remarked, “I can’t understand this rap stuff!” Once again, however, their analysis of the lyrics was insightful and well done. Some women even helped me understand certain phrases of which I was unsure. A “five senses” exercise was not only beneficial for comprehending the themes of the song, but also served to be a good tool for a writing exercise, “Where I’m From.”

In early May I noticed a few women were beginning to apply for jobs, scholarships, and colleges. I stressed the importance of giving specific details and stories of personal experience. A few women felt their pasts were not something they thought was appropriate for such an important essay. I played the song, “Everything Is Everything.” The women recognized that Lauryn

Hill understood that “despite the struggles in our youth, our life experiences are important on how we got to where we are today.” Another woman commented, “She’s saying that life

is a game; before you start to play, you lose if you have negative thinking—negative thinking won’t get you anywhere.” I proceeded to use an exercise from *Writing from Life: Telling Your Soul’s Story*, by Susan W. Albert, Ph.D., to begin the brainstorming process for writing essays. This lesson seemed to be the most successful (partly because the women adore Lauryn

Hill); it was the only time I received an essay from every single woman! This exercise was a good self-esteem builder and also produced many well-written essays.

Some students (mostly from the Caribbean) wondered why I had not been using any reggae music in my classes. Since students were stressed from the usual events of their lives and taking their GED tests, I decided to try a relaxation exercise. The women really enjoy Bob Marley’s music, so I did not receive any objections to “Three Little Birds.” The brainstorm exercise about “how I relax” was interesting because many women could not recall the last time they really relaxed. With all the chaos in their lives, the only time they had to “relax” was when they were sleeping, and even that time was extremely limited.

Overall, these experimental lesson plans were successful in producing essays from the learners at Project Hope. The biggest complaint was, “What does this have to do with getting my GED?” As a result, I found myself constantly relating the assignments to the skills important for writing a good essay. My other suggestions would be the following: 1)

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## I've Got Those Writin' Block Blues

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The internet is an invaluable resource for the most current information regarding popular music today. The instructor should utilize it as much as possible. 2) Try to stay as up-to-date as possible with the popular music your students listen to. They tend to be more interested in learning if they already know the songs by heart. 3) Be flexible and open to the learners' suggestions. A participatory approach is best for this type of experimental class.

### Annotated List of Curriculum Resources

Albert, Susan W. *Writing from Life: Telling Your Soul's Story*.

Putnam Books, 1996. Excellent activities for women to write about their lives. Section on "glories, gifts, and graces" is particularly useful for writing cover letters for jobs and essays for scholarships or college. Great for self-esteem builders.

Andrade, Chalene. "They Lived in Music—Blues Women Sing Their Song." Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute's Curricular Resources, Curriculum Unit 97.05.01 (1997). <<http://130.132.143.21/ynhti/curriculum/units/1997/5/97.05.01.x.html>> Activity #2, entitled "My Blues," is a useful creative writing activity. Includes a performance piece (play) that might be interesting to read in a literature/history class.

Bissell, Patricia. "How to Blues." Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute's Curricular Resources, Curriculum Unit 97.05.03 (1997). <<http://130.132.143.21/ynhti/curriculum/units/1997/5/97.05.03.x.html>> Good background information on the blues and how they might be useful in the classroom. Fun "musical" activities, but a knowledge of musical theory and music history is important. Mostly for a K-8 classroom setting.

"Bobmarley.com." Personal home page, 1999. <<http://bobmarley.com>> Internet website containing extensive background on Bob Marley as well as all the lyrics to his songs.

Colburn, Phil. "I Talk to Me." From *The Chicken Soup for the Unsinkable Soul*, edited by Jack Canfield, et al. Florida: Health Communications, Inc., 1999. A good poem to inspire relaxation and taking care of self.

Cooper, B.L. *Images of American Society in Popular Music: A Guide to Reflective Teaching*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Inc., 1982. Provides information on many crucial topics of discussion in music, but outdated for a class on popular music. Most music discussed is from the 50s to the 70s. Some discussion of spirituals, blues, and jazz included.

"Harry's Blues Lyrics Online." Personal home page, 28 May 2000. Incredible resource for just about any blues lyrics needed. Great background and history information on the blues. Good explanation of the blues "language." Constantly updated to provide more blues lyrics every day.

"Hip Hop 101." General College of the University of

Minnesota, 2000. <[http://www.gen.umn.edu/faculty\\_staff/sirc/hip\\_hop.html](http://www.gen.umn.edu/faculty_staff/sirc/hip_hop.html)> Not a very complete page but has good ideas on why it is important to understand rap lyrics. Contains sample essay by college student.

"The Hitlist Network: Hip Hop Archives." Homepage of the Hitlist Corporation, 2000. <<http://www.hiphoparchives.com>> Resource for hip hop lyrics. Great because it gives a "printer-friendly" version of the lyrics.

Oliver, Paul. *Conversation with the Blues*. Cambridge, UK, 1997. Very interesting resource for personal narratives of blues artists. Helpful to present these narratives to class to show how the blues has been a "therapeutic" medium and natural process in many Black Americans' lives. Includes compact disc recording of actual blues artists' interviews and clips of their performances.

"The Original Hip-Hop (Rap) Lyrics Archive." Personal home page, 05 November 1999. <<http://www.ohhla.com/index.htm>> Another invaluable resource for rap lyrics. Constantly updated to provide the latest popular rap lyrics.

Rhodes, Henry A. "The Evolution of Rap Music in the United States." Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute's Curricular Resources, Curriculum Unit 93.04.04 (1993). <<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/guides/1993/4/93.04.04.x.html>> Lesson plan #2 is an effective writing activity for students to create their own rap. Good resource for summary of rap music. Short, but informative section about women rappers. Information is slightly

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Please send all material for the newsletter to the editor, Steve Reuys, at the A.L.R.I. (E-mail address: [steve@alri.org](mailto:steve@alri.org); regular mail address: see last page of this issue. If sending by regular mail, please include, if possible, a computer disk (Mac or PC) with material saved as a "text only" document.) For more information or for permission to reprint articles, please call Steve at 617-782-8956 x14. Complete issues of this newsletter published since March, 1998, can be found in PDF format in the "Publications" section of our web page at: <<http://www.alri.org>>. Individual articles published since May, 1996, can also be found there in HTML format.

## I've Got Those Writin' Block Blues

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outdated (no information on such influential female artists as Lauryn Hill).

Williams, Sloan E. "A Guide Through the Culture of the Blues." Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute's Curricular Resources, Curriculum Unit 97.05.11 (1997). <<http://130.132.143.21/ynhti/curriculum/units/1997/5/97.05.11.x.html>> Detailed curriculum on the history of the blues and how to teach it using a multi-disciplinary approach. Gives background of the blues form—knowledge of music theory is important.

### Sample Lesson: Argh! I've Got the Blues!

1) Introduction—Discussion of the importance of creative writing in a GED Writing and Grammar class. Class brainstorm: How does creative writing relate to getting your GED? Purpose: For learners to understand that writing is writing and to realize that this is practice in "putting thoughts down on paper." Good practice for "brainstorming," an important skill to have on the essay portion of the writing skills test.

2) What are the "blues"? Class brainstorm of images that first come to mind with this phrase. Prompt questions: When do you get the blues? How do you feel when you've got the blues? What do you do to get over the blues? Why do you think people sing the blues? What kind of people, do you think, sing the blues? How can music express emotions or feelings? Where do you think the blues came from?

3) Listening/comprehension exercise—Boogie Woogie Red: "They Was Always Here" and "So Much Good Feeling" from *Conversation with the Blues*. Hand out copy of transcript; lyrics are hard to understand. Read narrative aloud after listening to each track. Comprehension question: According to Boogie Woogie Red, why is there "good feeling" in the blues?

4) Listening/comprehension exercise—Robert Curtis Smith: "It's Me As I Is" and Edwin Buster Pickens: "To Have the Blues Within" from *Conversation with the Blues*. Discussion question: Do these men sing the blues for the same reason you feel blue?

5) Listening exercise—Bessie Smith: "St. Louis Blues." Explain "blue note" and show example ("evenin' sun go down"). Discussion question: In this particular song, why does Bessie Smith sing the blues? Examine expressions and figurative language: "pulls that man 'round by her apron strings," "make a freight train jump the track," and "makes a preacher ball the jack."

6) Listening exercise (great for a Monday morning!)—T-Bone Walker: "Call It Stormy Monday, But Tuesday Is Just as Bad." Writing assignment: When was the last time you had the blues? This assignment does not necessarily have to be done in any particular type of structure; it can be in the form of a poem, short story, or essay.

## NEWS FROM THE A.L.R.I.

### Videos for Black History Month

The A.L.R.I. library has a large number of videos relating to African-American history and culture that would be appropriate for adult basic education classes, during Black History Month or at any time. Here's a list:

#### • History—

*400 Years: Black History in America*

*Half Slave, Half Free* (two videos dealing with slavery and the Civil War; 120 minutes each)

*We Fight for Freedom: The Massachusetts 54th Colored Infantry* (with book and other materials; 60 minutes)

#### • The Civil Rights Movement—

*Eyes on the Prize* (fourteen videos; 60 minutes each)

*The Road to Brown* (the legal roots of the Civil Rights Movement; 47 minutes)

#### • Literature and Writers—

*Dorothy West: As I Remember It* (56 minutes)

*Toni Morrison: Profile of a Writer* (52 minutes)

*Visions of the Spirit: A Portrait of Alice Walker* (58 minutes)

#### • Art and Artists—

*African American Artists Affirmation Today* (with study guide, book, and slides; 29 minutes)

*Against the Odds: The Artists of the Harlem Renaissance* (60 minutes)

*Faith Ringgold Paints Crown Heights* (28 minutes)

#### • Media Images and Racism—

*Color Adjustment* (race relations in the U.S. as seen through TV; 87 minutes)

*Ethnic Notions* (racial stereotypes in the media; 56 minutes)

#### • Other—

*Black Olympians 1904-1984: Athletes and Social Change in America* (28 minutes)

*Hair Piece* (animated satire on the issue of self-image; 10 minutes)

—Steve Reuys

### Bad Weather Activity Cancellation Policy

Please remember that the building in which we are located operates on a Roxbury Community College schedule. In the event of bad weather, the A.L.R.I. will be closed and activities scheduled to take place here will be cancelled if RCC cancels classes. To find out if an A.L.R.I. activity will be taking place on a bad weather day, you can: listen to the school closings in the morning to see if RCC has cancelled classes for the day, and/or call us at 617-782-8956 to see if there is a recorded message indicating that we are closed for the day. If bad weather develops during the day, RCC may close early, in which case A.L.R.I. activities would be cancelled or would end early, so please call ahead to check on whether an activity will be taking place as scheduled. Any A.L.R.I.-sponsored activities scheduled to take place at another location will be cancelled if that site closes due to the weather.

## Building on Cultural Strengths

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of what “participation” in a child’s education means: attending PTA meetings, helping children with homework, reading to children, speaking to children in English, and the like.

These activities are important components of the support that parents provide to children. However, when “family literacy” means “training” parents to fit into a pre-defined paradigm, the real contributions of language-minority and working-class parents, as well as those from communities of color, are usually undervalued. Traditional family literacy models often overlook and even invalidate the myriad ways in which parents of diverse cultural backgrounds support their children to be successful. Many of these types of support fall outside the traditional paradigm; the erroneous conclusion is that “those parents don’t value education.” One concrete example is the low-literacy monolingual Vietnamese mother who tells folk tales and family stories to her child every day. Her inability to read to her child in English is sometimes viewed as a deficit to be remedied. A narrow view of family literacy discounts the fact that this mother is supporting her child’s education by teaching him a love of language, an understanding of narrative structure, and a sense of belonging to a larger world.

In professional development workshops with administrators and teachers, I often ask participants, “Describe what your own parents did to promote your success in life.” Nearly 100% of the time, what teachers and administrators describe are activities that foster the values all good parents aspire to: unconditional love, support, encouragement, laughter, discipline. Rarely are traditional “literacy activities” high on their lists of the most important things their parents did to encourage their success. After examining and reflecting on their lists, the teachers and administrators usually recognize that being a child’s first and most important teacher involves a great deal more than homework help, PTA attendance, and school-oriented activities.

As professional development specialists, teachers, administrators, and counselors, we need to pull back from our frequently biased perspectives on what family literacy and participation in a child’s education mean. Only then can we use a constructivist approach—in true adult education fashion—to build on families’ strengths.

What does this mean in practice? In contrast to the deficit-oriented perspective of the traditional family literacy model, educators must actively validate and build on the values and practices of the families we serve. We must learn what these communities value and what kinds of concrete practices they use to support children’s success. We must learn *from the families* exactly what their vision of success for their children entails. For example, in many Spanish-speaking traditions, *educación* is not a direct translation of *education* in the academic sense, as the word is usually defined in the United States. *Educación* means more precisely a holistic development encompassing upbringing, values, and behav-

ior, as well as academics. If someone does not properly greet another or show respect, that person is referred to as *mal educado*, or poorly educated. A well-read academic may be *mal educado* simply by virtue of his behavior.

Once we learn from the communities we serve what they value in rearing children, we must use those values as a foundation for building a multicultural model of family literacy. Thus, an educator might begin a family literacy discussion group by asking parents what is important to their child’s success. In many communities, parents would respond that one important aspect of being a whole person is knowing who you are and who your people are—having a connection to your culture, your traditions, your family. The facilitator would then lead the group in activities such as constructing family trees, reading and telling family stories, making books and photo collections, and identifying the members of the family in those pictures. The group might also research and collect traditional sayings, learn their counterparts in other cultures, and discuss their significance. In the process, the group will be talking, writing, and reading about the role of language in a child’s education.

Finally, building a multicultural, constructivist model of family literacy means that we will never again say, “Those parents simply don’t value education.” The phrase, when used to refer to whole ethnic groups or whole communities, means that we do not know what values exist in those communities; we only know that they are different from our values. Those of us who want to promote an educational model that respects diversity and incorporates it as a strength should continue to challenge assumptions that ignore the important values, talents, and skills of the populations we serve. From that starting point, we can promote families and strengthen communities in the best way possible—by building on the foundations that already exist.

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*Marguerite Lukes is Director of the New York City Professional Development Consortium.*



## A PRIMER ON ADVOCACY

*[At the recent Network '00 statewide conference, the Public Policy Committee of the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE) distributed a variety of materials aimed at educating practitioners about their role as advocates for the field. The following are excerpts from some of these materials (plus a final note from the A.L.R.I.). We hope you find this information useful and that every one of our readers becomes an active advocate for the needs of our students and our field. If you have questions regarding advocacy or would like more information, please contact MCAE at 413-774-6455—Ed.]*

### From "Advocacy Without Fear of the IRS":

Perhaps the single most important point to remember is that tens of thousands of nonprofit organizations across the country do advocacy work at some level every year, and the IRS doesn't give them a second look. There are a few absolutes requiring total obedience, but anyone who keeps those in mind can be a successful literacy advocate.

*Lobbying* means influencing the outcome of legislation. 501(c)(3) organizations may lobby. ...*Political activity* or *electioneering* means trying to influence the outcome of an election, on behalf of or against a candidate. 501(c)(3) groups are forbidden any participation in political activity or electioneering.

...It is perfectly fine for a 501(c)(3) [and its employees] to: research issues pertaining to its mission and publicly disseminate its findings in position papers; invite public officials to speak to classes, school assemblies, new citizenship celebrations, graduation ceremonies and other festivities or academic activities; take students on field trips to city council meetings or to the state legislature to see government in action; support the passage of specific bills and budget line items; work with members of executive departments to create reasonable rules and regulations; encourage citizens to vote their consciences. ...501(c)(3) groups are [however] forbidden from spending a "significant" portion of their time and resources on legislative lobbying.

### From "Tips for Communicating with Legislators":

1. *Be brief.* Each Massachusetts representative has about 40,000 constituents; each senator, about 160,000. If you do the math, you'll see how little time they can, in conscience, devote to any one person. Don't be surprised or offended if you talk with a staff member rather than your legislator when you call. Often a staff member has more in-depth knowledge of a field than the legislator, who is expected to know a little about anything that might be of concern to constituents.

2. *Be specific.* Use the bill number(s) and budget line item(s) provided by the Public Policy Committee when you write or call your legislator. The General Court considers thousands of bills each year, and one bill can be reassigned a new number as it works its way through committee.

3. *Be honest.* It's fine to speak from the heart and to

provide a pertinent anecdote from your own experience, but don't, for example, succumb to the temptation of saying, "I have a student who..." followed by a composite portrait of several students. Statistics from the MCAE fact sheet and NIFL fact sheet are safe to cite, but beware quoting numbers from studies whose methodology you can't vouch for.

4. *Get to know your legislators' contact preferences.* Five years ago it was a truism among advocates that legislators ignore e-mail and form letters, pay some attention to phone calls and serious attention to individual letters and face-to-face meetings. It's no longer safe to make such broad generalizations. It's wise to study your legislators' background information on the state website. Their college major, former occupation, committee assignments and other resumé details can give valuable clues how to make your argument in ways that will resonate.

5. *Be polite.* Few writers can convey anger with eloquence; most of us come off sounding rambling and irrational. It's far more productive to take a positive, hopeful tone. Proper salutations are "Dear Representative <Last name>:", "Dear Senator <Last name>:", "Dear President Birmingham:" or "Dear Speaker Finneran:." Proper closings include "Sincerely," "Yours truly," and "Respectfully."

6. *Don't be overly familiar.* Naturally, if you do know the legislator personally, you can safely close a letter by sending regards to the family. But don't assume the legislator will remember you from a chance meeting months ago or appeal to them as a fellow alumnus of your college if you didn't know them during their student years.

7. *Don't threaten not to vote for them if they don't support your cause.* It's bad form at any time, and downright stupid in a state where most incumbents run for re-election unchallenged.

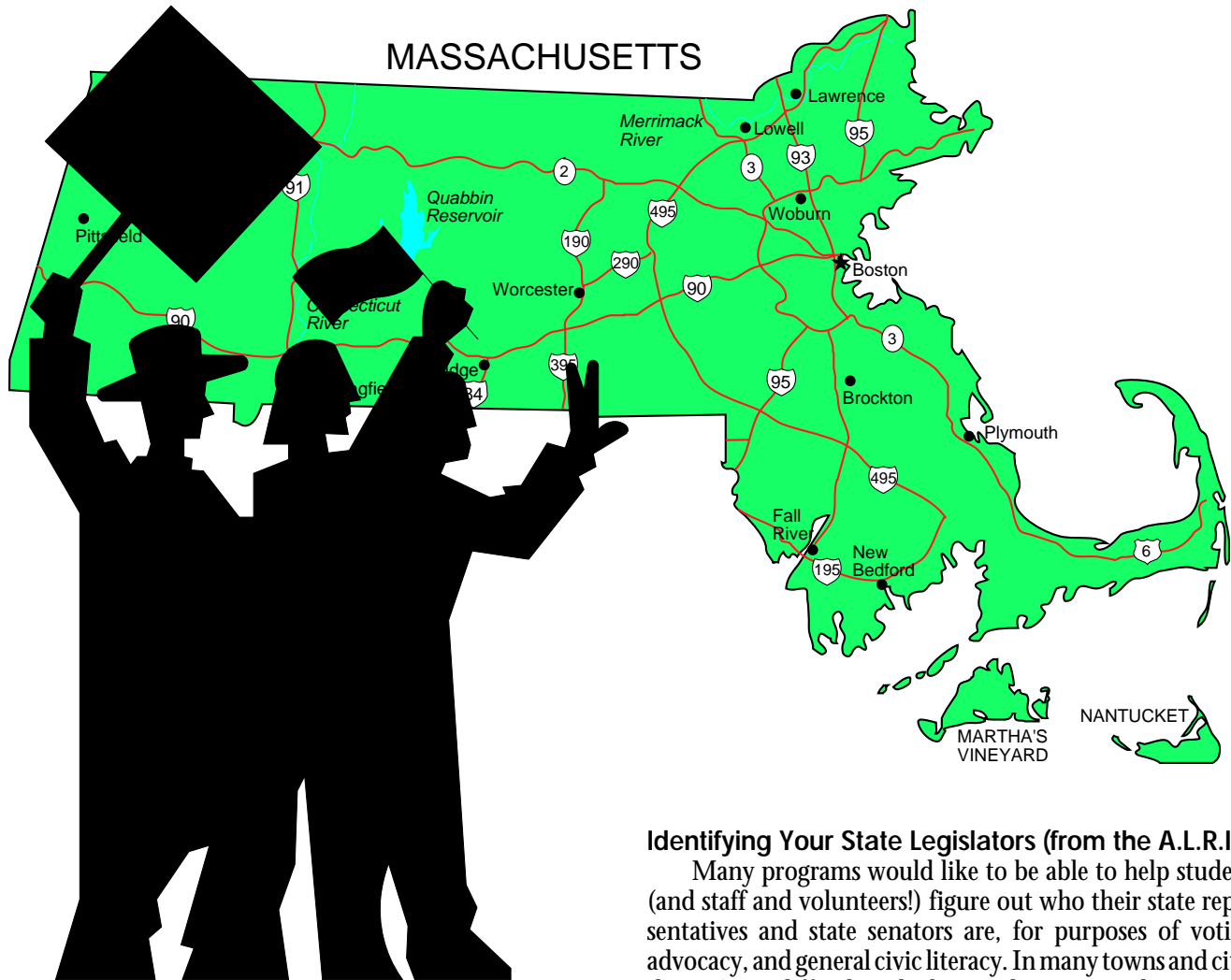
8. *Normally, write your own legislators.* "Spamming" is never effective. If you do not live in the same legislative district as the one in which your school is located, you can do double duty. Write the senator or rep whose names appeared on your ballot from your home address, and note in your letter that you are a constituent; then write the legislators who represent your program using your school's letterhead. If you have any doubts about what you can and cannot say in a letter written on a non-profit organization's letterhead, review the article "Advocacy Without Fear of the IRS."

9. *If you recently heard your legislator speak in public and liked what you heard, by all means mention that, even if the topic wasn't adult education.* Legislators are no different from our students; they blossom with praise.

10. *Proofread your letter and/or get a trusted colleague to review it before mailing.* Even if you cut and paste suggested wording from a Public Policy Committee e-mail message, typos do creep in, and if left uncaught are an embarrassment—especially for teachers.

11. *Report all contacts with legislators, especially positive ones, to MCAE's Executive Director, Charlie Houghton, at 413-774-6455 or <mcae@shaysnet.com>.*

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## A Primer on Advocacy

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### From "The Meet and Greet Campaign":

Call your representatives and senators and their staff or send a letter inviting them to visit your program. ...Invite them to visit a class, volunteer training or other activity to spend some time speaking informally with your staff, students and volunteers. (Encourage student participation in all activities your program plans during the Meet and Greet Campaign and in the future.) When they visit, explain about the work your program does and the people you serve. Have a fact sheet, brochure or any other printed material handy to give to your representative or senator and his/her staff when they leave. After they leave, write them a letter to thank them for their support and the time they spent visiting with you. You can also ask your representative or senator to speak at your program's graduation or recognition ceremonies in the future. (If they do, you may want to present them with an award in recognition of his/her support.)

### Identifying Your State Legislators (from the A.L.R.I.):

Many programs would like to be able to help students (and staff and volunteers!) figure out who their state representatives and state senators are, for purposes of voting, advocacy, and general civic literacy. In many towns and cities this isn't too difficult to do, but in a large city such as Boston, which is represented at the State House by seven different senators and seventeen different representatives, it can be hard to figure out just who someone's state senator or representative actually is. First of all, regardless of where you live, the best way to begin is to go to the website for the Massachusetts state legislature at [www.state.ma.us/legis/citytown.htm](http://www.state.ma.us/legis/citytown.htm) and scroll down to your particular city or town to find out who your state senator(s) and state representative(s) are. For many cities and towns, this is further broken down by ward and precinct, so you will need to know in what ward and precinct an individual's home or your program is located. To solve this problem, programs in Boston are urged to get a copy of the latest *Boston's Streets* directory, which lists all addresses in the city of Boston and indicates in what ward and precinct a particular address is located. A copy can be obtained by sending a request for this booklet to the Boston City Council, 1 City Hall Square, Boston MA 02201, enclosing a check for \$10 made out to the City of Boston. Or you may be able to obtain a free copy from your district City Councillor. If you have any questions about figuring out who your state reps and senators are, feel free to call Steve Reuys at the A.L.R.I., 782-8956, x14.

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# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## WGBH ABE/GED Courses

The WGBH Diploma Connection offers televised programs for adult learners to gain basic skills and to prepare for the GED test. These programs can be used for independent study or as part of a classroom-based course. Several programs, all shown on Channel 44, will be starting up in the new year. They include:

- *Connect with English*—Learn English while watching this dramatic series about a Boston woman who leaves her job, boyfriend, and family to pursue her dream in San Francisco. The programs can be used to learn English on four levels: low beginning, high beginning, low intermediate, and high intermediate. Accompanying workbooks can be ordered by calling 1-800-LEARNER. Two half-hour programs weekly for 13 weeks, Feb. 6 to May 1, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:00-7:30am.

- *TV411*—A new series that combines situation comedy, documentary, sports, entertainment and talk show formats with an instructional focus designed to enhance reading, writing and math skills for adults at the pre-GED level. To order books call 1-800-304-1922. One half-hour

program weekly for 20 weeks, Feb. 5 to June 18, Mondays, 7:30-8:00am.

- *Math Basics*—These programs show how adults use math in real life, at home and on the job. Students can improve their basic math skills on a pre-GED level. To order books call 1-800-354-9067. One half-hour program weekly for 11 weeks, Feb. 8 to April 19, Thursdays, 7:30-8:00am.

- *Workplace Essential Skills*—Learn how to use basic skills in finding a job and in realistic workplace settings. The series was created for pre-GED adult learners and helps them move to GED-level work. To order books call 1-800-354-9067. One half-hour program weekly for 25 weeks, Feb. 5 to July 23, Mondays, 7:00-7:30am.

## Book Buying Options

When buying books, it's best to support locally-owned stores whenever possible, but the reality is that many people are now buying books online. Given the union-busting activity at Amazon, you may want to consider the alternative presented by Powell's, the enormous unionized book store in Portland, Oregon, that is now online at <<http://www.powells.com>>, or, even better, through <<http://www.powellsunion.com>>, where ordering books through the union's website results in proceeds going to employees.

## Adult Literacy Resource Institute

989 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, MA 02215

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