

Adult  
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all write news

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University of Massachusetts/Boston.  
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the Boston BRA/EDIC/Office of  
Jobs and Community Services.

## DISCUSSION CONTINUES ON NEW ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS

*[As a follow-up to some of the issues, questions, and concerns posed in our last newsletter's article on the new accountability measures required by the NRS (National Reporting System) under the auspices of the WIA (the new federal Workforce Investment Act, which includes Adult Basic Education), we are including the following pertinent comments taken from recent discussion on the NLA (National Literacy Advocacy) List. I selected these comments from a much longer compilation prepared by David Rosen, the moderator of the NLA list, of comments made in response to a question he posed on the value of standards in education. —Steve Reuys]*



*Bob Bickerton, Massachusetts State Director of Adult Education:*

I'd like to check in with some very basic questions:

1. If WIA and the NRS are too narrow, shouldn't we be pushing for a more complete vision of what our work is about at the state level? WIA provides states with the flexibility to do this. Then the NRS could simply become a sub-set of what's looked at from the

broader perspective of each state, i.e., nothing more than a report, unfortunately incomplete, but without the power to narrow the important breadth of our work.

2. If quantitative measures alone are inadequate to describe the work of our field and our students, shouldn't we be working to find consensus across our field to articulate the qualitative dimensions? WIA provides states with the flexibility to do this. I imagine the most difficult part of this dialogue will be reaching consensus across diverse constituencies, particularly when it comes to who may be able to make judgements about what's credible and

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## WRITE FOR THE NEWSLETTER!

The *All Write News* is published by the A.L.R.I., but it is meant to be your newsletter. Its purpose is to present news and information dealing with adult literacy/adult basic education and to provide an open forum for materials written by and for adult literacy/adult basic education practitioners in this area. We encourage people to send us: • articles that share practitioners' thoughts, experiences, and concerns; that reflect various approaches to adult basic education; that present ideas about teaching; or that explore important issues facing the field; • reviews of books, instructional materials, curricula, websites, software, audio-visual materials, etc.; • information on resources (financial or otherwise) available to programs; • responses to previously-published articles; • material in other, non-prose formats (such as poetry, cartoons, etc.). Articles should usually be not more than five or six double-spaced pages in length, though there have been exceptions to this. For more information, see our Editorial Policy (page 6).

Please send all material to me at the A.L.R.I., 989 Commonwealth Ave., Boston MA 02215, and, if possible, please include a computer disk (Mac or PC) with your material saved as a "text-only" document. Or you can e-mail it to me at: <steve@alri.org>. The deadline for submitting material for an upcoming issue is usually about one month after your receipt of the previous issue. Please call me at 782-8956 x14 to ask questions, discuss an idea, or get further encouragement. Thanks.

—Steve Reuys

Sept./Oct. 2000

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

## New Accountability Requirements

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reliable. But it seems to me it's well worth the effort.

3. If large cross-sections of students can articulate important aspects of what they want to know and be able to do, shouldn't we be working across our field and in partnership with our students to capture this? And if these turn into a rich, but necessarily incomplete set of learning/content standards, shouldn't we at least honor this achievement? Whether it's EFF or other similar efforts to surface such skills and abilities sought after by students, shouldn't we find a way to agree to make such "learning/content standards" a part of the foundation of our work (including articulating this foundation with valid and reliable assessment processes)—always acknowledging that this is a sub-set of this universe and that we all need to continue to listen/hear and respond with an even richer set of teaching and learning experiences? I'm concerned that so much energy continues to go into finding fault with everyone else's proposals that we're not making as much progress as our students need and deserve from us—to make our work truly accountable to them! So my final question:

4. Are we afraid of any form of accountability with consequences, including to those we profess to serve?



*Regie Stites, from the Center for Education and Human Services at SRI International:*

I think the questions that Bob posed (or are they suggestions?) point us in the right direction toward working out answers to concerns about standards, accountability, and assessment systems. What these questions/suggestions imply is

serious work on developing performance assessments. In an earlier post George Demetron referred to the creation of "rubrics" as a (poorly defined) step toward making qualitative standards (like EFF—Equipped for the Future) count as primary quantitative measures for the NRS. Development of performance assessments (whether as guides for instruction or for accountability measures) does involve creation of rubrics—and much else. Rubrics are central because they are the mechanism for translating detailed qualitative descriptions of performance goals into quantitative measures of levels of performance. At this point, the qualitative/quantitative distinction begins to break down. To make this more concrete, a rubric is needed whenever we want to judge performance that is more complicated than a set of correct/incorrect responses to test questions. Teachers and students commonly develop and use rubrics to evaluate the quality of writing, oral presentations, project work, etc. If tasks are well-structured and the criteria for judging performance (rubrics) are clear to learner and teacher then assessment gets

folded seamlessly into instruction. This is what I mean by performance assessment and I believe that it can be made to work for accountability (probably first at the state level as Bob suggests) as well as for instructional purposes.



*Kathleen Bombach, from El Paso Community College:*

I have several concerns. One is that something like NRS standards (really outcomes) have been tried before, under JTPA. The result was that the population was creamed in order to meet the mandated outcomes. The expensive apparatus and process that developed around meeting these outcomes grew immensely in order to weed out anyone who might not, because of skill levels, English speaking ability, race and ethnicity, gender, or personal/motivational factors, succeed in earning a GED or getting a job. Less and less money actually flowed into direct instruction and services for the participants who made it through the maze.

The other side of this creaming was that low income people who could have striven for more were diverted into the JTPA system because they could provide quick positive results. I remember a program we did under JTPA. A number of the participants decided they wanted to go to college and got through the acceptance process, only to be told by their agency counselor that they were not allowed—they had to go back for job placement or job training in one of the infamous 13-week programs. (In one national study, 13 weeks was the average amount of time for JTPA vocational training programs.)

Since I did JTPA between 1983 and 1995, I observed every trick in the book to make sure only "winners" were served. In the beginning I bought into it and participated unquestioningly. After a year I began to question and try to make changes to address what I thought were the real needs of poor people, having been one most of my life until that point. It didn't work—the necessity to meet outcomes was too strong even when co-workers were sympathetic. If the person was not going to result in a success in a relatively short period of time, they were diverted into someone else's program—often the adult literacy programs. Of course, no money for the learner went with the referral.

The second concern I have gets at the difference between outcome measurements vs. accreditation requirements. In an accreditation process, one looks at the inputs, the activities, and the outcomes. In a system where the only things that matter are the outcomes, any way you can get those outcomes becomes paramount, including not providing services but pretending that you did.

We have tried the outcomes based approach before and it failed to serve most of the people who tried to enter the

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## New Accountability Requirements

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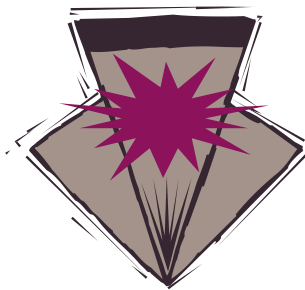
system it spawned. Now we are stuck with it again because it is politically appealing and sounds so good! EFF is one way to keep the focus on the learner, not the outcome, and to look at multiple aspects of providing a quality program defined as meeting the needs of learners, not the state or the private sector. If we can unify behind an approach that may not be perfect to all, but has substance and some earned momentum, as well as reflecting a lot of work over a period of years by a lot of knowledgeable people, we may have a long term chance of changing the dynamic from one of feeding the machine with workers to a balance of home and family, citizenship, and work. And aesthetics, spirituality, and whatever else matters to individuals. If we cannot push a broader agenda because we cannot agree on the nature of our utopia, we will be stuck with recycling the same inadequate system under a different name for the next hundred years. However, we must continue our internal debates over the nature of perfection.



*Gloria Gillette, Director of the NE ABLE Resource Center, in Ohio:*

The NRS has done three very important things for our state. It has forced us to analyze: Who do we serve? How do we serve them? How do we measure our effectiveness? There has been a lot of flotsam and jetsam, but in the end I think it has been a very good process of self reflection. And I think in the end,

we have developed a system that both embraces our goals and maintains the reality of the system in which we work, while respecting the integrity of the students we serve.



*Tom Sticht, researcher and consultant in literacy and adult basic education:*

Recently Bob Bickerton addressed some questions to several NLA list participants, including me. Here are my responses to Bob's questions and comments.

Reply to Bob's Question #1: It did not take WIA or the NRS to provide states with the flexibility of "pushing for a more complete vision of what our work is about at the state level." States have always had that flexibility and presumably have operated by some sort of vision over the last thirty years. In realizing their various visions different states have made different uses of different standardized tests. I understand that in New York, state-funded programs have had to use the TABE to measure growth in learning; in California, Oregon, Washington, Connecticut, and other states visions have

been put into practice using the CASAS tests to assess gains in learning; other states have included in the realization of their "visions." So as I understand it, then, the only thing new now is that the NRS is systematizing the gathering of data using standardized reporting forms and extending the need to provide learning outcome data in some systematic way. Also, as I understand it, the NRS has the blessing of the Council of State Directors of Adult Education. It is, as you say, merely an accounting system for keeping track of outcomes. It in no way narrows all the other types of information of which states may wish to keep track. But I think that the idea that funding may somehow be tied to the outcome data is a new thing under the WIA. At the state directors level that may not be a problem because the data are aggregated across local programs and the state is accountable only for the aggregated data. It is highly unlikely that any state personnel will lose their jobs because of failures to show learning outcomes in line with their approved five year plans. But folks in a given local program may be a little bit nervous if they can't meet state goals. Some have told me that they worry that their jobs may be on the line.

Reply to Bob's Question #2: States have always had the flexibility to articulate "qualitative dimensions" of the work of our field and our students. WIA does not prohibit such descriptions, either. It just does not include them in the core indicators of learning. Instead the NRS discusses implementing the WIA requirements for data on learning outcomes by suggesting a number of standardized tests with standards for indicating achievement at each of the six levels

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The *All Write News* is published every two months by the Adult Literacy Resource Institute/SABES Greater Boston Regional Support Center, which is primarily funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education, the Boston BRA/EDIC/Jobs and Community Services Department, and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. All signed articles represent the opinions of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the A.L.R.I. or its staff, nor does material included here necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Massachusetts Department of Education or the federal government.

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.

## New Accountability Requirements

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of ABE and ESOL. The NRS also permits other sorts of standardized, quantitative indicators of learning such as performance assessments that indicate learning at each of the six levels of ABE or ESOL. Portfolios can be used, too, but there must be some way of providing scores ranging from at least one to six so that progress up through the six levels of learning can be indicated. This may be done using various scoring guides, that is, rubrics, that permit the assignment of ranks to performance indicators. Whether or not most states will opt to use the more time consuming methodology of performance/portfolio assessment over standardized tests is unknown by me. But at the present time I think most states have opted for traditional standardized tests. I have not found any that propose to use the TALS, the commercial version of the NALS, perhaps because it is too time consuming. (It uses performance tasks and hand scoring of various responses using rubrics for scoring.) Apparently, ease of administration and scoring is a matter of some concern to programs. So maybe the search for qualitative dimensions (note that anything with dimensionality can be quantified!) may not be worth it to programs if they are too much trouble and too costly to use.

Reply to Bob's Question #3: From what I have heard over the years talking with many teachers and administrators almost everyone thinks that their program and their teaching reflects what adults have said they want to know and be able to do over the years. In short, they seem to think they have been capturing what their adult learners have articulated as their learning needs and desires. But when some adult learner says he or she wants to be able to pass the drivers license test, they don't mean drivers license tests in general, as some sort of general competency statement or "content standard" such as "convey ideas in writing" or "solve problems and make decisions" or "completes application forms" but rather as the specific vocabulary use, reading, writing, spelling, problem solving, and decision making they have to do to pass the specific test they have to take in their state and locale to get their drivers license. But the sorts of things they have to learn in the specific do not usually show up on the general assessment tools that are based on broader competency or learning content standards, such as the TABE, ABLE, AMES, NALS, TALS, CASAS or any other standardized tests represent. Hence, though programs may strive continuously "to listen/hear and respond with an even richer set of teaching and learning experiences" they do not always make much happen that shows up on the assessment devices that are used for accountability. In my experience, this appears to be what frustrates lots of teachers and learners about various attempts to create generally applicable content standards and the present stock of assessment tools. In going from the specific to the general, most of the actual learning seems to get stripped away.

Reply to Bob's Question #4: Most of the teachers and

administrators I have spoken with are not afraid of accountability with consequences so long as the accountability is based upon what they think they can do and are doing as adult educators. They express some concern about being held accountable for things like job placement and income earnings which they see as beyond their professional responsibilities. They express concern about the use of standardized tests like those included in the NRS guidance papers because they do not seem to relate much to what they are teaching and they think the tests do not accurately reflect what learning does take place in their programs (see above). Regarding those they serve, survey after survey has rewarded teachers and administrators with positive feedback statements from those they serve. If funding was based on the accountability reflected in the praise adult learners have for their teachers and programs, the Adult Education and Literacy System (AELS) in the United States would not be in the obscenely under funded position it is presently in.



*George Demetrian, Director of Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford, in Connecticut:*

This is an excellent and highly relevant discussion on standards. Thanks to Regie Stites for defining the term, "rubric." I think I get that now. Whether it's the GED writing test or EFF standards, various criteria are assigned a number (or to use NRS terminology, a level) that would allow a quantitative measure. Regie feels that they could be made to work at the state level for accountability as well as instruction, though Tom Sticht argues that most states in the current NRS requirements are opting for the easier to administer standardized tests. One wonders also, in light of the NRS mandate and time frame, how many states are willing and perhaps able to incorporate the more qualitative indicators of assessment that well constructed rubrics (depending on what they're linked to) might begin to capture. As Regie points out, there's much more than rubrics involved in establishing good assessment measures. And even the development of these within a state context that would involve more than the few "pilot" states that are attempting this now in response to the NRS, would be a long way off, if ever. In the meantime states have to respond to the pressing requirements of the NRS at this time and most are going to rely on standardized tests.

This brings us then to Bob Bickerton's point on the freedom and flexibility allowed by the WIA. Perhaps other state directors would like to weigh in here on that, though I wonder how freely they would be willing to speak. In any event, given the complexity of the issue—creating relevant standards that capture significant aspects of what students

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## New Accountability Requirements

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achieve through participation in adult literacy/ESOL and GED classes, in ways that are meaningful and can be applied to instruction as well as used for reporting purposes—does the WIA legislation facilitate that process or retard it? In theory it could do both, yet as Tom points out, the practical impact is that in the vast majority of states, it is only going to reinforce the pervasive tendency already to rely on standardized tests as the “primary” measure, premised, obviously, on the quantitative metaphor. State directors, I would love to be proven wrong on this.

I recently purchased a book from Peppercorn Press that addresses the issue of assessment. (This is an excellent clearinghouse of student-generated and Freirian-inspired resources located at 693 Snow Camp, NC 27359, telephone (336) 574-1634. Give them a call if you’d like to obtain a catalogue). The book, called *Language and Communication*, identifies the following principles for assessment: 1) Assessment should reflect what has actually been taught. 2) Assessment should serve instruction rather than drive it. 3) Assessment should fit in with the approach to teaching and reflect its value system. 4) Assessment should yield reliable and valid results. 5) Assessment should give learners a sense of their own progress. 6) Assessment should not be culturally or linguistically biased. 7) Assessment should allow for comparisons of learner progress within and between programs. 8) Assessment should be integrated within instruction (formative) and be incorporated at the end of learning cycles (summative). These are obviously big challenges and no one’s saying development of assessment standards based on these principles is easy. My concern is, given the current climate based on the quantitative and reductionist mandates of the NRS/WIA, these principles aren’t even on the radar screen. They may be “nice,” but don’t count in the “real world” of policy, power, and funding.

If there is a way out of this morass, I don’t know, but I’d like to briefly sketch out a possible world. First, any way out of this morass would require at least a one year moratorium on the imminent implementation of the NRS. Very difficult, to be sure, since the NRS train has well left the station. But an imminent train wreck is on the horizons. I say, “Stop! Halt! Screech! Watch Out! Put on the Brakes!” There is simply no way, given current pressures and limitations of resources, that the current ABE system can step up to the plate as both Bob and Regie are suggesting, to create the kind of complex, multi-dimension assessment system needed to come close to capturing the actual learning that is taking place in classrooms and tutoring sessions across this great land. While in principle the NRS allows for freedom and flexibility (that Tom says the states already had without the NRS), the reality is that it will only reinforce the current emphasis on quantification, standardization and a very limited legitimate view of adult literacy education. That is the reality.

Is there another model? Here’s one that would need much amplification. At the end of each funding cycle the state office would have to issue a narrative report on the programs that are funded by federal money. The report would be based on the narratives that the programs provided that then would be summarized, synthesized and analyzed by the state offices of adult education. This would be an ongoing progress report. A broad range of information would go into the report at both the local and state level and there would be no need of a “one size fits all” approach.” May 1000 flowers bloom. Obviously, certain criteria would be needed, though the plurality of the system in a given state would also be respected. (Why should a town-run ABE program be judged on the same criteria as a community-based literacy program?)

This scenario would include quantitative information, but more as support (secondary measures) that would amplify or help explain the primary story told through narrative. In this scenario, sampling—rather than focusing on quantitative information on each student—would be more pervasive. Given the narrative focus, there would be an emphasis on development such as: a) This is where we’ve been. b) This is what we attempted to achieve during this funding cycle. c) This is what we actually accomplished, including unanticipated breakthroughs and a whole host of projects and initiatives that flowed out of our work. d) These are the problems that we still have—some of which we have the capacity to improve on, some of which we don’t, given current resources. e) This is where we’d like to go for the next funding cycle. This report could be developed by a representative team from both the field and the state office with consultative support from a research institute. The information would flow back to the programs as well as upward to the federal government and would be a format to stimulate discussion, analysis, and program development as well as “data” for national accounting. I could go on here, but you get the point.

Improbable, you say. Perhaps so given the current official mentality grounded in the assumptions of standardization, quantification, and “objectivity,” behind all of which is a quest for control—control of the system, of the information, and of the lives of the students to be channeled within certain realms of behavior—get a job, get off welfare, stay out of jail, vote, read to your kids. As long as adult literacy is viewed as a subset of current social policy linked to the maintenance of the global economy, the more narrow view of the field as implied by the WIA/NRS will prevail. A broader and humane view would move in a direction perhaps in a manner like I am suggesting or in some similar manner that captures the qualitative dimensions of what our field is about.

To assume that my suggestion is “subjective” as opposed to the “objectivity” provided by a quantitative, measurable, and standardized format that drives the assumptions of the NRS is to assume that numbers accurately depict reality rather than interpret it. I do not make that assumption.

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

### Changes

Some of you with a particularly keen eye may have noticed that the masthead for the A.L.R.I. on this newsletter now reads simply, "A project of the University of Massachusetts/Boston." Roxbury Community College is no longer mentioned because, after seventeen years as one of the two sponsors of the A.L.R.I., RCC has decided it no longer wishes to function in that capacity. Last February, two days before our reapplication for funding as the SABES Greater Boston Regional Support Center was due in to the state Department of Education, we were informed by RCC that they would not be signing our refunding proposal, thus eliminating any fiscal links between us. Then, during the summer, RCC relinquished management to the Boston Public Schools of the building at 989 Commonwealth Avenue in which we and the Boston Business School Campus of RCC are located and, in negotiating with BPS to maintain its own space within the building, RCC declined to include space for the A.L.R.I. in those negotiations, thus severing this last link between us and the college.

Following the intervention of our funders—the Massachusetts Department of Education and the City of Boston BRA/EDIC/Jobs and Community Services Department—the BPS has agreed to allow us to remain in this building, at least for the time being, but with the loss of one-third of our space, including our classroom. Thus we no longer have a dedicated space for workshops, mini-courses, meetings, etc. and will need to use whatever rooms are available within this building. We hope this works. In any case, when coming to A.L.R.I.-sponsored activities taking place here, please check the activity announcement to see if a room number is listed and also watch for signs as you enter the building.

### What's New in the Library?

Hours for the library should remain the same for now (Tuesday 12-5:30, Wednesday 10-4:30, Friday 1-4:30, with other times by appointment), but please call to confirm before making the trip. The Job Book and Resumé Book can still be found in the library, and people looking for a job in adult literacy or programs that have a position to fill should mail, fax or bring in a resumé or a job posting.

The lab area of the library has added computers and we also have laptops that can be set up for additional spaces for hands-on tech workshops. New software available to preview includes Inspiration, Hyperstudio, Write Outloud, E-reader and Azar Grammar Interactive. The A.L.R.I. LAN is connected to a DSL, which gives speedy access to the internet. Read the *New York Times* education articles on Wednesday, the archives of NIFL listservs, and Dave's ESL Page, or catch up on your email.

Through the cooperation of the Department of Education and MCET Distance Learning Project, A.L.R.I. has a sample collection of *Connect with English* and *Crossroads*

*Café* videos and workbooks, which can be previewed at the library. Other new videos include *Matewan*, *Salt of the Earth*, Ralph Ellison's *King of the Bingo Game*, *A Day in the Life of the González Family*, *Viva la Causa: 500 Años de la Historia Chicana*, and *Wonders of the African World*. Preview them on our VCR and borrow them for your class.

New books in the library include: *Haitians: Their History and Culture*; *Guide to Standardized Test Preparation*; *The Light in their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* by Sonia Nieto; *Education and Race: A Journalist's Handbook*; *New Ways of Classroom Assessment* (TESOL); *How to Raise Test Scores*; and *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse.

The Whole Books Sharing Group recommended that we purchase multiple copies of some books for classroom use. Poetry and young adult novels are included in these sets of four to twelve copies, and some sets include classroom activities: • Marjorie Agosín, *Melodious Women* (a tribute in poetry to women in history and the female experience); • Sandra Cisneros, *La Casa en Mango Street*; • Nicholasa Mohr, *El Bronx Remembered* (Puerto Rican migrants in the '40s and '50s); • Katherine Paterson, *Lyddie* (a mill girl learns to read working in Lowell in the 1840's); • Hattie Gossett, *Presenting...Sister NoBlues*; • Rosa Guy, *The Friends*; • Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*; • Shakespeare, *The Tempest*; • Patricia Wild, *Swimming in It* (the setting of this novel is a Somerville women's shelter); • Jacqueline Woodson, *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This*.

This summer has brought many new people to the library, and when they register I always ask how they heard about the A.L.R.I. The most common answer is that they were told about it by a fellow teacher, their financial advisor, the local librarian, a friend of a friend. The A.L.R.I. has a web site along with regular mailings and we go to conferences, but word of mouth still seems to be the most common way that new literacy practitioners find their way to the A.L.R.I. Library. We appreciate the business and your PR help.

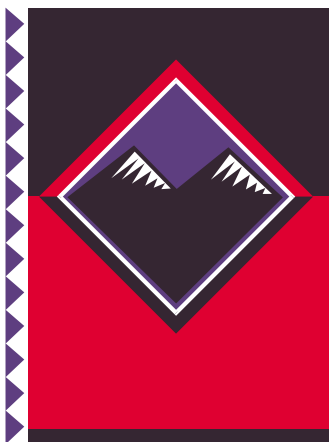
—Sandra Darling

### Newsletter Editorial Policy

The goal of the *All Write News* is to present news and information dealing with adult literacy/adult basic education (which here includes ABE, ESOL, GED, and EDP/ADP) and to provide an open forum for articles and other materials that are written by and for adult basic education practitioners in the greater Boston area. Our policy is generally to print all material received from the field that is related to adult literacy/adult basic education, so long as it is of reasonable length (usually not more than five or six double-spaced pages, though there have been exceptions to this). We reserve the right to reject articles which advocate racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, or anti-semitism or which are libelous or consist essentially of personal attacks on individuals. All signed articles represent the opinions of the individual authors and are not intended to reflect the views or policies of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute or its sponsoring institutions or funders.

# SABES GREATER BOSTON REGION PROGRAM-BASED STAFF & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

## Program-Tailored Activities



Is there a topic on which you'd like to see a staff/program development workshop or series of workshops happen on-site at your program? As we have done for the past several years, the A.L.R.I. will later this month be sending out to program coordinators at all DOE-funded

programs in the SABES Greater Boston region (that is, Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, Watertown, Brookline, and Belmont) information on how program staff can request these sorts of "program-tailored activities." (This year, we're also including a "menu" of some particular activities you might consider asking for.) Requests for these activities cannot come from individuals; they must come from programs and reflect the interests and priorities of program staff as a whole. So, if you have an idea for something you'd like to see your program request, or if you'd like more information about this, talk to your program coordinator and ask to see the material on "program-tailored activities" when it arrives.

## Mini-Grants



Has an idea ever occurred to you for a staff or program development project that you thought would be useful and interesting to work on, but you didn't know what to do about it? Maybe you should think about applying for a staff / program develop-

ment mini-grant. This year the A.L.R.I./SABES Greater Boston Regional Support Center will be awarding mini-grants of **up to \$2,000** to staff at adult basic education programs in our region (again, that's Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, Watertown, Brookline, and Belmont) to enable them to carry out staff and program development projects. (Staff at both DOE-funded and non-DOE-funded programs are eligible.) If you're interested, ask your program coordinator to be sure to show you the mini-grant information and application form when it arrives at your program later this month, or call the A.L.R.I. to ask for a copy.

## A Reminder About Staff Development

New teachers (and others) at programs funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education may not be aware that your program's funding includes money to pay for your staff development time. Each full-time staff person is expected to participate in 50 hours of staff development each year, while the figure for part-time staff is pro-rated based on the number of hours you work. You're encouraged to talk with your program coordinator if you have any questions about this.

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# FOR YOUR INFORMATION

## Governor Axes Funding Increase

The increase in funding for adult basic education programs that we had hoped and worked for this year fell victim to a cost-cutting governor and a tardy legislature. The FY2001 budget process began months ago with the House recommending a \$5 million increase in funding for the ABE line item and the Senate essentially recommending level funding. When an overall FY '01 budget finally emerged from the legislative conference committee this summer, the ABE line item called for an increase of almost \$4 million. However, this budget was produced so late that it allowed Governor Cellucci to issue his vetoes—including a veto of the entire recommended increase in ABE funding—on the last day of the legislative session. The field thus had no real opportunity to mount a campaign to urge the legislature to override this veto, and indeed this was one of the many vetoes the legislature did not act to override before the end of its session at midnight of July 31.

## Laubach To Award Book Grants

Laubach Literacy is seeking grant applications for this year's National Book Scholarship Fund, which distributes books and other educational materials to qualified adult literacy and education programs nationwide. NBSF grants are designed to help local educational groups expand their work or to begin new programs among under-served populations. First priority is given to family literacy programs that work to improve the literacy skills of parents and their children. Grants are also awarded to programs that work with special groups, such as the homeless, refugees, ESOL students, and adults with learning disabilities. Last year, the NBSF gave \$225,625 worth of in-kind grants to 96 programs. For more information or to apply for an NBSF grant, contact Mara Roberts at the National Book Scholarship Fund, Laubach Literacy, P.O. Box 131, 1320 Jamesville Ave., Syracuse, NY 13210; phone 315-422-9121; e-mail <mroberts@laubach.org>. Information and applications are also available on-line at <<http://www.laubach.org/NBSF/indexnbs.html>>. Applications will be accepted until December 7, 2000.

## Adult Literacy Resource Institute

989 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, MA 02215

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