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Editorial

As the rhythms of another new year in education begin, it is a real pleasure to receive the first copy of *Fine Print* for the year. As usual, this edition is stimulating and thought provoking, exploring literacy in and beyond the classroom. Collaborations with learners are clearly at the centre of these articles, as well as practical ideas for teaching right here, right now.

In the feature article 'The Pink Room', Helena Spyrou celebrates a government initiative that has encouraged residents in a Victorian public housing estate to express themselves, their concerns about changes to their neighbourhood and their strong connection to community. They do this with texts that are both written and visual. Through Spyrou's writing, and the writing and images of the participants themselves, the reader also comes to appreciate that in the Pink Room 'stories unfold memories, dreams and hope'. Like the Pink Room itself, the stories glow as they make their mark recording the personal, breaking down stereotypes, building hope. For Helena it is a collaborative project: 'as I write, my task is to facilitate a process by which the people can find their voice as individuals and as a part of the community, and they help me in turn find my voice'. The voices are very clear in the writing of both Helena and the participants, and in the wonderful images by photographer Angela Bailey.

Sue Wallis and Luzma Sanchez take us into a very different context with 'No-one is an empty vessel: ESL and aged care'. Their context is a collaboration between the ESL faculty and the Health and Community Services faculty at NMIT, that allows for ESL students to complete a Certificate III in Aged Care concurrently so that they will be qualified to work in culturally and linguistically diverse aged care facilities. There are similar threads to Helena Spyrou's narrative, as this program is also about creative collaboration. It is also about allowing students to find a niche and a way of expressing themselves, about putting students' needs at the centre of innovative thinking. This program allows ESL students to match their enthusiasm, commitment and nurturing skills to increased language skills and a formal qualification as a sure step to employment. Sue and Luzma do not shy away from presenting the challenges they and the program have faced, just as they are very clear about the learnings and the success of the program—and their

success rate is very impressive! This success was summed up by a student thus: 'The most important thing I learnt in this course was communication skills, being more confident. I also learnt written English to be professional at work. Now, I have skills for the job and also new knowledge'. There are benefits for students and benefits also for aged care facilities and their residents.

In Practical Matters, Kerrin Prior with 'Integrating new literacies into classroom practice' reports on an action research project at Upper Yarra Community House. The project, which is firmly grounded in a broadly conceived sociocultural view of literacy, challenges the dominant discourses of traditional literacies, focuses on students' own home and out-of-school literacies, and examines ways in which these different literacies can often sit uncomfortably together. The report is well theorised, using Luke and Freebody's four resources model and the work of the New London Group on multiliteracies as a springboard for work with young learners around technological literacies. Critical thinking around these new literacies is foregrounded, as is the notion of collaborative learning. One learner says 'we like the SMS activities because it was fun, we got to use stuff we know about, we got to know the teachers better, we got to teach the teachers, our teachers got to see what we do'. Readers of these pages can look forward to hearing more detail of the website and the teacher resources when the project is finished. Also in Practical Matters, Philippa McLean outlines the context for making available specific qualifications for adult language, literacy and numeracy. She gives details of the Advanced Diploma of Language Literacy and Numeracy Practice in VET, how it came about and what its structure is. The CAE will be running the course this year and Philippa can be contacted for further details.

In Technology Matters, Jenny McDonald gives an outline of the St Mary's project which allowed nine adults from St Mary's House of Welcome to attend CAE for three months to work on a digital story project. This project is another example of innovative collaboration that places the students' needs at the centre of the process. The project helped participants break down their negative views of themselves as learners and highlighted the transformative power of the story. It is a powerful example of the Freirean notion of 'reading the world'. Jenny gives a web address so we can gain more information about this inspiring project.

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The Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC) aims to lead the adult literacy field through identifying issues of importance to practitioners and facilitating positive change. This is achieved through networking, professional support, the sharing of information and the promotion of best practice.

The Pink Room

by Helena Spyrou (with photographs by Angela Bailey)

In the early 1960s, many people thought a sense of neighbourhood and community would never develop in the new public housing projects that replaced grim inner city slums. Almost 50 years later, residents of the partially-demolished Carlton Public Housing Estate use stories and photographs to tell stories of life on the estate and explore their impressions of relocation. Writer Helena Spyrou and photographer Angela Bailey based themselves in a living room that a former resident had painted luminescent pink. The Pink Room came to symbolise the community's rebirth.

Media sound bites conjure up distorted and stereotypical images about people who live in public housing estates. The Flats Arts Project aims to redress this by placing public housing tenants at the centre to acknowledge their voices and their rich and complex history. Given the diverse mix of people living in a public housing estate, the task of the artist is a sensitive one. Such a task respects the differing ways people communicate—their public and private personae, their words and their silences, their interests, passions and connections to each other and their environment.

The Flats Arts Project—initiated and managed by the City of Melbourne's Community Cultural Development Program and supported by the Office of Housing—engaged two artists, Angela Bailey (a photographer) and myself (a writer) in a long-term arts project spanning four to six years. Through The Flats, the City of Melbourne acknowledges and celebrates the cultural contribution made by the communities living on the Carlton public housing estate.

In mid-2006 we began to work with tenants who were being relocated from the four-storey walk-up flats at the Carlton Estate at two sites in Rathdowne and Elgin Streets. These 192 walk-up flats, built in the 1960s, will be demolished and replaced by 246 public housing flats and 550 privately owned flats. This public-private mix causes much concern to many on the estate as much needed public housing land is being sold off. Most tenants love living in Carlton and are relying on the Office of Housing's assurance that they can return once the new flats have been built. Some have spent nearly 40 years of their life in their walk-up flat and have shared entire lives with their neighbours. The Pink Room is the first public exhibition of The Flats Arts Project. Through stories and photographs, The Pink Room explores tenants' impressions of relocation and is a tribute to tenants' lives on the Estate. See Image 1: walkups in Rathdowne St.

Live the dream

Being based in one of the vacant walk-up flats gave us a presence on the estate, and this helped us facilitate a process to build trust and draw out memory, understanding, experience and opinion, so tenants could tell their stories and develop their own way of expressing the impact of relocation and the proposed redevelopment upon their lives.



Image 1: Walkups in Rathdowne St

A focus on process rather than any preconceived outcome is paramount if tenants are to be placed at the centre. As we have been getting to know the physical, social and internal landscape of the estate and the people we have met, we have collaborated and negotiated to mediate potentially differing perceptions and expectations to make decisions about artistic outcomes. A project reference group comprising tenants, community workers, the City of Melbourne and the Office of Housing has helped us do this.

The Tenants' Association on the estate was not fully representative of the diverse estate communities, and consequently getting to know tenants took time. We introduced ourselves to community workers. We ran workshops in classrooms at the primary school and the neighbourhood literacy centre. We visited people relocated to suburbs all over Melbourne. We cold-called on people waiting to be relocated. We hung around a lot—at the playground, the community garden, the after-school program, the sewing group, and the homework club. And we got involved in whatever was happening on the estate.

One day we heard they wanted to open up Drummond Street. The street was going to run right through the green. It was going to run right through the children's playground. So one afternoon, we all got together in that green and had a party. We held a protest. We put up signs for everyone to see. We played music. We had a barbecue. We said, 'Stop the road', and they did.

Slowly we made connections and drew together threads of who knew who—whose child was at the local school, whose parent went to the ESL class, whose friend came to the drop-in centre and whose friend had been relocated out of the estate. Visits became frequent. Short chats turned to long conversations and the sharing of knowledge, ideas, stories and memory. Soon after came the invitations to one tenant's art exhibition, another's group excursion with their gardening group, another's offer to show us her collection of photos, another's performance at La Mama. We went on camp with the Horn of Africa families' group. We walked around the Carlton gardens with the Vietnamese walking group. We watched the boys play soccer at midnight during Ramadan.

The Office of Housing relocation team were supportive, but central office posed many problems for tenants as the relocation timeline became like shifting sands and clear, regular information was not provided. Another big problem for tenants was the lack of maintenance support. We would visit homes that had been flooded weeks before due to the theft of copper piping in the roof and tenants were still waiting for repairs. Although we were not formally engaged as community development workers, in the absence of someone in that formal role we became advocates, interpreters, assistants as well as listeners and observers, while at the same time we actively supported local agencies to pursue funding for such a position. All this and the staggered relocations were fragmenting the community.

After the first group of tenants were relocated and just prior to the demolition of the first block of flats in late 2006, we began our visits to each empty flat. This became a kind of evidence-gathering exercise as we came across the things that people had left behind. In one of the flats we were surprised to discover, amongst the faded and yellowing beige of all the other rooms, a room that glowed. It was painted a bright, rich pink—the walls and the ceiling. Angela photographed this pink room and its stages of demolition and we sent the images to the person who was relocated from that flat. Soon after, we visited him in Brunswick. He told us he came to live in the walk-ups in 1979 when he was six years old. He moved out when he was in his early 20s and returned a few years later, this time to a different flat. He told us he painted the room for his children and they loved the images we sent. See Images 2, 3 and 4: original pink room in its stages.

The pink room

In the pink room stories unfold, memories, dreams and hope, alongside whispers of the unknown. See Image 5: Pink Room Exhibition.

Our first exhibition in September 2007 was called The Pink Room. It was inspired by this room and its story, and was a testament to the way each person has made their mark on the estate and within their communities. In the same way as each



Images 2, 3 and 4: Original pink room in its stages



Image 5: Pink Room Exhibition

person has personalised their living space, giving each home its own character, we personalised the many stories shared with us about living in the walk-ups and the range of emotions about being relocated from your home. Our aim was to tell of the bigger picture of what's been happening on the estate as well as the personal picture. In a visible and artistic form, we recorded people's ongoing history and their lives together in close and diverse communities with both surface and deeper layers to create the full range of people's experience, and paid tribute to their lives on the estate in a concept of a pink room.

It was important to have the exhibition in one of the walk-up flats as a way of celebrating and bidding farewell to all these homes. We chose to have it in the flat where we were based in 3/486 Drummond St.

For the first element of The Pink Room exhibition, we painted one room pink—walls and ceiling—and this room told of some of the myriad stories shared with us as well as the story of the original pink room itself. What we created in this room was a kind of montage of text and image and found objects.

I grew up in High St, Carlton near the Clare Castle hotel. My mum said there were 12 or 13 of us kids, but I only remember nine. My grandmother and mother were both barmaids at the Clare Castle. My dad was from Geelong. I moved from there to 1018 Lygon St, and in 1974 into the walk-up at 41 Palmerston St with my four kids. They were the best years of my life. People undermine the flats, but I'll never be as happy as I was there. I'd go back there tomorrow if they'd let me. (Joyce) See Image 6: Joyce.

I like it here. I'm very happy. I walk and walk, and walk. Everywhere is not far. I have many friends in Carlton. In my block there are many Vietnamese. At 7 every morning we meet each other at the bottom of 520 Drummond St and we go walking to the Carlton Gardens. We've been doing this for ten years now. (Ngoc Hanh) See Image 7: Walkers.



Image 6: Joyce

We are refugee boat people from Vietnam. We came to Australia 20 years ago and moved into 503 Drummond St. I was one year old and my sister was two. My other sister and little brother were both born in Melbourne. Most of my brother's friends live here. Everyday after school, his friends call out to him and when he hears his name, he'll ask to go downstairs. With the people we know, we have an unspoken trust, a mutual trust of neighbours looking out for each other. When we don't see a neighbour's car we wonder where they are. When we see them again we get their story. We love it here. It's a safety net. It's a home. It's a family. There is a lot of history, a lot of stuff in this house, a lot of memories. (Vy)

It's sad as everyone is leaving and it is getting lonelier by the day. Before, in the morning, I used to be able to smell food cooking. Different smells would waft out of each flat as I came down the stairs. I'd imagine what each person would be having for breakfast. I'd say, oh, so-and-so must be having toast, and so-and-so is having dumplings. (Vy and Shukri)

I take two buses every day to bring my children to school in Carlton. All my friends and all their friends are here. We



Image 7: Walkers

were relocated to Brunswick, but we are not happy there. (Mrs Zhang)

It's the blandness of this estate that's imprinted in my brain. There's something about blandness that's really soul destroying. You need more colour. You have to have more colour. If you have colour at least you've got variety. The day I moved in to 521 Rathdowne St was the day that woman, the ex-warden, stole a helicopter to get that guy out of prison. The day I moved in was the day she took refuge in the flats and I couldn't get into the flat. And I thought, 'If it's going to be like this, I won't get through this'. But I did. I had experienced a dramatic shift from one life to another.

When I moved here, I was still in crisis, but now I had a place where my kids could come and stay. To have this refuge was amazing for me. I lived opposite the swimming pool and a great deal of my life revolved around the pool. It was a great place to take my kids and I often swam there in the mornings. Just being in the water was very healing for me. Everything I needed and everywhere I wanted to go to was within walking distance. The nine years I spent there helped me to become physically and emotionally healthy again. And telling this story has been really therapeutic for me. (Doug)

This is the way of life moves. One day you are here and the next day you are somewhere else. Change becomes part of life. But it is hard, especially for kids. In 1994, when my eldest boy was born, we ran away from Somalia to Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, our two girls were born. From Ethiopia we went to Yemen. From Yemen we went to Saudi Arabia. From Saudi Arabia we got deported to Egypt and then deported back again to Saudi Arabia and from there we came to Australia.

We arrived in Melbourne in 2000 and moved into 521 Rathdowne St. Here our two youngest girls were born. Then in 2006 we moved to the high-rise and here our youngest boy was born. On the day we were moving we took our children through every room. We said to them: 'This was our kitchen, this was your bedroom, this was our lounge, and this is our box that is going to the new flat'. Although we have a big family with six children and it was overcrowded, we loved our flat. Our neighbours were from many nationalities. It was very friendly. Here our kids go to school by themselves. They like their school and they have many friends. (Abdi and Batulo) See Image 8: Object.

I came to Australia 12 years ago and I moved into the flats in Elgin St. I now have ten children. The youngest is one year old and the oldest is 18 years old. I put in an application for a house ten years ago. I said no to one house because it was far away from public transport. I said no to another house because it had only three bedrooms. I'm still waiting for a house. (Fadumo)



Image 8: Object

Another room was inspired by the prolific and creative work of a previous tenant relocated from the walk-ups. Felicity was born in Greece in 1941. She came to Melbourne in 1965, and has raised three children here.

The first time I met Helena and Angela was the day they pulled down the first block. I told them I was moving to Brunswick, and every day I go by tram to bring my things there. The next week they came to help me to bring my small things to my new flat and Angela took a photo of me with my favourite flower. They started to visit me and I talked about how I've been writing songs in Greek since I was young, and that for 25 years I haven't sung but I keep the songs because my granddaughter has a nice voice. The song I sang for the exhibition, I wrote in 512 Drummond St. One day when I was walking to Safeway I was singing to myself and when I got back home I started writing and in two days I had this song. (Felicity)

We introduced her to Melbourne-born singer and songwriter Anthea Sidiropoulos. Anthea and Felicity collaborated to bring together a live performance of Felicity singing three of her songs (in Greek and English) at the launch of The Pink Room exhibition. Anthea has also taken Felicity to a recording studio and together they have recorded a CD of Felicity's songs.

Just keep writing your songs (x2)
And I'll keep on singing them

Just keep telling your stories (x2)
And I'll keep on listening from here

Don't talk to me about love (x2)
Just keep writing your songs
And move on, got to move on

Just keep writing and writing
Don't you ever stop, and I'll
Sing them here in this foreign land

Don't talk to me about love (x2)
Just keep writing your songs
And move on, got to move on

At night time there is nothing to do because I live by myself and I start to draw. One time I start with a circle and I was upset for something and I was going around and around using different colours and when I finished I looked at this and I saw that it was a snail. And with another one I started with the Greek letter 'Gamma' and turned it into a bird. (Felicity) See Images 9, 10: Felicity room and Anthea and Felicity.

The lounge had a feature wall painted pink depicting the story of Amina in English and Somali. I had met Amina in one of the English classes at the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre, and during a series of workshops I ran with that group Amina wanted very much to write her own story.

I live in 3/503 Rathdowne St. I have lived there for 11 years. My children and my husband live with me. I have three children, two boys and one girl. One boy and the girl are twins. Next year they are 16. The other boy is 18. My neighbours are Chinese and Vietnamese and I am from Somalia. Next to me in No 4 is a Chinese family. Their children play with my children. Above me in No 5 is a Vietnamese family. She makes my clothes and her daughter helps my son with his homework. Next to them in No 6 is another Vietnamese family.

Together we share many things. Sometimes I finish oil or I need egg, I go to No 4 or No 5 and I take oil or egg. Sometimes I forget or lose my laundry key and I take my neighbour's key. Sometimes they separate and fold my clothes and bring to my door and I do same for them. We also look after each other's children and we make food and give to each other's children. (Amina)

We visited Amina, met her family and got to know her 16-year-old daughter Shukri, who later gave an eloquent speech at the launch of the exhibition about growing up on the estate. See Image 11: Shukri in front of her mother's text.

The kitchen featured a montage of images Angela had taken over a 12-month period of a seat at the intersection of a number of internal paths connecting the walk-ups and high-rise. This seat was always being used. It was a resting place, a place to



Images 9, 10: Felicity's room and Anthea and Felicity

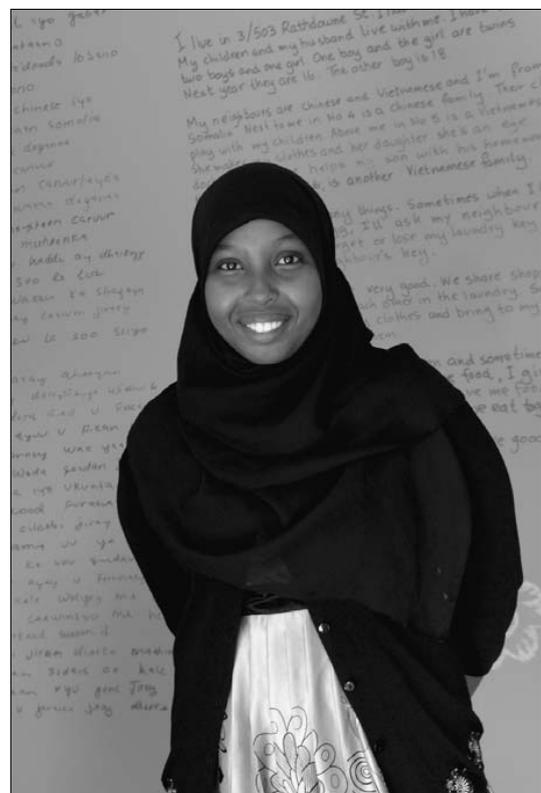
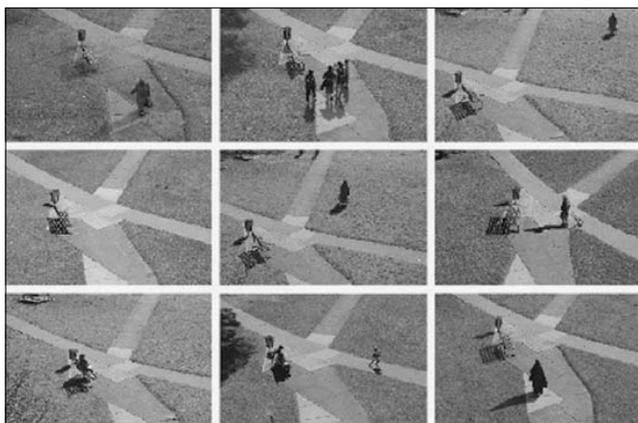


Image 11: Shukri in front of her mother's text



Images 12, 13: Seat montage and Stairs montage

contemplate, exchange gossip, pass the time, wait for others or have an afternoon nap. See Image 12: Seat montage.

The second montage in the kitchen was of the internal stairs of the walk-ups. Each railing carried the memory of each person who had traversed the stairs. See Image 13: Stairs montage.

The second element of The Pink Room exhibition was a series of photo panels located in 13 sites around the estate. Each panel tells a story in text and image of relocation and community. See Image 14, 14a: Hue in situ and Hue at launch; 15: object in situ.

The final element of The Pink Room exhibition was a glowing pink light installation from dusk until 11pm that emphasised that sense of living and occupying.

Relocated tenants and the wider community, some of whom had never entered a public housing estate, were invited to



Image 14, 14a: Hue in situ and Hue at launch; 15: object in situ

the launch of The Pink Room. The most frequent comment we received from people living outside the estate was their realisation of how diverse and connected this community is. After the exhibition we video-interviewed tenants who were involved in this first stage of the project.

It's been a fascinating experience for me. I've loved all the chats that we've had about things and I've been intrigued with the way you've done things. This, for instance, the Pink Room. See, there's photos and stories here of people that I didn't know (and I know a lot of people) and it's taught me new things about the place even though I've lived here on and off since I was a kid. When I read the stories about individual people, the way they spoke about their experiences, well, that awakened me to a lot of things. (Shane) See Image 16: Shane.

As a writer, my task is to facilitate a process by which the people involved can find their voice as individuals and as part of a community, and they in turn help me to find my voice so that I can represent their stories honestly and respectfully. Together we have made decisions about what to make public and how to say it. We both have been actors and authors in the process. We both have needed to trust each other. As a writer I am also learning much about the artistic process in working collaboratively with Angela Bailey.

Helena Spyrou is a writer and literacy educator, and Angela Bailey is a photographer who has worked on a range of



Image 16: Shane

community-based residencies and arts projects. They are currently working as artists on The Flats Arts Project, produced at the Carlton Public Housing Estate.

This project is produced by the City of Melbourne, and the City will continue to develop and strengthen opportunities for cultural expression by disadvantaged and marginalised communities through its Cultural Community Development program.

Contact The Flats Arts Project at theflats@bigpond.net.au. You can also go to www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/ccd or tel: 9658 9658.

No one is an empty vessel: ESL and aged care

by Sue Wallis and Luzma Sanchez

There was a growing need for ethnic aged care workers, and NMIT had plenty of ESL students who were keen to work in the industry but lacked either the English skills or the confidence to attempt the necessary Certificate III in Aged Care Work. And then someone suggested combining the two courses.

Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT) has implemented an innovative program combining the Certificate III Aged Care Work with ESL III Employment (Frameworks). Faculties and departments usually work as separate entities within the TAFE system. This delivery depended on two departments working together cooperatively and learning from each other. There was a sharing and development of material and human resources, and an integration of learning and teaching styles and methodologies.

This is the third year of delivering this course and we have been able to overcome some of the difficulties. More than 90 per cent of the students are currently working in the aged care field. Some of them are in a mainstream facility and others in ethno-specific facilities.

Together with other teachers, we have been working together for the last two years to deliver these two certificates to diverse groups of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. We based our course delivery on our students' previous skills, knowledge and life experiences, and built on literacy and English language skills to enhance their employability skills in Australia. This article will explain the planning, implementation and outcomes of this joint venture.

Background

In November 2005, an article in the Melbourne Times stated that there was a growing need in Darebin area for ethnic aged care workers due to the increase in population of elderly residents from non-English-speaking backgrounds. It looked at the challenges of finding culturally appropriate care and carers to maximise dignity and minimise fear and isolation of the ethnic elderly.

At the time we had sitting in our ESL classrooms students wanting to work in aged care but who didn't have the Certificate III that was necessary for them to obtain employment. They either didn't have the English skills, or they lacked the confidence to be accepted into mainstream classes. Realising there were employment opportunities, and believing that many of the students had the potential to be excellent carers of the

aged, we decided to offer an ESL class—Certificate III ESL English for Health Care Workers.

Our aim was to support students who wanted to work in aged care by improving their skills and confidence. Students were enrolled in Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Health and Science, and a Vocational Elective.

Part of the vocational elective was to participate in work placement so the students would get an idea about whether they really did want to work in the field, as well as seeing what work in Australia was like. The students completed a three-week work placement in various settings. The outcome from this experience was extremely positive both for students and facilities. Managers said they would have employed the students if they had the qualifications necessary, as they were well suited to the job, being very caring and potentially very capable employees.

You are a very dedicated and caring worker and I would employ you with qualifications.

I don't have any vacancies at the moment but with no hesitation I would employ the two students who have been doing placements at this facility.

She is a very soft and gentle person who has the ability to calm the residents.

The feedback from the residents was also encouraging as the students related well to them, and what they may have lacked in verbal communication they made up for in their nurturing skills and desire to learn. On a workplace visit, one student, in discussing her care of a resident with the visiting teacher, said 'She could be my mother', and this was the attitude these students brought with them. The students were sure that they wanted to care for the elderly and work in aged care.

You don't wash me like a car like some other staff do.

I feel really happy when the student assisted me with the showering ... he is extremely caring and careful.



She treats me like a human being.

Journey

As the students were enrolled in ESL and needed an aged care certificate, the ESL coordinator approached the HACS department, and the result was that the class was enrolled in Certificate III in Aged Care. Students were enrolled in 13 modules, including work placement in an aged care facility. The modules included Communication, Provide Support to People with Dementia, Comply with Information Requirements of Aged Care, Provide Personal Care, Working Effectively with Culturally, Linguistically Diverse Clients and Co-Workers, Provide Medication and Occupational Health and Safety.

Firstly, the students attended aged care classes one day a week and English classes for three days. They were exposed to a mainstream environment including teachers, learning materials, timetable, rooms, and methodology. The group was accepted into the course not so much because of their levels of English but their desire and commitment to work in aged care. These are the students who wouldn't have been able to enter the aged care course because of their low-level literacy/oracy skills, or if they did they would have struggled to succeed.

As mentioned by Judith Miralles, author of the article 'Migrant women step up' (*Fine Print*, spring 2004), her research highlights that:

many people from a language other than English background consider it possible to successfully complete vocational training programs with only moderate English language skills if integrated language support is provided as part of the training program. (Miralles,2004)

We believe that Miralles's research highlights an essential element of the success of this program.

The learners

The students who participated in this program over the last two years have been diverse in many aspects. They were culturally and linguistically diverse, and came from Sudan, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Greece, Serbia, China, Hong Kong, India, Fiji, Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Indonesia and Morocco. There have been more women than men, ages have ranged from 20s to 50s, some were recent arrivals while others were long-term residents, some were highly educated and others had minimal schooling.

There were students with low literacy and/or oracy as well as a lack of general knowledge, maths and science. Few had any experience of work in an Australian environment and most lacked confidence and self-esteem. Many had young children attending school or childcare. Some had worked in the health area in their own countries as midwives and nurses and had experience in a different health system. Some had never worked in any country and a few were working on a part-time basis.

First and second year classes were similar in some aspects. The students were supportive and helpful to each other. Those competent with computers assisted those who were lacking in IT skills; those with high oracy practised with those who were reluctant speakers, and they worked in groups or pairs and shared their experiences, difficulties and successes.

Students had to learn time management skills to be able to juggle all the commitments at school and the workplace, as well as their personal and family needs, transport, finances, workload and deadlines. Regular attendance and punctuality were necessary as students were now attending ESL classes, studying in mainstream education and attending work placement in the community.

Many of the students had preconceived ideas about caring for the elderly that were different from Western aged care models. In the majority of their countries, nursing homes don't exist and care of the elderly was considered a family responsibility. Many of the concepts taught were unfamiliar and learning within a mainstream TAFE environment was a new experience.

In my country the teacher told us everything. Now we have to participate and it makes us think more.

I get nervous every time I have to talk in class.

I have not learnt this way in small groups. In my country the classes are very big.

I have been here for a long time but haven't had the chance to come to school. I had to work for my family. I love coming to school.

Challenges

Our first challenge was to plan and develop the most effective method to teach aged care with ESL support. Aged care consists of Training Package modules, and ESL is a Frameworks curriculum. A HACS teacher teaching ESL and an ESL teacher teaching aged care: how to merge the two? We were out of our comfort zone and on a steep learning curve.

Communication and cooperation were vital to the success of the course, given that we were in different departments—and sometimes different campuses, had intensive work loads, other commitments and time constraints. Regular planning meetings, telephone calls and emails were essential to the success of this program. There also had to be liaison at a higher level concerning coordinators and heads of departments.

As well as struggling with language skills, the students had to somehow learn an unfamiliar amount of content from 13 training package modules—including 240 hours of work placement—and be assessed as competent. Quizzes, reports, assignments and presentations were part of the assessment criteria for the off-the-job component as well as demonstrated competency of all models in the workplace component.

The HACS materials needed to be modified and simplified to cater for students' needs. These were then used to develop materials and activities for the ESL classes. All the assessment tasks for the Frameworks certificate were developed using the modules and content from aged care. The work done in aged care formed the basis of the ESL classes, and therefore reinforced the work to ensure the students had a full understanding of the field. The ESL was driven by the content of aged care.

Work placement was a challenge for both teachers and students, and was integrated with the learning programs. Some aged care facilities were very reluctant to provide our learners with a workplace opportunity. Anecdotal evidence in our experience of placing students in facilities showed that the learners' ethnicity posed issues and ambiguities with some managers and facilities. For example, in the process of placing some students, all went well until the disclosure of the student's name, which was Vietnamese. 'Oh no, the residents won't like her', was the response. At another time a manager said she would take students 'but not Africans ... residents don't want them'.

It was often the first experience students had of work in an Australian workplace. They had to telephone for appointments, attend interviews, start at 7.30 in the morning, work on holidays, organise their families, purchase appropriate clothing and rely on public transport to get there.

I am a single mum with eight young children. I have to get up at four o'clock in the morning to do everything.

The workplace is very far from my home. I don't have a car and there is no bus at that time of day. I have to walk and sometimes it's dark.

Communication, both verbal and written, was often difficult for the students. In some instances, documentation and care planning were the most challenging tasks for the students to complete in the facility. According to the article 'Literacy support and aged care students' by Kerrin Pryor (*Fine Print*, summer 2005), it was stated that:

The aged care industry is demanding more proficient language and literacy from its care workers. Personal care assistants are required to read and apply client care plans and policies, contribute appropriately to written progress notes on a daily basis, and engage in clinical aged care discourse with other health professionals.

Outcomes

- Students shifted in their mentality and approach, and broadened their views and ideas about caring for the aged in Australia.
- Excellent attendance and retention rates.
- Positive changes in self-esteem and confidence.
- Movement out of ESL into mainstream study.
- 100% successful completion of Aged Care Certificate III.
- Improved language skills and successful completion of ESL Certificate III Employment.
- Gained higher levels of education and other certificates.
- The first group of students successfully completed a Patient Services Attendant (PSA) course with mainstream students.
- 70% of students enrolled in Certificate III Home and Community Care (online), with some already having successful completion and others still participating.
- One student has been accepted into Division II Nursing at La Trobe University.
- One student is working in St Vincent's Hospital.
- 90% of students have gained employment and are working in aged care facilities (high and low care).
- Development of employability skills that are transferable to other jobs.

Currently I am working in a health and medical supply business. The skills I gained in the course have assisted me in this job.

I think I learnt a lot of knowledge and skills that will help me to get a job.

The most important thing I learnt in this course was communication skills, being more confident. I also learnt written English to be professional at work.

Now, I have skills for the job and also more knowledge.

I have skills for the job and knowledge and more confidence and experience when I had my work placement.

The communication skills that we learnt from this course will enable me to be more confident and apply for a job in an aged care facility.

I learnt a lot of things, knowledge for aged care workers ... skills on how to assist older people ... I learnt a lot.

Overall comments

My experience of this course makes me know that I can do any course or anything. I feel more confident. This course has been an eye opener.

I got more knowledge from my teachers. They help me a lot how to assist the older people and to support them.

We had a joyful time in the past year. I felt fully supported by my teachers. I feel very confident.

Student's stories

... is a young Sudanese man who escaped alone from his home country and lived in Egypt for four years in difficult circumstances before coming to Australia as a refugee. He completed 510 hours of English in the Adult Migrant Education Program at NMIT and then attended recurrent classes at Certificate II level. He wanted to do nursing and was in the first group to do the dual certificate, and worked extremely hard to learn and achieve his goals. After completing the certificate he was offered work at the facility where he did his placement and became a valued and popular worker. While working he completed a Patient Services Attendant course and was offered work at St Vincent's Hospital where he did his placement. During this time he applied to do Division II Nursing at La Trobe University, and was unsuccessful the first time but was accepted on his second attempt. He is on his way to becoming a nurse and realising his dream.

... is a mature-age female of Greek background. She has been a long-term resident of Australia and her four children

were born here. She has minimal education and has been working as a cleaner at night to help support her family. She enrolled at NMIT in 2005 to do ESL literacy as she wanted to be able to read and write in English, and she hadn't had the opportunity to do this in the past. She loved coming to school and was very committed to learning. In 2006 she enrolled in the dual courses and was still working at night. Considering her language constraints, embarking on the demands of this were daunting indeed. She rose to every challenge, nothing stopped her and even her appearance seemed to change. She gained confidence and self-esteem and blossomed during the course. She successfully completed the ESL and Aged Care courses and is presently completing the online bridging Certificate III in Home and Community Care. She is currently working in a Greek aged care facility four days a week.

... is a mature-age male Chinese student who has lived here for seven years. In China he was the carer of his elderly parents and also his parents-in-law. In Australia he is the carer of his ill wife. He enrolled in the course because he wanted to work in the disability field. His literacy was very good, but he lacked confidence in his oracy skills and was a reluctant speaker. He successfully completed the three courses—ESL, Aged Care and Home and Community Care—and has obtained two jobs, one in the disability sector and the other in an aged care facility.

For us as teachers, it was about empowering those individuals who felt unempowered. Every one of them is flying at their own pace and time!

Sue Wallis works in the Faculty of Further Education at NMIT. She has worked for AMES and the community sector, and has many years of experience as an ESL teacher. Sue's main interest is working with migrants and refugees with low-level literacy skills.

Luzma Sanchez is a VET teacher and works in the Health and Community Studies department at NMIT. She has also been involved in such projects as the On-line Pilot Bridging Course, where many participants were from a CALD background. One of Luzma's passions is to facilitate sessions on multicultural and cross-cultural issues.

Practical matters

With the profusion of communication technologies and electronic texts, literacy can no longer be defined in psychological, cognitive and school-based terms. As Kerin Prior explains, literacy is no longer a paper-based set of discrete skills to be applied across a variety of contexts. And Philippa McLean looks at the Advanced Diploma of Language Literacy and Numeracy Practice in VET, a recently developed national qualification designed to provide learning and career pathways for specialist educators and LLN practitioners.

Integrating new literacies into classroom practice: an Action Research Project

For many years, Upper Yarra Community House has provided innovative education programs to young people aged between 15 and 19 who are at risk and/or early school leavers. In 2005, it came to our attention that the young people in our programs were technologically very savvy, yet many struggled with pen- and paper-based and traditional 'book' literacies in the classroom. It became obvious that their home literacies such as internet messaging, mobile phone text messaging and internet use were not being valued or utilised in the classroom. In other words, their out-of-school literacy practises were going unrecognised.

The younger generation have been described as the 'Shi Jinrui' (Carrington 2004), a term roughly translated from Japanese that means 'new human kind' and describes the new generation of technological literates. Carrington states we need to accept that the 'cultural and technological framings of the lives of young people have been profoundly altered by the advent of communication technologies and electronic texts' (2004:215). Communication modes have expanded and young people accept, embrace and use new technologies. Prensky (2001) calls this new generation Digital Natives and outlines ten ways that our young people think differently to the older generation whom, he calls the Digital Immigrants.

The new literacies are naturalised in young peoples' daily lives. A nine-year-old tunes the new DVD player before I have absorbed the first page of the instruction booklet. Fifty-seven per cent of Australian youth are given their first mobile phone between the ages of 13 and 14 (Australian Psychological Society 2004), and over 72 per cent of 14–17 year-olds access the internet weekly or more (Atkinson & Nixon 2005:399 referencing ninemsn 2004b). In the not so distant past, the event of communicating with a friend was either face-to-face, letter by post, or through a telephone conversation. However, technology has added the new options of email, chat room, SMS and instant messaging.

The rule of thumb

Our young people are avid text messengers and users of technology. You only need to look at the local school bus stop

to note this. If nimble thumbs are not being utilised on mobile phone keypads, then it is likely that a cord dangles from an ear that plays music downloaded using specific software for personal use: IPODs and MP3s. Many are engaging in digital games and digital communications before entering school. New literacies are a part of their identity and the way they live. Many of these communication forms may be foreign to parents and teachers and consequently, young people may possess more functional and social mastery of these than most of their adult teachers and parents.

One of the adult literacy principles I have applied over the years with success is 'Start with what they know'. Motivated by this principle, the team at Upper Yarra Community House wanted to learn more about the home literacies that young people were familiar with and loved interacting with. We wanted to integrate these new literacies into classroom practice in an attempt to re-ignite student's enthusiasm for literacy practices. Guided by the New Literacy Studies that draws on a number of disciplines, including sociology and linguistics, we applied for and received an Innovative Literacy Project grant from DEST to research and create a teachers' resource that would provide information about the new literacies with ideas to integrate these into classroom practice with literacy learning outcomes.

The New Literacy Studies has a history of qualitative research, predominantly ethnographies that serve to identify and describe literacy events, practices and texts. Brice Heath's (1982), Marsh's (2003) and Pahl's (2002) ethnographies on home literacies demonstrate that literacy is developing before in-school literacies take place. Literacy permeates all aspects of life. These studies showed how out-of-school literacies influence and intersect (not always with ease) with in-school literacies. From the findings these theorists and others have argued for a broadened interpretation of literacy. Consequently, literacy can no longer be described as paper-based reading and writing framed in psychological, cognitive and school-based learning terms, or a set of discrete skills that can be applied readily across diverse contexts. This view is commonly called a traditionalist 'autonomous view' (Street 1997).

Practical matters

The contemporary sociocultural view is that 'reading and writing only make sense when studied in the context of social and cultural practices of which we are but a part' (Gee, 2000:180). Literacy is seeped in social meanings and like society and culture, literacy is always evolving and changing (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1997). We never just read and write; we read and write in a situated place, with a social identity and history, making meaning of what we read and write through our own particular world paradigm. Lonsdale and McCurry (2004) sum up literacy in the new millennium:

If this broader conception of literacy is overlooked, then literacy becomes reductive, little more than the mastery of a series of sub-skills, such as using punctuation marks correctly, rather than the genuinely transforming experience that current conceptions of literacy—as social practice, critical engagement, situated and multiple—suggest it should be. In general, literacy today is perceived to be social by nature rather than an individual's autonomous set of skills, inescapably ideological rather than 'neutral', relative rather than invariant, and situation-specific rather than universal. There is general consensus among literacy researchers that the meaning of literacy depends on the context in which literacy is being used, by whom and for what purposes. (Lonsdale & McCurry 2004: 39)

Studies and articles such as Carrington (2004) on texting, Gee (2003) on learning principles inherent in computer games, Lankshear & Knobel (2003) on new literacies and changing knowledge, Lewis & Fabio (2005) and Beavis (2002) on instant messaging events and practices, Atkinson & Nixon (2005) on teens and internet use, Prensky (2001) on the changing ways in which our young people think, show how young people are taking up the new literacies with ease, negotiating the multiliteracies and multi-modal communications competently, while many teachers feel threatened by and/or ignorant of these changes or at best lag behind in their knowledge and expertise.

Despite the argument that new literacies are a natural evolution of literacy and communication practices, there still remain many who feel anxious about them. For example, SMS texting has many critics. Squeeze text is accused of ruining good English and creating a generation of bad spellers. Texting is an evolving language format with a strong social function that lends itself to multiple simultaneous tasks, an attribute of many of the new literacies.

Critics of SMS texting, asserts Carrington (2005), are arguing for the maintenance of the dominant discourse. She draws on critical sociology theory to purport that those who fear and seek to repress these new literacies do so from a place of fear.

This fear emerges out of the fact that print text is controlled by adults and is losing its dominance (Carrington 2004: 226; Kress 2003:1). Wider power and structural issues are at stake here as the new literacies are being mastered by our younger generations for themselves and by themselves, while older generations are still on steep learning curves.

Project goals

Our project set out to address some of these issues. How can we engage disengaged early school leavers? How can we educate teachers about the new literacies? How can we involve young people in the project to guide and inform us? How can we create activities that are meaningful to the students themselves and also satisfy teacher's needs to address learning outcomes and engage reluctant learners?

Our project goals were to:

1. Generate discussion in the classroom around the practice, domains and events of new literacies.
2. Improve skills and engagement of students in literacy tasks.
3. Produce a digital resource that will inform and assist teachers to integrate new literacies into the classroom.

Approach

An action research methodology was utilised. Two students from UYCH youth education program joined our research team along with three teachers: two from ACE organisations and one from a secondary school. We came together in five workshops to explore the use of new literacies by young people, how these could be incorporated into classroom literacy learning, and to trial the created activities. Data collected were student surveys, workshop notes and recordings. Reflective teacher journals and teacher interviews conducted post-trialing of the activities also contributed to the findings. Our student researchers were invaluable in explaining new terms, how the technologies worked, and what benefits young people saw in the uses of them. They also made recommendations for the activities.

Models for teaching new literacies

Two models guided the activities trialed in the classroom. The first was the Four Resource Model by Luke and Freebody (Anstey & Bull 2004), which focuses on developing strategies for readers. All four resources are required to read effectively. They are as follows:

1. Code breaker
Recognising and using features such as alphabet, sounds, spelling, conventions and patterns and discourses of the text.

Practical matters

2. Meaning maker

Understanding and composing meaningful written, visual and spoken texts from within particular cultures, institutions, families, communities, nation-states, etc, that draw on the existing knowledge of the reader, their schemas and situational models.

3. Text user

Knowing about and acting on the different cultural and social functions that various texts perform both inside and outside of school. Knowing that these functions shape the ways texts are constructed—their tone, their degree of formality and their sequence of components. Using texts for purpose in practical ways for everyday living.

4. Text analyst

Critically analysing and transforming texts. Understanding and acting on the knowledge that texts are not neutral, that texts represent particular views, silence others, influence people's ideas. Where the reader asks, 'so what?' What does this really mean for me? Text designs and discourses can be critiqued and redesigned in novel and hybrid ways.

We also drew upon the multiliteracies work of The New London Group (Cope & Kalantzis 1996). The term multiliteracies shifts us from the dominant written print text to acknowledge the many varied ways that literacy is practiced in the new millennium. Their idea of selecting designs, designing and redesigning texts gave us a meta-language to name and create meaning from the multiliteracies around us. The three aspects are:

1. Available designs, which include the grammars of language, various semiotic systems that we draw from as creators of design.
2. Design, when we use these existing designs to create the new.
3. The redesigned—the finished product of our work.

Trialled activities

We surveyed classrooms to gain some understanding of new literacy practices and to generate discussion around these practices. We found that texting, games and the internet as well as MSN messenger, and the creation of personal web spaces such as My Space were very popular with the young people. Over 50 per cent used SMS text messaging three or more times a day, and over 66 per cent used the internet for games. Girls were more interested in My Space and messenger while boys engaged more in games.

Web sites, SMS and games were the three broad categories chosen to frame activities that would be trialled. However, teachers also took the lead from their students and further

investigated wikis, My Space pages, messenger language and practices. Some of the resulting activities are as follows:

SMS

- Producing an alphabetical glossary.
- Exploring phonics and grammar.
- Exploring symbols.
- Decoding and encoding SMS text and standard English.
- Projects that investigate mobile phones, including the history and how they work.
- Critical discussion activities.
- Discussion around the evolution of language.
- Being wise mobile phone consumers.

Web sites

- Creating awareness of semiotic codes.
- Analysing advertising and marketing on web sites that target youth.
- Classification of web site genres.
- Critiquing web sites.
- Looking at the dangers (pros and cons) of public web sites such as My Space.
- Creating and critiquing personal web sites including My Space.
- Using web searches to locate specific information.

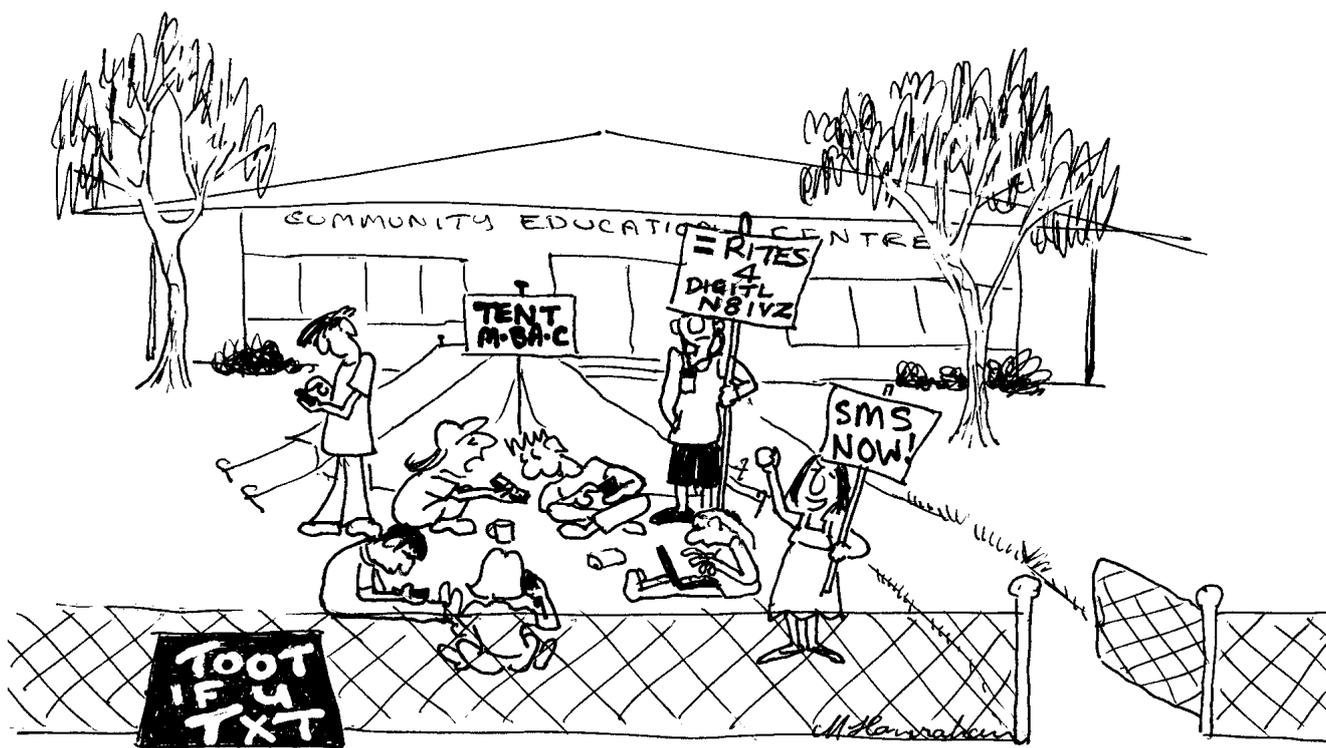
Games

- Creation of key words that can be used to explore games in the classroom.
- Numeracy activities such as creating graphs of popular games.
- Game reviews that take into account semiotic systems, target audiences, characters and rules, recommendations for improvement.
- Procedural text; writing instructions on how to play the game.
- Critical thinking discussion about stereotypes, violence, prejudice, gender and individualism versus community in games.

Findings

Teachers were unanimous in recording the enthusiasm of the majority of their students towards the activities. One classroom experienced a record number of attendances on the day games were being critiqued. Reluctant learners contributed to classroom discussion and participated for the first time in literacy exercises. We had readied ourselves for some resistance in that adults were intruding on 'teenage language and knowledge'. On the contrary, many students delighted in teaching the teachers their skills and sharing their knowledge. Self esteem and confidence grew, as they were able to talk about a subject in which they had some expertise.

Practical matters



We like the SMS activities because it was fun, we got to use stuff we know about, we got to know the teachers better, we got to teach the teachers, our teachers got to see what we do. (student researcher)

The SMS sessions, particularly, were able to focus a whole class and stimulate critical discussion. They gave opportunity to discuss phonics, as most SMS language is based on phonic spelling. Spelling patterns were explored and different graphemes and phonemes listed. Interestingly, those with the least literacy levels across the three classrooms engaged the most wholeheartedly in SMS activities.

Most students expressed a preference to working on a computer than using pen and paper. For many of these students, pen and paper, and even books, had come to mean failure while technology meant fun. For many boys, the classroom was the only time they picked up a pen. Generally, the activities had the ability to engage students who were 'pen refusers'. One teacher commented after utilising a blog to communicate responses to a learning activity in class:

When I read what he had typed, I was so impressed because until that point, I had thought he had serious problems with reading and writing. Even now, when we take him away from the computer and expect him to write on paper we don't get anything from him.

The same kid on a computer would do it (read and write)

without feeling that they are being punished because they can't read. (Teacher talking about a student with a learning disability)

I didn't like it. It felt like a test. (Student researcher's response to an activity where students critique a web site answering a set of questions but using pen and paper responses.)

Using technology just made more sense to them:

I don't like paper. You can't edit as well as on computer, computers are much easier to organise information, more efficient, paper gets lost but not on your computer, folders get heavy but your computer doesn't just because you add more work. Paper gets crunched up and creased. Paper is 'school work'.

Through the lively classroom discussions resulting from teachers trialing the activities, it became apparent that while students were using these new technologies with skill and efficiency, there was little critical thinking occurring. Gee's (1991) differentiation between acquisition and learning may explain this: acquisition is how we gain our primary discourse and is an informal process, while learning is a process that involves conscious knowledge. 'Acquisition is good for performance, learning is good for meta-knowledge' (Gee 1991:6).

Young people are acquiring new literacies in a functional and cultural way with no formal opportunity to be meta-

cognitive and to critique their literacies. With such a proliferation of diverse literacies now, and the plethora of information and media made available now, it is important to 'develop children's ability to protect themselves from, or more positively, to understand and to deal effectively with the broader media environment' (Buckingham, quoted in Lipschutz & Hilt, 2005: 2).

A number of dangers or pitfalls of new literacy practices were identified during the classroom action research. For example, indiscriminate posting of photos on My Space pages, the concept of 'friend' applied to anybody met online, the trust that a photo always represented the real identity of the person online, debt incurred through mobile phone plans (including falling prey to hidden costs from SMS services advertised on television), bullying and stalking through texting and messenger, unethical use of mobile phone videoing, and placing people on loudspeaker during private conversations. This led to a new term, 'New Manners for New Literacies', coined by our research team to frame discussion around such issues as phones left on in theatres and the pressure people feel to always answer a call.

The teacher resource

The project is currently in the final stage where the teacher resource is being created. The research and documentation of the activities will result in a web site that can be accessed by teachers. Alongside the formal report will be information about pedagogical issues concerning introducing home and other new literacies into the classroom, general information such as teenage use of the new literacies, the history of mobile phones and an SMS dictionary. There will be a list of further links for teachers to learn more, such as how to set up a wiki. There will be a glossary of the meta-language teachers can use to address the teaching of critical thinking around the new literacies, and of course there will be the activities and an ideas bank for introducing new literacies into the classroom.

The project should be completed in June 2008, and the web site will be available to all literacy teachers. Keep posted for the date that this innovative and contemporary online resource will be launched.

Kerrin Pryor is project manager for the 'Integrating new literacies into classroom practice' project at the Upper Yarra Community House in Melbourne's outer east. She has worked in adult literacy for over 20 years and currently teaches Return to study skills, Communication and Cultural awareness.

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Practical matters

Has the sheet hit the fan?: the Advanced Diploma of Language, Literacy and Numeracy Practice in VET

In the past decade, the language, literacy and numeracy field has become increasingly diversified. One consequence of this is the recently developed Advanced Diploma of Language Literacy and Numeracy Practice in VET, a national qualification aimed at providing learning and career pathways for specialist educators and LLN practitioners.

For a number of years, there has been a growing concern about the lack of suitably qualified adult language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) teachers, and the lack of availability of appropriate training courses for adult LLN teachers. There are still a number of opportunities to gain an ESL qualification. However, this is not so in the areas of adult literacy and numeracy, where there is added confusion by the lack of an agreed standard on qualifications. Recent anecdotal evidence would indicate that it is now extremely difficult to recruit new literacy and numeracy staff who have appropriate qualifications and/or experience. This situation is exacerbated for those providers who, through their funding structure, are restricted to paying lower wages and/or are only able to employ sessional staff.

Over recent years LLN provision has diversified due to changes resulting from the integration of LLN into Training Packages, where the development of LLN skills occurs concurrently with the development of VET skills. The range of students has also increased, as has the need to provide LLN and cultural awareness training for practitioners in the VET system. The rate of change in the workforce means people require ongoing upskilling, including in the underpinning LLN skills required by workers.

These changes have resulted in a demand for relevant and current professional development for LLN teachers. There is a need for training opportunities that enable practitioners to develop skills to deliver adult LLN in a VET context. A number of LLN teachers have postgraduate qualifications, particularly in primary or secondary education, that equip them to meet many needs in the adult classroom. However, there are differences in adult pedagogy, and in meeting the needs of adults in the VET sector, and these require training in adult LLN specifically for the VET sector.

In 2006 DEEWR (then DEST) funded TAFE South Australia to develop the Advanced Diploma of Language Literacy and Numeracy Practice in VET. This national qualification has been designed to provide the required learning and

career pathways for specialist educators and VET Language Literacy and Numeracy practitioners. The qualification is an acknowledgment of the growing diversification of LLN provision over the last decade.

This course was developed with funding from the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (formerly the Department of Education, Science and Training), and is an approved qualification for trainers in the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program, and the LLN program.

This advanced diploma has been developed with a strong emphasis on the application of knowledge. So, although it acknowledges the importance of theoretical understandings and research, it is particularly interested in how this applies to the actual delivery and assessment of LLN in VET. The course includes a practical workplace experience. This qualification will:

- facilitate relevant and current professional development for teachers in the LLN field
- support teachers from other sectors to contextualise their teaching into a VET context
- provide teachers/trainers entering LLN teaching through pathways in the TAA04 and their own vocational competency area.

Course structure

The course consists of four core electives:

1. NYRA—Conduct initial assessment for placement within an adult English language, literacy and/or numeracy program.
2. NYRB—Apply adult literacy methodologies to develop literacy skills.
3. NYRC—Apply adult numeracy methodologies to develop numeracy skills.
4. NYRD—Apply adult TESOL methodologies to develop English language skills.

Candidates must also choose five electives from a range of offerings across three groups.

Group A (select one minimum)

- TAALLN401A—Address language, literacy and numeracy issues within learning and assessment practice.
- NYRE—Coordinate adult English LLN tutors.

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Group B (select two minimum)

- NYRF—Design courses for adult English LLN and general education.
- NYRG—Design workplace strategy for adult English LLN.
- NYRH—Provide specialist adult English LLN services in a workplace learning environment.
- NYRK—Provide specialist adult English LLN services in an institutional learning environment.
- NYRL—Develop general education through an accredited course.

Group C (units from the training and assessment TAA training package)

- TAADES502A—(NFPA) Design and develop learning resources.
- TAADES503A—(NFPB) Research and design e-learning resources.
- TAADEL503A—(NFPG) Provide advanced facilitation to support learning.
- TAAASS501A—(NFPK) Lead and coordinate assessment systems and services.
- TAATAS502A—(NFPT) Prepare a bid.
- TAACMQ503A—(NFPN) Lead and conduct training/assessment evaluations.

During 2007, DEEWR (DEST) funded two projects to support the rollout of this qualification. These resources are available through DEEWR:

1. The development of a resource to support the delivery of the four core units.
2. The development of a resource to support online RPL for this qualification.

The advanced diploma of LLN Practice in VET can be offered via face-to-face or flexible delivery. The range of units allows candidates to specialise in a particular context, for example, workplace LLN, or to gain broad knowledge of a range of contexts. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has proved to be a popular choice for candidates wishing to gain the full qualification, or single units. This course also provides opportunities for professional development for already qualified staff who may wish to do a refresher session on a particular topic.

CAE will be running this course in 2008. For further information, please contact Philippa McLean at philippa@cae.edu.au.

Philippa McLean has extensive experience in LLN delivery and assessment. She has worked on a number of national LLN projects, particularly focused on professional and resource development. In 2006/7 Philippa was a member of a project team funded by DEEWAR (formerly DEST) to produce a facilitator's guide for the four core units of the qualification.

Other project team members were Dave Tout, Jan Hagston, Dianne Parslow and Katrina Lyle.

Technical Matters

When a group of marginalised people from St Mary's House of Welcome took on a digital storytelling project, Jenny MacDonald saw how the transformative power of story helped them shed their negative self-images and metamorphose into storytellers. Also, Roland Maxwell asks what the digital immigrant (ie most of us) can offer the 'digital native' (as in cyber-savvy, super-digital teens) in the classroom.

The St Mary's project

Studying at the CAE during 2007 for me personally, has drawn me out of the psychosocial rehabilitation realm and given me mainstream validity. (Helen, project participant)

It is truly inspirational when students move from the confines of the known to the challenges and rewards of the unknown. Such was the case with the students involved in St Mary's digital storytelling project. In 2007, nine marginalised adults from St Mary's House of Welcome in Fitzroy ventured into unknown educational territory. Accompanied by staff from St Mary's, they attended the Council for Adult Education (CAE) over a three-month period. Using digital technology, they created their own remarkable and moving stories.

The St Mary's project was made possible by a grant from VicHealth. Delivery of the course was a collaborative process between Access Education and Training (CAE) and Writing, Acting and Film (CAE). Access Education provided a literacy tutor, and Writing, Acting and Film provided a digital-media tutor. St Mary's House of Welcome provided tutors for relevant parallel teaching of photography and computer skills. The culmination of the project was an interactive multimedia site (designed by RMIT Design Consultancy) called Psyche Tube.

Project participants displayed considerable courage in confronting and overcoming former negative educational experiences to engage in new learning. Some students suffered from mental illnesses and others had struggled with alcohol and drug addictions. All participants were motivated by the opportunity to have their own unique voices heard through the power of story.

The course was based on the Plan and Undertake a Project (VBQU131) unit from Certificate 1 in General Education for Adults (21772VIC). Following the performance criteria for this unit, students proposed, designed and planned a project, documented and carried out the project plan, and reviewed the project in operation. Students were made aware of the performance criteria for the unit, and appreciated the fact that their work would be assessed.

The overall project began with participants meeting staff members and familiarising themselves with the CAE

environment. Students then identified their existing skills and considered how these could be linked to individual projects. They then thought of project titles and canvassed them with the whole group.

Before students were introduced to Mac computers, different forms of narrative were discussed. Students had a basic understanding of what constituted a story. They knew that a story could be about a person, place, object, emotion or event. However, they were unsure how to structure a story and had limited knowledge of narrative variance. They were provided with examples of prose and non-prose to encourage exploration of different narrative styles. Students were inspired by Antonio Graceffo's Rays of Hope on Dark Streets in Phnom Penh¹ a narrative written about street kids. They also shared some of their own poems. These poems ranged from the deeply personal to the descriptive. Some students would have found it too emotionally difficult to base a project on their own experiences. Reading Graceffo's work and the shared poetry provided modelling that enabled students to either create something based on their own lives or to be more objective.

Students were also introduced to the tradition of oral storytelling and shown how such a tradition could be incorporated into digital storytelling. Sample digital stories provided inspiration as well as appreciation of the uniqueness of individual stories.

Participants were exposed to new technology and encouraged to explore e-learning. Using iMovie (on Mac computers) they learnt to connect visuals with text. This connection involved editing of both text and graphics. Editing of text was sometimes challenging because students had placed so much work into their narratives. Editorial tact was important because students generally lacked confidence, and tutors aimed to inspire rather than discourage. Some textual errors remained because correcting every error might have further disengaged students.

Editing the voiceover on individual projects was also difficult because the text was usually too long. Students became aware of the importance of constantly checking how written narrative could be appropriately combined with digital images. Tutors encouraged students to be concise, and to understand that

editing out words, sentences and even paragraphs was all part of the digital storytelling process.

Participants worked well individually and as a group. They were supportive of each other and constantly encouraged perseverance. Digital stories ranged from the observational to the metaphorical, including stories entitled Sunrise–Sunset, Bikes Collingwood My Home and Owl Man.

Course evaluation sheet feedback was positive. Some students indicated that they experienced initial difficulties with computer use, but the feedback indicated students gained confidence as they became more familiar with computer technology. Students felt they had acquired a firm understanding of the elements of story. Students also indicated that they had enjoyed the course, had felt supported by staff, and were inspired by other students' work. Encouragingly, three students have continued studying at CAE.

Lindsay Tanner officially launched Psyche Tube at Fitzroy Town Hall on the evening of June 28, 2007. St Mary's and CAE staff, RMIT Consultancy members, various community members, and

project participants and their relatives attended. Students were encouraged by the warm applause they received when they were given their certificates of attainment.

One popular television advertisement tells us some things in life are priceless. Indeed, my memory of students beaming with pride as their digital stories were shown on a wide screen to their friends and relatives, remains priceless.

Jenny MacDonald teaches literacy and creative writing at CAE. She has a particular interest in unlocking student creativity. Jenny has previously taught English and history in state secondary schools. In her spare time she writes poetry and plays.

Further information about the St Mary's digital storytelling project is available from www.psychetube.org.au.

Note

1. Antonio Graceffo, *Rays of hope on dark streets in Phnom Penh*, pp. 8–9, <http://www.talesofasio.com/rs-37-streets.htm>.

New literacies and the role of digital immigrants

In the past that is now lost forever, there was a time when the land was sacred, when the ancient ones were as one with it; a time when only the children of the Great Spirit were here, to light their fires in these places with no boundaries; when these forests were as thick as the fur on a winter bear; when a warrior could walk from horizon to horizon on the backs of the buffalo. In that time, when there were only simple ways, I saw with my heart the conflicts to come. And whether it was to be for good or bad, what was certain was that there would be change. (Goyathlay, a Chiricahua Apache leader, also known as Geronimo)

To stay competitive in a digital economy Australia must accept the fact that computer technology is no longer just a key subject to learn, it is now the key to learning in almost every subject. (ALP media statement of 14 Nov. 2007)

... the single biggest problem facing education today is that our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language. (Digital Natives Digital Immigrants, Marc Prensky 2001)

If you are over 30 like me, then you are by definition a Digital Immigrant. And like me, you will probably stay out of the queue when the operation to install a cortical shunt (that plugs your brain directly into the 'data-sphere') becomes available. With Mr Rudd's government offering us an education revolution with

computer technology as 'the key to learning', it seems a good time to see whether we 'Digital Immigrants' are merely in the way or whether we have something to offer.

It behoves us to be cautious, as revolutions tend to be bloody affairs. And the dot com crash gave many of us a jaundiced view of new paradigms. We discovered that, contrary to glossy investment brochures, there was no new business model; that 'burn rate' was a euphemism for going broke, and that—even wearing techno clothes and postmodern jargon—a South Sea bubble was still just a bubble.

If we are to promote the benefits of digital literacy, it must be coupled with a strategy to mitigate the risks. To fail to do so is like promoting the benefits of individual transport without teaching road safety.

Addiction

In medical circles, the concept of computer games addiction is now seriously discussed:

Several studies of the brain and behaviour back the idea that there is very little biological difference between what goes on in the head of a gambling addict and that of a crack addict. A growing number of researchers believe that the same processes lie behind all addictions, behavioural or chemical, whether it's gambling or shopping, computer gaming, love, work, exercise, pornography, eating or sex. *New Scientist*, 26 August 2006)

Obesity

The Australasian Society for the Study of Obesity (ASSO) notes that:

Rates of childhood obesity in Australia are at one of the highest amongst developed nations. Around 25% of Australian children are currently overweight or obese, a huge jump from 5% in the 1960s.

The computer world alone cannot take the blame for childhood obesity, when other lifestyle factors such as diet and television are major players, but it would have to rate as a significant contributor.

Invasiveness

The internet probably represents the greatest single assault upon families' ability to control the influences upon their children. Before the internet, to obtain pornographic materials one had to know that it existed, find a place that sold it, and then purchase it in a face-to-face transaction. Now a child may stumble across pornography while looking for pictures for a school project. It is possible to put safeguards that reduce the risk, but many families—and schools, for that matter—have computers whose settings are ineffective.

And you can guarantee that the pornographers will be investing significant dollars in finding ways to circumvent protective measures. As an example, it was largely pornography that rendered the early search engines useless. Early search engines worked on the voluntary attribution of metadata (keywords) to make material discoverable, so porn racketeers put masses of keywords in to make sure that for any search term, a porn site would always appear in the list.

Exploitation

In November 2007 I attended a briefing given by a member of the Federal Internet Taskforce, who said that the internet had become the weapon of choice for paedophile rings. These are not shabby-coated individuals, but well-heeled highly organised criminals who specialise in breaking into children's trust networks (such as Microsoft Messenger circles). And one thing that has been reported by both American and Australian law enforcement agencies is that children are certain they would always spot a fake, but the fact is they never do.

Some offenders primarily collect and trade child-pornographic images, while others seek face-to-face meetings with children via online contacts. It is important for parents to understand that children can be indirectly victimised through conversation, i.e. 'chat', as well as the transfer of sexually explicit information and material. Computer-sex offenders may also be evaluating children they come in contact with online for future face-to-face contact and direct victimisation. (A Parent's Guide to

Internet Safety—FBI website <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm>)

Another aspect is financial exploitation. One internet scam offered children an iPod for one dollar, but they had to put in their parents' credit card details to pay the dollar. The iPod never arrived, and the parental account was sucked dry.

Bullying

I don't have the statistics to hand for this one, but as the world goes more virtual, the incidence of virtual bullying increases through mobile phone text messages and internet chat.

Time wasting

Recent federal government research found that, in a sample group of secondary students across NSW schools, the average number of online chats that each student had open at any one time was 12. Has the 'connected generation' miraculously developed a new cognitive faculty that enables them to handle multiple inputs with clarity and efficiency? Let's look at the evidence.

It is becoming recognised in industry that email is a major threat to productivity. The reasons are simple: it provides a constant source of interruption, and people become focused on emptying their in-box, rather than on doing the work on the basis of well-thought-out priorities. There are now consultants who advise on email control. One of the standard recommendations is don't look at your email before 11 am.

As further evidence of our inability to multi-task, look at the statistics of drivers who have or cause accidents because they are distracted by their mobile phones while driving. And the Monash University Research team (MUARC) has found that the problem for young drivers is their inability to attention-share: they tend to focus on a single area of the road and a hazard coming from another direction catches them completely by surprise.

Multi-tasking is a myth. More distraction simply means loss of focus, inferior quality of work, and more time taken to complete any one task.

Unqualified acceptance of published material

Google is promoted as a key research strategy by many schools. The problem is that a lunatic fringe website may look as credible as the website of a qualified institution. Even Wikipedia is patchy, and the credibility of much of its information makes the suspect material harder to detect.

What is the role for Digital Immigrants?

I think I have assembled a reasonable catalogue of woe. So what's the answer? The answer lies in skills and approaches

that were around long before the digital literacies were even thought of.

The first principle is one of conscious application of risk management. We have a duty to teach our students the 'road rules' of this brave new world, and to offer them clear avenues of support if they are threatened. Our approach needs to include training for parents in controlling their children's computer access.

The second principle is in recognising that, in a high quality learning process, the instructional medium is suggested by the nature of the learning objectives, and not the other way round. To make computers central to one's pedagogy is to promote a delivery medium above the learning itself. (A 1965 issue of *Realité* predicted that the television would generate an educational revolution by ensuring that teaching of a consistent high quality could be 'beamed into every classroom'. The idea that computers will achieve this is equally laughable.)

The third principle is to teach critical thinking skills; things like:

- Evaluating the qualifications of information sources.
- Analysing evidence, and deconstructing arguments.
- Identifying ulterior motives and seeing beyond the hype.

The fourth principle is to remember to turn off our own computers, and to go and kick a ball with our young folk.

And finally, to be an immigrant is not merely a statement of disadvantage. We 'immigrants' have some advantages, such as fluency in other languages and personal experience of other cultures.

Roland Maxwell is a new media designer with 15 years' experience. He has won awards for the design of e-learning materials. For the past five years Roland has been lead designer for Boojum Pty Ltd, an Australian company whose mission is to provide online design for people involved in positive social and environmental change.

Open Forum

We welcome your responses to the articles featured in Fine Print. See the back cover for contact details.

Even the veteran teachers at the Broadmeadows campus of Kangan Batman TAFE were anxious during the lead-up to the delivery of the new Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA). Pauline Morrow outlines how they approached the new CGEA.

Kangan Batman TAFE delivers both the CSWE and the CGEA at its Broadmeadows campus. During the first semester of 2008 we are delivering the newly accredited CGEA. This has been the cause of a fair degree of anxiety, with many meetings to discuss the curriculum, and even more meetings and conversations to organise the implementation.

Most of the practitioners here have been around for a while, and have been involved in the philosophical discussions about the nature of literacy, both informally and formally, in the lead up to the reaccreditation. They were happy with the changes to the structure that sees the reading and writing broken down into smaller units, and to see the organisation of texts in terms of their social context rather than in terms of their genre. We were alarmed by the disappearance of the General Curriculum Options, as we had known them, and while happy with the concept of employability skills we were a bit peeved that we had to address them without being able to assess against them (strictly speaking).

The real anxiety came when we were deciding what to offer with the hours we had. We decided to offer three of the Create units and three of the Engage units. We opted to leave out both Create and Engage for the workplace. The reason for this was that the majority of our students, for a variety of reasons, show little interest in entering or returning to the workforce in the near future. Some felt they had been denied an opportunity to develop literacy and numeracy skills in the past, and they wanted time to do so now without the distraction of work and work issues. Others expressed a desire to continue on to vocational training after literacy classes, and so dismissed the notion of entering the workforce in the near future. Most of our students, however, are women with young families. Most of them are not interested in working, and want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills in order to improve the quality of their own and their children's lives.

A small percentage of our students are older men and women who see themselves as past work with no interest in gaining employment, and they are also learning English for personal and community reasons. Added to this is practitioner anxiety about our own ability to teach generic workplace skills (having been in narrow working environments ourselves for many

years) and the need to provide an authentic context for literacy and employment purposes. We may regret this decision.

In the evening where we had classes of three-hour sessions, we opted to enrol students in Create and Engage for Learning Purposes, and in the Learning Plan and Portfolio. We felt that it was the closest fit to what students and teachers understood as their goal. The Learning Plan will be seen as an extra job to do by some evening teachers, and it will formalise what many have always done.

Then came the imported units. Which ones? We looked for computer modules from various training packages to replace the old favourite GCO, Computers, that we had offered under the old certificate. We selected from those recommended in the certificate, but other than the two taken from ESL frameworks, we found the units from training packages to be not immediately suitable.

We have spent time trying to get some sequence up through the levels, and at the same time stay away from the temptation to use what we see as the 'good ones' across various levels, as this will be problematic administratively for us later on. We chose Listening and Speaking units from the CSWE. Numeracy is not significantly different, but choosing two modules out of three has caused some difficulties, as it is hard to decide what not to teach.

We hurried to get some record-keeping proformas to at least give us something to work with at the beginning of the year. There is a lot of anxiety about the implications the new format has for record keeping. Teachers are concerned about the workload involved in completing the assessment requirements, and also about the likelihood of students not completing due to constant absences.

Rather than exacerbate this problem by running Create and Engage units longitudinally, we opted to do integrated delivery of the Create and Engage units with the Learning Plan and Project at most levels, and placed an ongoing staff member as the teacher/coordinator of each large chunk of the course delivery. We have allocated the smaller units to the sessional staff.

Continued on page 31 ...

What's Out There?

In this edition of *Fine Print*, Laine Cannard and Alex Vardis review the *Cambridge Literacy Workbook for VCAL*, an accessible resource designed to help secondary students keep track of their progress while developing a folio of work.

The *Cambridge Literacy Workbook for VCAL* is designed to develop the skills needed to successfully complete the VCAL Literacy unit at intermediate level. The workbook offers a range of texts, discussion starters, learning activities and other opportunities for supported skills-based practice. It employs relevant and interesting youth-oriented reading and writing content, integrated across genres and mapped against the learning outcomes. It also provides activities that could be integrated or applied to a project being undertaken by the class; for example, a permission letter; thank you letter and a reflection on a project activity. Activities provided can also be readily integrated with other VCAL units, such as IT and Oral Communication.

The introductory section is an excellent feature of this workbook. This section explains the learning outcomes clearly and links them directly to the various activities and tasks, enabling students to understand their assessment requirements. It assists the students to develop a portfolio of work. A checklist is provided for students to keep track of their progress, allowing them to take responsibility for their own learning.

The workbook effectively addresses the key concepts of each unit of study—genre, audience, purpose and critical literacy. The content of each unit enables students to build specific, relevant skills as part of the exploration of various set texts. At times, however, it is wordy and uses sophisticated language. As a result, some students may need extra teacher direction.

There are some tangible, practical problems with this resource. It is a class set workbook and not designed to be used as a

photocopiable resource. In working to the philosophy that VCAL is delivered as a flexible and negotiated curriculum, teachers would probably prefer to choose activities from the text that suit their student group. However, in order to justify the costs of a class set, ideally the whole book should be used. Lastly, like all texts that use current content, it may date quickly. Hopefully the resource will be updated or revised regularly.

For ACE teachers it is worth noting that the workbook is designed for secondary school use and employs language appropriate to this learning environment, such as the Principal, Year 11 Student Organiser and School Council.

Overall, this is a useful resource. It would be most effective as a tool from which teachers can gather ideas for effective and interesting ways to explore text types and models of integrated teaching. These can then be readily adapted to class projects.

The Cambridge Literacy Workbook for VCAL, Robyn Hodge and Corrina Ridley, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2006.

Laine Cannard and Alex Vardis work in the youth unit at Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE.

Laine Cannard has taught VCAL since its inception, and has worked in a variety of fields including primary schools, adult literacy, ESL, VET, and youth and disengaged youth students. She is currently teaching in a senior VCAL program at NMIT.

Foreign Correspondence

Karen Manwaring from Fine Print talks with Karen Leonard of the Lifestart Foundation about her work with street kids and their community in Hoi An, Central Vietnam.

Two lifelong passions—travel and music—led Karen Leonard to Vietnam and ‘the busiest time of my life’, at a time when she expected to be semi-retired and enjoying the fruits of her labour.

Until relatively recently Karen lived in Essendon, where for 30 years she had run her own music school. Then in 2000, she went backpacking through Vietnam. She visited Hoi An, a town of about 80,000 people in Vietnam’s central Quang Nam province. Karen sings its praises as a ‘beautiful town that was one of only a few that weren’t bombed during the war, so it still has lime-washed heritage buildings and little cobbled streets’.

It was here that Karen met one of Vietnam’s many street kids. They had an instant connection and he introduced Karen to his world, his fellow street kid friends and their families:

I was struck by the level of intelligence of these kids. They could translate the Vietnamese Dong into any currency and were often conversant in several languages. Hoi An is a tourist town so these are the skills that life depends on. I thought it was such a waste to see their brightness and intelligence unmet by education because they didn’t have the resources to go to school. They were selling wooden whistles, postcards and trinkets from a very young age, with their only ‘promotion’ being that they’d sell newspapers when they were older. That’s the street kid hierarchy.

Karen asked a couple of the kids if they’d attend school if they had the opportunity. Their response was so enthusiastic that Karen did something that she realised at the time was quite unusual for her: ‘I promised that I would come back and help them’.

From that time, Karen started to personally support several street kids by encouraging them back to school and paying their education costs. While the cost of education in Vietnam is low compared with Australia, families that are struggling to feed and clothe themselves see education as an unattainable luxury.

When Karen returned to Melbourne she asked her friends and family to donate the money they would have spent on her Christmas presents to her support work in Vietnam. Soon, extended family and friends heard of her initiative and started donating money:

I didn’t have any problem receiving donations from people who knew me personally, but when money started coming in from total strangers, I realised I had to set up a formal project so that it would be accountable.

Karen registered the Lifestart Foundation in April 2004. Today the scope of the foundation is expressed in the variety of its project titles: Families, Education, Youth, Orphans, Medical, Housing, Boats and Elderly Assistance.

If you’re going to create change, it has to be about the whole person, the whole community. You can’t just provide education alone, because the rest of the community will bleed somewhere else. If you just organise education but the child is hungry, or has medical issues, or their parents or grandparents are struggling, then it’s just not going to work.

On the education front, the foundation has established a school in Hoi An—the Lifestart Foundation Free School—which was officially opened in March 2006. This original school used its premises rent-free, thanks to the support of the local government. More recently, the local government has built a new building to house the school, in the same street as the old school. The new premises opened in March 2007. The Lifestart Foundation funds all staff, resources and equipment.

The children and young adults who attend the school (their ages range from 8 to 23) are from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds with their own particular problems and challenges. Most cannot read and write when they first attend.

Karen says that the initial goal of the school was to create a safe, stimulating and happy environment for the students to come to each day. Part of this commitment means providing new or nearly new clothes and shoes for the students, all donated from Australia. The foundation also provides free medical and dental care for the students.

We want the children to be able to make the step of regularly attending school, without any obstacles. They just have to turn up—which they do willingly—and we do the rest.

Students at the school study Vietnamese literacy and numeracy five days a week. On the weekends there are optional art classes. They also help with cleaning and care of the school grounds: each student has his or her own tree planted in the

schoolyard. The tree has a plaque with the student's name on it and it provides a focus for their caring attention.

Retired Vietnamese teachers teach the Vietnamese literacy and numeracy classes:

Teachers retire at a relatively young age in Vietnam. I knew that newly graduated teachers were probably not going to have the skills needed to teach these traumatised kids. They need teachers with teaching and life experience, and also plenty of patience.

Karen adds that the students are 'a teacher's dream—early to class, pushing for more time at the end of the day, and always attentive to what's going on in class'. She reflects that these children and young adults have no other stimulation like television, radio or cinema: 'They're hungry to learn, it's their main stimulation'.

Teaching at the school purposefully avoids the conventional class style, says Karen:

There's no passing or failing and the kids aren't separated according to level. They already feel like a failure when it comes to education so we don't give them a time limit in terms of progress. If it takes them two years to finish Grade 3 then that's OK—and that's whether they're 12, 17 or 24 years old.

The school also provides two English language classes that run six nights per week. Again, these free classes are for disadvantaged students whose main chance of getting regular, fairly paid work with decent conditions is in the hospitality sector, where English is the main language. Classes in personal hygiene and presentation are also a part of the school's program—a visit to the Lifestart Foundation website describes a hard-fought battle against an infestation of nits, and the nerves and hand-holding involved in a group of students' first visit to a dental clinic.

Volunteer ESL teachers, many from Australia, teach the English language classes. ESL teachers can also support the Vietnamese teachers in their work. For travelling ESL teachers who are only in Vietnam for a short period of time, the schools Coffee Classes are a way of getting involved. The Coffee Classes

involve an English-speaking teacher and two students meeting for an hour a day, outside the classroom environment to chat in English.

So for a teacher with ESL training (and a police check), a five-day stay in Hoi An could include an hour a day for a Coffee Class with students from the Lifestart Foundation School.

'We need people with skills—and ESL teachers are definitely in demand. We don't need more pairs of hands, we have plenty of locals we can train, but we do need skilled volunteers', says Karen. A recent branching out of the educational limb of the foundation is into the area of Vietnamese sign language. 'Hearing-impaired people in Vietnam are some of the most marginalised people in the country'.

Karen lists the long-term goals of the school as:

- For Lifestart Foundation Free School to expand to be able to offer more children better opportunities and to have a bigger premises to work from.
- To set up a crisis/drop in centre and ultimately be able to employ experienced staff to deal with the myriad issues these children have.
- To have a sporting facility for the children. At present Lifestart Foundation has neither space nor equipment.

When asked how all this has affected her, Karen reflects: 'Thirty years as a music teacher now seems like it was actually a really long apprenticeship—a preparation. This is the real deal now'.

Karen's daughter Jade has taken over the reins of the music school back in Melbourne, so that Karen can concentrate on fundraising for the school and also working to fund her own travel expenses. Karen plays the piano, a skill that she says is pretty irrelevant in her current life in Vietnam. 'There aren't any pianos around here', she laughs, 'unless you head off to one of the five star hotels'.

Playing the piano is now a million miles from her thoughts. 'It seems like a rich person's thing to me now. It's just so far from my world these days'.

The website for the Lifestart Foundation is at *www.Lifestartfoundation.org.au*.

Behind the Whiteboard

Where are they now?

In 1995 the editorial committee agreed to introduce a new feature to expand the Open Forum section of *Fine Print* that would 'represent different voices and styles of text within the journal'.

An interview format was adopted along the lines of 'On the Couch' with Chris Beck that was a feature of the Saturday Age at the time. In the 1995 winter edition of *Fine Print*, Kay McCrindle was invited to be the inaugural interviewee and Tricia Bowen spoke to her about her background experience and her opinions of the adult literacy field.

At that time she had been working for three years as an adult literacy teacher with the Flemington Reading and Writing Program, the Brunswick Neighbourhood House, and the Brunswick Community Education Program and, as she said, 'for a little light relief I also teach writing to a group of women writers at SPAN'.

Kay's commitment to education and the needs of her learners have always been paramount in a teaching journey that began in adult literacy in London in 1980.

Recently *Fine Print* caught up with Kay to find that she is still working at FRWP, teaching mainly ESL students and a small class of MID students. A series of questions were put to her about the changes she has seen, and her reflections on the adult education field in general. In these days of email rather than face-to-face interviews, Kay composed the responses, and her voice is still as clear as it was in the interview with Tricia back in 1995.

What is it about your work that has kept you at FRWP for such a long period of time?

I've been part of a gradually changing team that has worked at FRWP (now the Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre) for many years, I guess for a number of reasons (true I think for most of us here)—that the work environment is very flexible and personalised: that we have a mostly female staff and this is reflected in our approach—our thinking about the way the place should operate tends to be quite 'woman-centred' and I really value that; I like the physical environment—one of our venues is adjacent to a park and the other is in the Flemington library—both really pleasant work spaces; we try to nurture our staff as much as possible; I have a lot of autonomy here in designing course materials—I really love that.

With the influx of newly arrived migrants in the Flemington area the student profile at Flemington has changed. What are some of the changes to the student profile at FRWP that you have observed since 1995?

The student profile has changed considerably in the time I've been here—when I first came here there was a roughly even balance between ALBE and ESL learners—that was in the days of the big SIP funding. Now we have only one small literacy class and the bulk of our students are ESL learners. The literacy students who were referred through Centrelink agencies have really dwindled—we tend now to pick up students coming through support agencies like Crossroads, who have complex personal histories and generally have intensive personal support—for them lack of literacy is a part of a much larger picture of disadvantage. Almost all of my literacy students are mildly intellectually disabled (MID) and I spend much more time than I'd like being a social worker.

In 1995 Kay identified a key issue for her students as being the uncertainty of ongoing funding for courses, while for her it was the demands of the CGEA and uncertain tenure and conditions. What issues concern your students now?

Key issues that concern my students are that their physical and or intellectual disabilities have in a large sense helped to cement their lack of literacy, because the education system in the past has passed them over as too difficult to deal with in the mainstream and with too many soft options in special education (that's a very long-winded way of saying they feel they've become stupid because people have treated them that way!). Another key issue is their difficulty in accessing help in their personal lives because of poor literacy skills, hence the social work role that you inevitably take on in the classroom.

As for many adult literacy, language and numeracy practitioners, the work of teaching extends beyond the classroom. Increasing demands of accountability and accreditation have impacted on curriculum development and preparation time for sessional teachers.

How do you feel that the adult literacy field has changed?

I think the adult literacy field has changed in that it's become even more 'certificate-driven'. It frustrates and saddens me that so much of so-called 'best practice' is seen in terms of

CGEA delivery—that for many teachers the certificate has become the goal rather than the framework of delivery. It certainly has its place in the field, but I think the perspective on learners’ needs has got a little lost in the process. I might add here that my own teaching has become so much more centred on ESL students these days, but some of the issues remain the same.

What issues affect you as a teacher?

On a personal level, I’m frustrated that the preoccupation with accredited courses and the mountains of paperwork involved take up too much of my time and energy and cut into my ‘real’ teaching time. In some senses the paper work serves as a reminder of the focus of my teaching, but I see too many teachers in all fields of education who are drowning in paper which then sits forever unread in some archive.

What has influenced you in your teaching practice?

I think the greatest influence on my teaching practice has been my students—listening to their articulated needs and trying to tailor my teaching to meet those. I’m reminded every day that I’m also a learner in the classroom—that’s one of the things that I most enjoy about teaching.

What have been some of your best teaching experiences?

Some of my most rewarding experiences working in the adult lit field have come in watching the excitement that students show as print gradually becomes decipherable and becomes a tool rather than an enemy—a 64-year-old man last year cried as he wrote his first letter to his mother, and a long-term literacy student taking over the role of teacher, leading some of the other students into the world of computers.

What do you see as the challenges for adult literacy and numeracy practitioners in the future?

I think one of the major challenges for the adult literacy practitioners of the future is actually how to reach their target group. I read constantly about the number of non-literate and semi-literate students leaving secondary schools, but most of them seem to disappear without accessing help. For those who do come to the classroom, I think perhaps the greatest challenge for practitioners is keeping pace with technological change—to be a literate person now involves so many more fields of competency than in the past, both for teachers and students.

What advice would you have for those starting out in adult education?

For those starting out in the field—a giant supply of imagination, compassion and patience!

What lies ahead for you?

For me—I’m slowly starting to cut back my teaching time—I’ll be around a bit longer yet, but the life of a grey nomad is sounding more and more appealing.

Thanks Kay for your insights into what has been a long and rewarding teaching and learning journey, and we are certain that there are many students who would wish to thank you also.

Fine Print seeks your participation in this section, and invites you to submit an interview with a practitioner or suggest to the editorial committee someone you believe has a story to tell about their work in adult literacy, language and numeracy.

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Also in Technology Matters, Roland Maxwell with his 'New literacies and the role of digital immigrants' poses the question of what the digital immigrant (most of us, I am afraid), has to offer the digital native in the classroom. He believes we immigrants can offer critical thinking skills and risk management. Roland and Kerrin Prior need to talk. I suggest they could text each other to collaborate further on Kerrin's idea of new manners for new literacies.

Open Forum focuses on the new CGEA, and Pauline Morrow outlines ways they approached it at the Broadmeadows campus of Kangan Batman. Even though they are experienced teachers, Pauline says they have felt a fair degree of anxiety in the lead-up to delivery. They have lamented some of the changes, like the loss of the General Curriculum Options and chosen units to suit their students, students who are not centred on work. Pauline says they have gone forward in their planning with lots of goodwill. Let's hope that pays off for them when classes start, we will wait to hear!

In the resource review section, What's Out There, Elaine Cannard and Alex Vardis look at the Cambridge Literacy

Workbook for VCAL by Robyn Hodge and Corinna Ridley. The verdict? They like it, it is useful, well set out and well pitched.

Foreign Correspondence takes us to Hoi An in Vietnam, where we hear about the inspiring work of Karen Leonard who has set up an educational facility and complementary services for street kids. For those of you who are itching to get back to Hoi An, Karen offers us the chance to join the coffee classes, just an hour or two a day is all that is required to chat with the kids in English. Check out the website.

Beside the Whiteboard winds back in time to 1995 where we found Kay McCrindle at the whiteboard at Flemington Reading and Writing Program. Thirteen years later we find her still there and still passionate. There have been some profound changes to the field in this time, but what remains for Kay is the focus on the student and the collaborative process. This theme has echoed throughout the articles in this edition of *Fine Print*. Enjoy the read, it is both challenging and life affirming!

Pauline O'Maley

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We tried to involve everyone in the process somehow, because we value their experience and their input, and also to encourage ownership. My parting words at our meeting at the end of 2007 were: 'This will only work with a lot of good will'. Let's see what happens next week!

Pauline Morrow has taught adult literacy and basic education for 15 years. She currently coordinates the ALBE programs within the language studies department at Kangan Batman TAFE in Broadmeadows.