

CALPROGRESS

CALIFORNIA ADULT LITERACY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Message from the Director



As part of its research-to-practice initiative, CALPRO supports CDE's efforts to make research available to California's adult educators. Toward that end, the fall semester of 2004 found CALPRO staff totally absorbed in designing and coordinating the national adult education practitioner-researcher symposium, *A Meeting of the Minds*. The ensuing dialogue between researchers and practitioners was rich and engaging, with each presentation followed by round table discussions in which participants brainstormed implications for policy, practice, and further research. These are captured for your reference on the Web site, www.researchtopractice.org.

CALPRO staff were particularly pleased to learn that the Study Circles Facilitator Training on Learner Persistence that we hosted in June 2004 yielded several successful study circles at adult education agencies throughout the state. Many of these study circle facilitators attended the Symposium and shared their excitement about the study circle readings. Coupled with John Comings' Symposium sessions, lots of excitement was generated throughout the adult education community about learner persistence. CALPRO hosted another Study Circles Facilitator Training on Learner Persistence in March 2005 and has plans to offer yet another over the summer of 2005. Stay tuned.

To complement the Study Circles effort on enhancing learner persistence, CALPRO has several research briefs, summaries, and bibliographies available (see page 6). Check these out on the CALPRO Web site, www.calpro-online.org. In addition, the six new workshops (see Highlights column) that are being rolled out for the fall semester all speak to enhancing learner persistence. To further enrich the

Continued on page 2...

HIGHLIGHTS OF CALPRO ACTIVITIES FOR SPRING 2005

This column lists the many and varied activities that CALPRO has recently accomplished as well as those that are in progress.

The Meeting of the Minds Symposium

On December 9-11, 2004, the *Meeting of the Minds Symposium* was held in Sacramento. A national adult education practitioner-researcher symposium, the *Meeting of the Minds* was designed to provide opportunities for adult education practitioners and researchers to dialogue and share the most current research findings and practitioner wisdom. The ultimate goals of the symposium were to enhance literacy practice and increase student learning gains. The symposium had three major co-sponsors: the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), located at Harvard University; the California Department of Education, Adult Education Office; and the California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project (CALPRO) of the American Institutes for Research. It also had the support of the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network (OTAN), the California Distance Learning Project (CDLP), and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS). Enjoying the participation of more than 300 adult educators representing 30 states, with one attendee from the United Kingdom, the Symposium brought many of the nation's foremost adult education researchers together with adult education practitioners and policy makers. Symposium proceedings (abstracts, Power Points, participant responses) are all available online at www.researchtopractice.org.



Trish Kerns and Patty Long at the opening session of the Symposium

Professional Development Specialists

Following CALPRO's invitation to program administrators to apply for the services of a CALPRO professional development specialist, 12 agencies were selected based on each agency's statement of a need it wanted to address through site-based professional development. Working with Jennifer Knight in northern California are Anderson Valley, Eureka, and Willits Adult Schools; with Sandy Steiger in central California are Monterey, San Leandro, West Contra Costa, and Watsonville Adult Schools; and with Lillian Zepeda in southern California are Alhambra Community Adult School, Anaheim School of Continuing Education, and Beaumont, Capistrano, and Redlands Adult Schools. Together, the PD specialists and staff at each agency are working to develop a professional growth plan and to initiate a site-based professional development program. Among the needs that these agencies identified are increasing learner persistence and building a community of learners. Applications will be available over the summer for agencies wishing to apply for the services of a PD specialist for the 2005–2006 academic year.

Continued on page 2...



professional development focus on learner persistence, CALPRO will soon announce an initiative on classroom-based inquiry. Classroom teachers will be invited to apply for small grants to try out and document their efforts to improve learner persistence. CALPRO will disseminate additional information on this effort over the summer, both on the CALPRO and OTAN Web sites as well as through mailings to program administrators.

At the same time that our research-to-practice initiative is growing, so too is our online course delivery. Providing oversight to the Alternative Delivery Systems effort is a new employee, Carol Christensen.



We are delighted to have Carol join the CALPRO staff: her educational and employment history make her the perfect person for the job. Please join us in welcoming her, and look for the many innovations in professional development via distance learning that Carol will bring.

In closing, I remind you to check out the variety of professional development offerings, both workshops and networking meetings, that are hosted at the various CALPRO Professional Development Centers. The calendar at www.calpro-online.org allows you to register online. In addition, check out the rich array of publications and links to other literacy resources. CALPRO staff members join me in wishing you a restful and fun-filled summer and we look forward to seeing you at one or more of our professional development offerings in the fall.

Sincerely,



Who We Are (from left to right): Mary Ann Corley, Carol Christensen, Ellen Oka, and Erik Jacobson

Study Circles on Learner Persistence

CALPRO continues to support professional development on the topic of learner persistence by training facilitators to run site-based study circles. On March 7th, 30 people attended the second study circle facilitator training workshop in Sacramento. Each facilitator will return to their program and lead three 3-hour discussion sessions, in which participants will discuss readings, engage in interactive exercises and identify ways to increase learner persistence. Participants from last year's training have completed study circles at nine schools, and some of these schools have moved to implement changes proposed during the study circles (see "The Field Speaks" on page 5). For information about the next training of study circle facilitators or about study circles in general, please contact Erik Jacobson at ejacobson@air.org.

New CALPRO Workshop on Questioning Strategies

On March 8, 2005, CALPRO conducted a Training of Trainers on the second workshop in the series, *Using Questioning Strategies to Improve Instruction*. Session One, *Questioning Strategies that Improve Cognition*, available since November 2003, addresses principles of effective questioning and examples of how to design questions that require higher-order thinking skills. In Session Two, *Designing Questioning Strategies*, workshop participants get hands-on practice designing questions. To find out when these workshops are being offered in your area, contact your local professional development center or check the CALPRO Web site master calendar, www.calpro-online.org.

New Online Courses

The pilot program for online delivery of *Managing the Multi-level ESL Class* and *Designing Programs for Adults with Learning Disabilities: Awareness for Adult Educators* recently concluded and has been evaluated. The pilot program implemented both classes over a three- to four-week period where participants communicated with an instructor and classmates via CALPRO's Web-based online delivery. CALPRO is currently assessing the outcomes, suggestions by participants and facilitators, and new improvements in the Blackboard™ platform in an effort to advance the development of distance delivery for CALPRO workshops. Plans are underway to offer final designs of these two workshops during the summer of 2005 and additional online courses by the end of the year.



Three Online Resource Guides

CALPRO has produced three new online resource guides. *Shaking the Funding Tree* was developed in collaboration with California Literacy and provides guidance in seeking funding sources and examples of how to write effective proposals. *Success for Small Adult Schools* addresses the many issues that administrators of small schools face. It is a companion piece to the *Adult Education Administrator's Online Guide*, which contains chapters on budgeting and fiscal management, community collaboration and outreach, enrollment options, guidelines for running fee-based classes, and the principal as instructional leader. The three new guides are available on the CALPRO Web site.

New Workshops for Fall 2005

CALPRO has six new workshop modules currently under development: *Counseling the Adult Learner*, *Effective Lesson Planning*, *Learner Goal Setting*, *Mentoring Instructors in Adult Education*, *Algebra Instructional Strategies*, and *Enhancing Learner Persistence*. Look for these workshops at your local professional development centers in the fall of 2005.

This newsletter is published twice a year by CALPRO. We welcome comments and submissions of noteworthy items related to professional development in adult education and literacy. Contact Erik Jacobson at ejacobson@air.org, or call 916-286-8805.



SPOTLIGHT ON CALPRO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Northern California PDC – Eureka Adult School

The Northern California PDC is located at Eureka Adult School in the coastal city of Eureka, in beautiful Humboldt County. The center opened its doors in August 2004 and provides professional development services to 13 northern California counties. Most of the agencies in this region are small adult schools, with library and correctional institution programs also making up the constituency. It is exciting that the PDC is here to meet the diverse needs of our rural communities.

To understand the needs of educational providers in northern California, the PDC manager embarked on a three-week road trip to visit the far-flung reaches of the region. This face-to-face contact has helped establish a personal relationship between the region's adult educators and PDC staff. This has resulted in collaborative efforts and has made such vast distances between schools seem much smaller.

The commitment to professional development from the northern California agencies was demonstrated

when representatives from 10 northern counties attended a two-day conference hosted by the PDC at Eureka Adult School in October 2004. Presenters at

this conference included the California Consortium of Independent Study President, the regional EL Civics Program Specialist, two OTAN Technology Project Specialists, two vocational CalCRN Training Coordinators, and the two regional California Department of Education Consultants. They offered popular CALPRO workshops, *Managing the Multi-level ESL Classroom*,

Becoming a Program of Excellence, and *Organizing and Monitoring Instruction to Improve Learning Gains*, all of which were well attended.

In addition to the conference, the PDC has offered CALPRO workshops in Glenn County at Willows Adult Education Center and is planning a workshop this spring at Shasta Adult School in Redding. The Northern California PDC welcomes you to visit our Web site at <http://www.calpro-online.org> or give us a call at 707-441-2424. It is a pleasure to serve you.

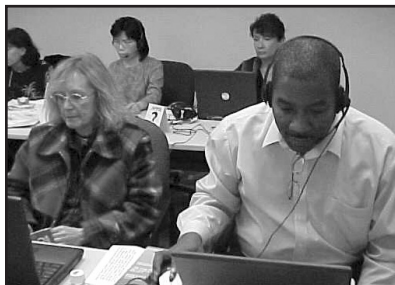
Submitted by Jennifer Knight



Jennifer Knight and Kevin O'Brien at Northern California PDC

Los Angeles Unified School District PDC – Division of Adult and Career Education

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) PDC opened its door in August 2004. LAUSD is the nation's second largest school district. The LAUSD PDC is operated through the Division of Adult and Career Education, which serves over 400,000 adult and high school students. Professional support for our educators is paramount. The PDC has hosted a variety of professional development workshops from



Using MS Word to Practice ESL Grammar and Writing

Managing the Multi-level ESL Class to *Just-in-Time Leadership*, offering strategies to assist our teachers and new administrators working within the field of adult education at various locations.

Currently we are offering workshops in *Differentiating Instruction* and will be presenting modules on *Managed*

Enrollment for ESL Programs and *Teaching Critical Thinking*. The PDC library has been quickly expanding to include a plethora of professional development materials that are available for dissemination and we invite you to avail yourselves of the resources in our collection. We have just completed our first professional development needs survey and are eagerly awaiting the results. The LAUSD Professional Development Center welcomes you to visit our Web site at <http://www.calpro-online.org> or give us a call at (213) 241-3777.

Submitted by Shelley Adams

The CALPRO and Professional Development Center Master Calendar

The master Calendar provides up-to-date details about all of the professional development opportunities that are being offered at PDCs. To access the calendar from the CALPRO homepage (www.calpro-online.org), go to the left menu and click on the "Calendar" tab. To get more information or to register for an event, simply click on the event listing on the calendar.

Extending Professional Development through Practitioner Inquiry

by Mary Ann Corley

The goal of effective and successful professional development for teachers is to change the way participants think about and practice the art of teaching and, ultimately, to improve student learning gains. Much has been written concerning the one-shot workshop, or the “knowledge transmission model” of professional development, in that it increases awareness about a topic but “seldom leads to noticeable improvement or change” (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993, p. 33).

To date, CALPRO efforts to extend and sustain professional development include the following:

- Workshops of two or more sessions with interim assignments in which participants practice the skills learned passively in the first session;
- Study circles in which participants read and reflect on research findings, consider the implications for their practice, and effect some changes in their practice;
- Site-based initiatives in which a CALPRO PD specialist works with an agency to develop small learning communities and design and put into place an agency action plan addressing a specific issue such as enhancing learner persistence; and
- A mentoring initiative in which lead teachers guide and mentor others on specific topics.

Soon, CALPRO will add a new dimension by offering teachers the opportunity to engage in practitioner inquiry. Additional information about this initiative, to be launched in the fall of 2005, will be mailed to program directors and posted to the CALPRO Web site. This article provides an overview of practitioner inquiry as a powerful approach to professional development.

What is Practitioner Inquiry?

Also known as action research or classroom-based inquiry, practitioner inquiry is both a reflective process in which teacher-participants gain better understanding of their practice, and an action-oriented process of “systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers, tutors and administrators in their own programs” (Lytle, Belzer, & Reumann, 1993). It centers on teachers as researchers who asks questions about what is already familiar to them—their own students and classrooms. Teachers target specific problems in their own educational settings, plan and carry out interventions, and observe and document the results.

The *reflective* part of the process includes identifying a problem or research question (e.g., how can we increase learner persistence?); observing and reviewing one’s own practices related to the problem (e.g., how does my agency’s student intake process contribute, either positively or negatively, to learner persistence?); collecting and analyzing data and deciding on an intervention; planning an action or intervention; and reflecting on lessons learned as a result of carrying out the intervention or action plan. The *action* part consists of implementing the action plan, monitoring and evaluating the changes that occur, and documenting and sharing results and lessons learned (Drennon, 1994).

The primary goal of practitioner inquiry is to improve practice by fostering in teacher-researchers a better understanding-of students’ needs, goals, motivations, and expectations, and of teachers’ own practices in organizing and monitoring instruction and assessing learner progress. It can help teachers recognize which of their practices embrace student needs, expectations, and goals, and which fall short, and why. This reflection-inquiry-reflection process, in providing insights into teaching and program practices, can lead to positive changes in teaching practices, more effective programs, and enhanced learner outcomes.

Benefits of Practitioner Inquiry

Several benefits accrue to teachers who conduct research. Teacher-researchers are involved in creating knowledge that is relevant to their own contexts. In focusing on and creating local knowledge, teacher-researchers demonstrate that “understanding practice cannot be accomplished by university researchers alone” (Lytle, Belzer, & Reumann, 1993). In addition, even after their formal inquiry projects have concluded, teacher-researchers

- continue to make and test assumptions about their teaching, connecting theory with practice;
- increase the use of resources, from networks, and become more active professionally; and
- become critical consumers of research, less vulnerable to fads, and more authoritative in their assessment of curricula, methods, and materials (Goswami & Stillman, 1987).

In short, by participating in practitioner inquiry, teachers can become better learners themselves and achieve more reflective levels of professional practice. By engaging in research and contributing to local knowledge, teachers move beyond their traditional roles and become leaders for change.

References

- Drennon, C. (1994). *Adult literacy practitioners as researchers*. (ERIC Digest ED 372 663). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Literacy Education, Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Goswami, D. & Stillman, P. (1987). *Reclaiming the classroom: Teacher research as an agency for change*. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.
- Lytle, S., Belzer, A. & Reumann, R. (1993). *Initiating practitioner inquiry: Adult literacy teachers, tutors, and administrators research their practice*. (Technical Report TR93-11). Philadelphia: National Center on Adult Literacy.
- Osterman, K., & Kottkamp, R. (1993). *Reflective practice for educators: Improving schooling through professional development*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.

Online Resources for Practitioner Inquiry

- Inquiry Research Compendium*
<http://www.calpro-online.org/pubs/Inquiry..pdf>
- The Pennsylvania Action Research Network*
<http://www.learningfrompractice.org/paarn/default.htm>
- Practitioner Research as Staff Development*
<http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/research/introduction.htm>

WHAT'S THE WORD?

The Field Speaks

This column features articles from our readers who share their experiences, ideas, and success stories related to professional development. CALPROgress invites readers' comments and suggestions. You are invited to send your articles by mail to CALPRO, 2880 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite #220, Sacramento, CA 95833, by fax to 916-286-8840, or by e-mail to ejacobson@air.org.

ESL Retention Project

As with many adult education programs with open entry/open exit enrollment, student retention is an ongoing concern for Santa Barbara. It is not uncommon for fifty percent of students enrolling in the initial weeks of a class to drop out before the end of the term 10 weeks later. To better understand the problem and address possible solutions, our ESL program participated in the Study Circles on Learner Persistence initiative sponsored by CALPRO. Nine instructors met a total of nine hours to read the most current research on adult student retention and discuss implications for our program. When we finished the review of the research, we decided that we wanted to produce something concrete to share with all other instructors in our program and thus the ESL Retention Project was born.

The Project has two primary components. The first is an annotated list of 12 practices and activities most likely to positively affect student retention, including a thorough needs assessment, goal setting, student orientation, a force field analysis (students' life factors supporting or hindering attendance in class), student recognition of progress, and class sense of community. The second part is the Retention Packet—an expanding collection of support materials to assist in the implementation of the identified practices and activities. Some of these resources include lesson plans, games, graphics, writing prompts, readings, pre-test/post-tests, vocabulary lists, sample needs assessment and syllabi—anything that will make it easier for our instructors to carry out the actions of the Retention Project.

Instructors involved in the Retention Project classrooms have committed to use 90 percent of the chosen practices/activities this spring term. When the term ends, we plan to study the retention rates of these classes both compared to their rates before the project and to other classes not involved in the project. The participating instructors will meet again to share additional resources and modify the project as

necessary. The revised project will then be shared at our Fall in-service as new program policy for all classes. A complete description of the project and resources can be found at <http://ce.sbcc.edu/esl.htm#retention>

Jack Bailey

ESL Program Director, Santa Barbara Adult Education

Stopping Out vs. Dropping Out

Sweetwater's division-wide ABE Summit is held once a year to provide ABE teachers updates on adult literacy issues and teaching strategies as well as opportunities for networking. ABE teachers choose to attend and are paid for three hours of professional development using 231 WIA funds. The Summit brings together day and evening teachers on a Saturday morning, with the aim of improving program quality. This year's summit, which was attended by 18 teachers, focused on learner persistence and retention.

Based on our experience in hosting Study Circles, I presented an article entitled "Stopping Out, Not Dropping Out." Study circle participants presented the idea of students "stopping out" to rest of the group and explained how it affected their view of the students who had left their programs. Teachers were placed in smaller groups to discuss their feelings about the article and how it should be presented to the students. Teachers then spent time brainstorming ways to communicate better with students about the difficulties students may face in maintaining better attendance in our programs. By discussing this article, teachers became more aware of their own attitudes about the students who leave their programs. The "stopping out" idea is a more positive way of looking at these students and allowing the door to be "open" for them to return. The article on stopping out and related materials will be placed in the teachers' ABE Department Handbooks for future use during other semesters.

Sandra Devereux

*Teacher on Special Assignment — ABE
Sweetwater UHSD-Adult Resource Center*

Persistence vs. Retention

The terms learner persistence and learner retention are related but distinct concepts. Learner persistence looks at the experience of adult learning from the student's perspective; it refers to an internal attribute. For example, NCSALL defines learner persistence as "Adults staying in programs for as long as they can, engaging in self-directed study when they must drop out of their programs and returning to programs as soon as the demands of their lives allow" (NCSALL, Report 12, pg. 3). Students may be seen as stopping out—leaving with the intention of returning—rather than dropping out. Learner retention, on the other hand, is a program level measurement of the percentage of students who remain in classes. The concept of retention is focused on the program, while the concept of persistence applies to adult learning both in and out of formal programs.



Research-to-Practice

Bridging the Gap Between Research and Classroom Practice for Adult Learners and Educators

The CALPRO Research-to-Practice Initiative is designed to help bridge the gap between the most promising adult education research efforts and the people who stand to benefit most from them: adult education learners, teachers, and administrators. It is important for teachers and administrators to be empowered consumers of research so that they can make informed choices about how research should affect decisions they make about their classrooms and programs. One of the main goals of the Research-to-Practice Initiative is to help teachers and administrators think through implications of research, focus on applications, and move research about adult basic education beyond academic discussions.

CALPRO supports the Research-to-Practice Initiative by publishing research-related briefs and by creating online spaces where the field can come together to discuss the use of research in adult basic education. Although individuals can learn a lot by reading materials on their own, professional development that is based around a learning community is more likely to lead to changes in teachers and in programs. For this reason, in addition to the more formally structured study circles (see page 2), CALPRO also encourages educators and administrators to form discussion groups that can examine research topics in depth and think through the implications for their own programs.

LPRP CONNECTIONS

Join the CALPRO-hosted Literacy Practice, Research, and Policy Connections electronic discussion list. To subscribe, send an email message to join-lprpconnections@lists.scoe.net. Leave the body of the email message blank.

CALPRO Research-to-Practice Publications

CALPRO publishes a series of research-to-practice publications in three different formats. Research Digests collect and summarize information about a single topic, Research Summaries report on the results of a single study, and Research Bibliographies contain citations and commentary related to a topic of interest. Copies of these publications are available at local PDCs and online at www.calpro-online.org. CALPRO has also developed a Discussion Guide to support focused conversations on the topics that the publications cover. The Discussion Guide is also available online. Publications currently available online are:

- *Applying Adult Learning Theory: Self-directed Learning and Transformational Learning in the Classroom* (Research Digest)
- *Learner Persistence in Adult Education* (Research Digest)
- *How Teachers Change: A Study of Professional Development* (Research Summary)
- *Research on Participatory Approaches to Adult Basic and Literacy Education* (Research Bibliography)

Northwest Practitioner Knowledge Institute Teacher Web Logs

Two practitioners from California are working with CALPRO as part of the Northwest Practitioner Knowledge Institute. This goal of this project, co-sponsored by NCSALL, is to examine the classroom implications of research being conducted at NCSALL's ESL Lab School at Portland State University. Each of the teachers from California is posting to blogs (web logs) about her experiences using this research in her own classroom. To read their Blogs, visit the following sites:

Pair Work Project Blog: <http://calpronwkipairwork.blogspot.com/>

Sustained Silent Reading Project Blog: <http://calpronwkipimssr.blogspot.com/>



Calendar of Upcoming Events



- May 5-7** CCAE/COABE Conference (www.coabe.org)
- June 14-16** CASAS Summer Institute (www.casas.org)
- July 18-21** CALPRO Adult Education Leadership Institute
- Sept. 28-30** ACSA Adult Education Conference (www.acsa.org)

RESOURCE CORNER

Other Online Resources

Stopping Out, Not Dropping Out

Alisa Belzer • FOCUS ON BASICS Vol 2, Issue A • Mar 98
<http://www.ncsall.net/?id=417>

Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners

www.familit.org/Publications/Practitioner-Toolkit-ELL.cfm

Adult Students: Recruitment and Retention

www.calpro-online.org/eric/docgen.asp?tbl=pab&IC=108

Visit the CALPRO Web site

www.calpro-online.org

for professional development materials that link research to practice, including publications, information about CALPRO moderated discussion lists, and links to other online resources.