



Winter 2009

Technology for Adult Basic Education

Register Now for TDL!
February 17-19, 2009

Registration is now open for the Technology and Distance Learning Symposium to be held in Sacramento. There is no charge for the symposium, but registration is important to facilitate planning workshops and lunches. Registration is also available for two pre-conference sessions on February 17, 2009. The session on Nuts and Bolts of Distance Learning still has openings. The keynote on February 18 will focus on Distance Learning. On February 19 the focus will be on technology integration. There will be strands throughout the symposium for technology integration, distance learning, ABE, ESL, and for coordinators and administrators. **Register now at: www.otan.us/tdlsymposium**



Technology and Distance Learning Symposium
Feb 17-19, 2009
Register Now!

ABE Institutes

CALPRO will host two one-day ABE Institutes this spring, one in Northern California and one in Southern California, dates and locations to be announced. CALPRO also offers a self-directed online course for new ABE teachers. Look for more information on the CALPRO Web site, www.calpro-online.org.

Videoconferencing with ABE Students

By Marian Thacher

Susan Gaer is teaching a reading and writing class at Santa Ana College Continuing Education that has ABE, high school subjects, and ESL students together. This class is part of the community college Basic Skills Initiative, which has the ultimate goal of helping adult education students transition to college. Last summer, Susan started experimenting with videoconferencing in her classroom. Her program purchased the necessary equipment for \$1500, and she contacted PORTS (www.ports.parks.ca.gov), a project of the California State Parks that offers videoconferences for schools that take students to different state parks and provide lesson plans and other activities to prepare students for the visit.



Susan Gaer

The first PORTS videoconference she chose was a visit to the state capitol. She spent a month emailing the host at the Capitol. They chose the vocabulary words together, and the host made a crossword puzzle that students could work on as part of vocabulary development. The videoconference was a great success. The students were engaged and excited, and they looked forward to the next videoconference with their state legislator. The second videoconference was not as successful. She set up a meeting with their state legislator, and he was waiting for them with some members of his staff, but they couldn't connect. However, PORTS sent someone up to solve the problem, and she went on to have other successful events.

Susan believes that "bringing the outside in increases reading and writing skills." She uses videoconferencing to provide a common high-interest experience for the students. They read about the subject before the videoconference and do some writing, and then write about their experience afterwards.



State of California Capitol in Sacramento

There are many organizations that offer videoconferences for education, but not all are free. The Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration, CILC, (www.cilc.org) is a good source of information. It sends out a weekly email announcing new videoconferencing opportunities, and some are free.

Another web site is TWICE (www.twice.cc). Through Shared Classes on TWICE, Susan "met" a teacher in Mexico who wants to do videoconferencing collaboration with a class in the U.S., and they are planning this event for December.

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Inside this Issue

Focus on ABE Programs

By Marian Thacher

The California Department of Education (CDE) has recently announced a three-year initiative to focus on improving instruction and outcomes in California's Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs. (See news item on the OTAN Web site from 12/2/08.) The impetus for this focus comes in part from the fact that overall ABE performance has declined for the last two years. At the same time, the number of Californians with less than a ninth grade education has grown by 17 percent, according to the 2000 census. Only 45 percent of ABE students that enroll in our programs stay long enough to have a pre and a post test score. In order to support programs to investigate ways in which we might serve students in more effective ways, CDE has issued an open application for programs that would like to participate in the statewide ABE Initiative. Programs with 100 or more ABE students are eligible to apply, and applications are due January 11, 2009.

The Leadership Projects (CALPRO, CASAS and OTAN) will be supporting this initiative in various ways. OTAN's role includes:

- Providing an ABE strand at the Technology and Distance Learning Symposium in February 2009
- Focusing the Technology Integration Mentor Academy next year on ABE
- Supporting the development of an online learning community among the agencies participating in the CDE Initiative and others
- Adding current lesson plans to the ABE area of the online lesson plan collection, particularly lessons from the STAR Project
- Increasing the number of ABE students represented on the Students Succeed Web site, www.adultedlearners.org, where there are currently 16 stories and two videos

We welcome your ideas and suggestions as we explore other ways in which we can support the integration of technology into instruction and professional development in timely and



Videoconferencing

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Lessons Learned

Be prepared – Any new technology presents its share of challenges, so “be prepared for things to go wrong.”

It takes coordination – She emailed back and forth with the presenters quite a bit in order to ensure that the content and their instructional levels would be appropriate for her students. She also did a lot of in-class preparation before the actual event. “The videoconference doesn’t teach for you,” she says, “it requires preparation and facilitation.”

Don’t give up! – She could have been discouraged when the second videoconference didn’t work, but instead she persisted until the problem was solved.

Susan’s goal is to do a videoconference with her students once a month. She currently has one scheduled with NASA in February called Humans in Space. If you would like more information, or would like to try videoconferencing with Susan’s students, contact her at susangaer@gmail.com.

Streaming Video in the ABE Classroom

By AnneMarie Molinari, ABE Instructor,
Winterstein Adult Center (SJUSD)

Many of the adult students in my Adult Basic Education (ABE) in San Juan Unified School District struggle with reading comprehension and vocabulary, which is reflected by low scores on the Social Studies and Science sections of the GED



AnnMarie Molinari in class

exam. One specific term which often presents a challenge to my students is the term biome, which refers to a community of plants and animals that form a specific region such as desert or tropical rain forest. A common response from my students is, “What the heck is a biome?”

To help my students understand the term, I have used my program’s subscription to Discovery Education Streaming to get videos, science lesson plans, activities, vocabulary word list, worksheets, and quizzes on biomes. The video allows students to visually visit all of the biomes including the tundra, grasslands, and desert. One student responded, “Everything we covered on the biome lesson helped me pass the science test.” Other comments were, “Now I know what a coniferous tree is,” and “I know that an herbivore eats only plants.” Many of my students are parents, and they have taken this new knowledge home and discussed it with their kids.

My colleague, Tom Brewer, has used streaming videos in his ABE and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) classes. Tom says he has used online video “to supplement direct instruction in my math group. I have found clips to introduce topics in the areas of basic numeracy and beyond. I also used a clip from YouTube on the Pythagorean Theorem that was made up of movie segments featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Matt Damon. The students really related to it and got them interested in the topic.”

ABE Resources on OTAN

By Linda Swanson

Here are some Web sites that are linked from the OTAN Web site. Go to www.otan.us and choose ABE/ASE/GED as the program type under Teaching Tools to find any of these Web sites. The numbers after each one refer to the ABE designated courses which are listed at the end of the article.

Lesson Plans

ABLE Net Online Lesson Plans (1.1007)

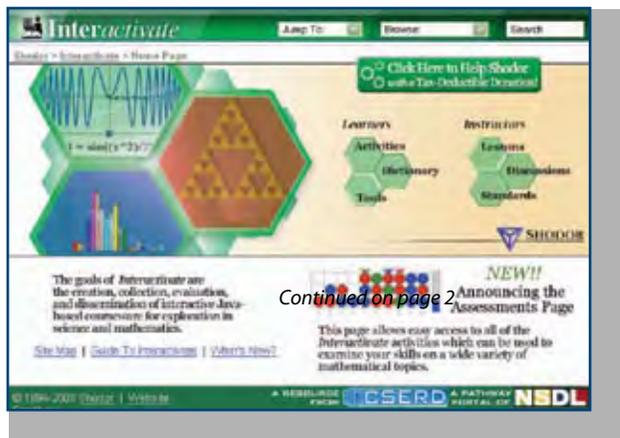
ABLE Net is a site developed for Adult Basic and Literacy Education practitioners in Pennsylvania. There are some lesson plans here which integrate computer/Internet literacy into Literacy, ABE, ASE, or GED programs. To find them, look on the bottom section labeled "Developing and Utilizing Internet-based Classroom Activities" and "Incorporating Computer Literacy into ABE Programs" and others. If you encounter a window requiring a user ID & password, just click "Cancel" and you will see the content of the lesson. Subjects included: science, math, history, geography, Internet searching and use.

Workforce Education Learning Activities Bank (LAB) (1.1001, 1.1006, 1.1007)

The LAB collects and distributes high-quality Web-based learning activities that focus on the basic skills and knowledge adults need to be effective in the 21st century workplace. The LAB also provides information on active learning, project-based learning, and the intersection of Equipped for the Future, SCANS and GED skills.

Project Interactivate (1.1002)

Project Interactivate is mathematics courseware containing more than 80 classroom-tested interactive activities and tools. Suggested lesson plans and discussions based on various concepts contained in the activities help support standards-based approaches to mathematics education. Students can also use the site to learn fractions, do comparisons, create Venn diagrams and practice other mathematics concepts. This is great for the visual learner. Supplemental materials for the activities and lesson plans exist in the form of help files, worksheets, open-ended explorations, a dictionary, and links to various standards. They are appropriate for elementary grades through undergraduate courses.



Project Interactivate

Classroom Activities

CA Distance Learning Project (CDLP) (1.1001, 1.1003, 1.1004, 1.1007)

The purpose of this site is to help adults improve basic skills like reading and spelling using real-life stories on topics of interest to adults. You'll find stories to read and/or listen to along with activities to do afterwards.

Florida Region 1 Literacy Cyberspace (1.1001, 1.1002)

This site gives adult learners Web-based access to adult education instruction, work readiness skills, and information on area support services. It is designed for adult learners with educational skills below the ninth grade in reading, writing and math. There are lessons on a variety of topics. They all contain a Web site for your students to visit.

Math Fact Café (1.1002)

Math Fact Cafe provides math fact sheets and flashcards for teachers. The focus of the site is on the elementary grades, K-5, but can be used with ABE students. You can access hundreds of pre-generated math sheets or create custom sheets to meet a student's specific needs. To find information on their copyright policies, click on "Company" once you are on their home page.



Math Fact Cafe

Sites to Use with Students

National Library of Virtual Manipulatives for Interactive Mathematics (1.1002)

This is a library of interactive Web-based virtual manipulatives and tutorials for mathematics instruction. There are manipulatives for number operations, algebra, geometry, measurement and probabilities. The activities are organized by grade level and are great for visual learners who are struggling with math concepts.

English Language Centre Study Zone (1.1001)

This site offers extensive interactive practice with grammar, reading, vocabulary and some writing.

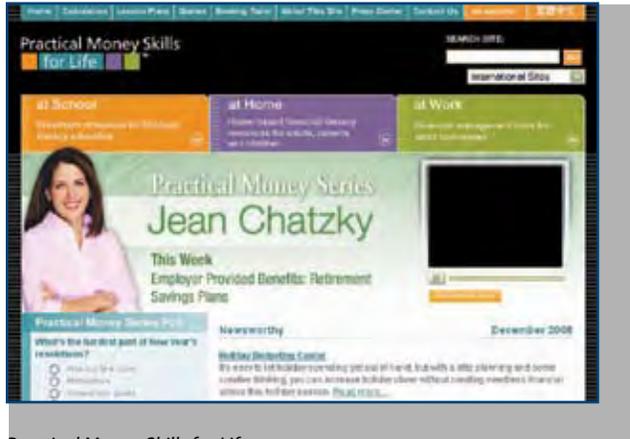
ABE Resources on OTAN

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Sites to Use with Students continued

Practical Money Skills for Life (1.1002, 1.1005, 1.1007)

This site has well-organized information with interactive quizzes and other activities. Free downloads of programs are needed for this site. The “Games” section gives students a fun way to learn about finances. Under “Banking Tutor” you’ll find a Glossary of banking terms, a “Primer on Check/ATM Cards” and “Statements.” “Calculators” are practical interactive exercises. There is also a section to help parents teach their children about money and one for retirees to help make their retirement money last as long as they do.



Practical Money Skills for Life

Eye Witness to History (1.1004)

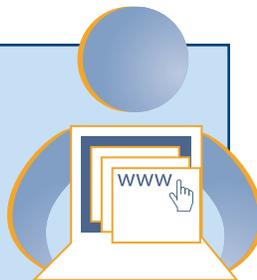
This site shows history through the eyes of those who lived it. It has audio clips of different events in history along with a narrative on the event. It makes the event come alive for your students.

Reading Skills for Today's Adults (1.1001, 1.1003, 1.1007)

Appropriate for and valued by adult learners, this site contains leveled reading selections. The project helps adults become better readers and more informed consumers, parents, employees, citizens and community members. The focus of these reading selections is on topics such as Civics, Employment, Housing, Health, School, Money, and Government. Audio files of the reading selections are also available and the stories are printable.

Adult Basic Education Course Outline Numbers (ABE)

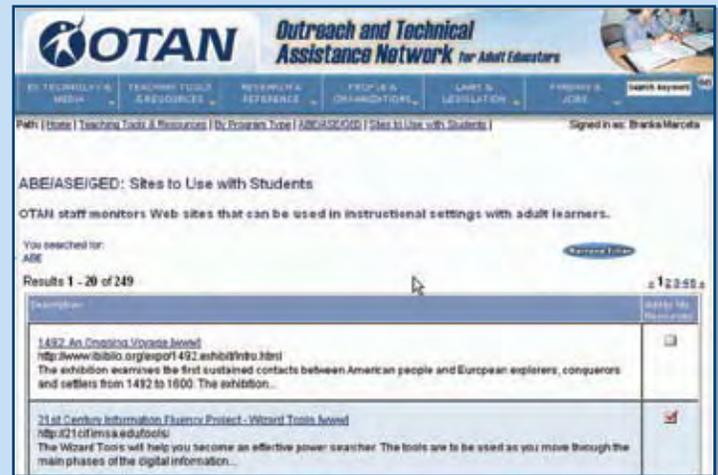
- 1.1001 ~ English Language Arts
- 1.1002 ~ Mathematics
- 1.1003 ~ Science and Health
- 1.1004 ~ Social Studies
- 1.1005 ~ Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving
- 1.1006 ~ Vocational ABE
- 1.1007 ~ Employability and Life Skills
- 1.1008 ~ ABE Family Literacy
- 1.1009 ~ ABE Multiple Academic Subjects



Organize Your OTAN Resources

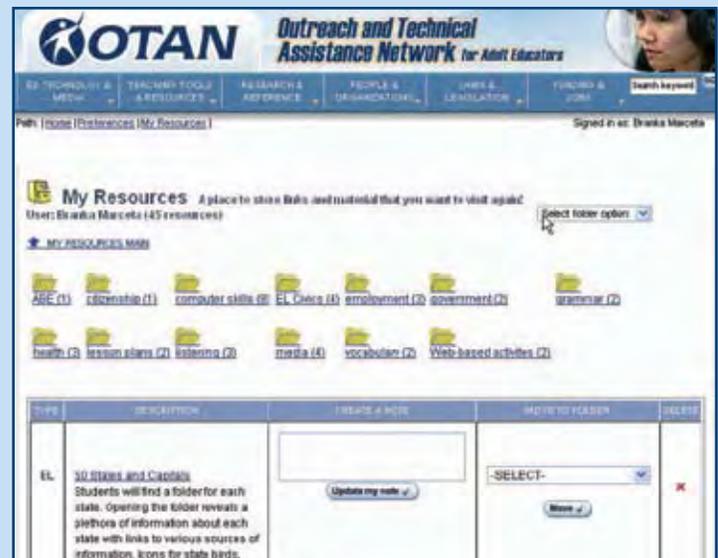
By Branka Marceta

Have you ever found a really great resource on the OTAN Web site and then couldn't find it again when you returned a month later? Did you know that once you log into OTAN's Web site, you have a tool available for you to organize all the Web sites and resources you find? Under Teaching Tools and Resources, go to your Program Area, and explore the lesson plans, Web sites and resources listed. They are listed in alphabetical order in a table. Once you find the ones you'd like, click on the Add-to-My Resource checkbox. You will find the checkbox in two places: either in the left column of the table with the listings, or on the Individual page with annotation.



When you click on the box, it will automatically take you to the My Resources page. This is where you can organize your favorites in folders for easy future reference. Next time you want to use the same Web site, you can go straight to the My Resources area by using the following path: OTAN Home Page | Preferences (top left part of the screen, above OTAN logo) | My Resources. For a video tutorial about using the My Resources feature, visit:

http://www.otan.us/timac/screencasts/2008-12-03_1636.swf



Using the Internet to Find Answers

By Marian Thacher



Sheila Shaw

Sheila Shaw teaches Adult Basic Education at the San Diego Community College District Continuing Education, and has been involved with the STAR reading project. "In STAR you ask the students to think about and maybe write down questions as they're reading, to help them get more engaged the reading process," she explains. She asks them to write down their questions as they read, then collects them. She selects the most frequently asked questions and writes them on the board, asking her students to find more information on the Internet.

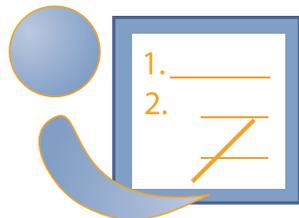
Some of the questions are factual, and some are more abstract "Why?" questions, requiring the students to figure out, as a group, how to research and find the answer. This teaches many things beyond the answer to the question, including how to find and evaluate information on the Internet. She gives mini-lectures on how to find and analyze Web sites.

Some sites she suggests are Ask.com to find answers to factual questions, and Dictionary.com to learn the meaning and pronunciation of new words. Her students also search with Google. For example, they read an article on the Nobel peace prize. To answer a factual question, such as, "Where was Nobel from?" Ask.com is a good source. Students can type a question and get the answer. Through the reading, they found out that Alfred Nobel invented dynamite, and that he thought his invention would end war. The students didn't understand why he would think that, so they searched on Google for Nobel, dynamite, war, using key words separated by commas, to find more in-depth information.

Workshops for 2009

OTAN offers free, online and face-to-face workshops for California adult education teachers. For face-to-face workshops on a variety of technology topics, gather 10 interested teachers in a computer lab equipped with an Internet connection and we will send a trainer to you. Not sure you could get 10 teachers? Consider coordinating with other small schools in your area to fill your workshop. Visit www.otan.us to see the complete list of classes. Contact Linda Swanson at lswanson@otan.us to schedule a workshop.

Or take advantage of 'just-in-time learning' in an online workshop. For more information click "more about training" on the OTAN Web site, www.otan.us. The link to the short tutorial video explains the registration process and what to expect online. Contact Penny Pearson for more information at ppearson@otan.us or (800) 894-3113 (CA only).



ABE Teacher's Passion for Technology

By Branka Marceta



Susan Coulter

Susan Coulter, an ABE teacher at Baldwin Park Adult and Community Education, integrates technology into her class every day. She believes that technology projects build her ABE students' self-esteem and give them skills for the future. Here are a few examples of how she uses technology in her classroom:

- Most group-work centers around the interactive whiteboard. Reading and vocabulary books are scanned to the interactive whiteboard and students work together to answer questions by moving and matching words, or completing crossword puzzles. Students stay on task and work cooperatively.
- She has a wireless slate which students use to type into the computer. She projects an online quiz on the screen that students compete in teams, playing a version of "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" Students pass the wireless slate from group to group allowing them to select and answer the questions projected from their seats.



Susan working with a student

- Reading selections and vocabulary are recorded on audio CDs for students to check out.
- For a student having difficulty pronouncing drug names required in a Pharmacy Technician class, Susan gave a digital voice recorder to another instructor who recorded the difficult words. She then converted the audio to MP3 files and transferred them to her student's iPod.
- She makes use of online video on Discovery Education Streaming which demonstrates rules for using commas.
- She implemented project-based learning by having students research articles about Elvis Presley online and then share their articles with the class. The class was divided into five groups and each group created a video using images, text, and music they had found online.
- She prints out Bingo cards created in Excel for a weekly Essential Vocabulary lesson to help practice for the Friday test.
- She has helped several colleagues create class Web sites that students can use both in class and at home to study vocabulary words or to practice skills they learn in class.

In addition to her energy and enthusiasm for technology integration, Susan reveals another factor that makes it all happen: "We are very fortunate to have a director, John Kerr, who values technology in the classroom and keeps us on the cutting edge." To read the full interview with Susan, including many more ideas about using technology in the classroom, visit <http://timac.wikispaces.com/SusanCoulter>.

Executive Director's Message

Enrollment in adult, vocational and higher education programs typically increases during difficult economic times. What is unfortunate about this downturn, however, is that California education programs are facing some substantial cuts. As this is written, the impact of these cuts is unknown.

Perhaps this is a good time to take a closer look at approaches for increasing the use of technology to extend and enhance learning opportunities. During February, OTAN will be hosting a Technology and Distance Learning Symposium in Sacramento. If you have thought about doing something more with using technology in your classroom or agency, or if you are thinking about starting or expanding efforts to serve learners at a distance, this will be a great opportunity for you to hear from some very knowledgeable practitioners. There is no charge to attend the Symposium but you do need to register.

Research shows that where there is real-time two-way interaction learning can be as effective as classroom instruction. Although not ready for prime time in most California adult education agencies, videoconferencing technology offers tremendous potential to provide that real-time interaction and connect the outside world into our programs. Susan Gaer, one of the perennial technology pioneers in adult education, has been experimenting with videoconferencing in her classroom. Be sure to read the lead story about Susan's efforts to engage her students in new and exciting ways.

It would be great if we all had extra hours in our day to research and find useful Web-based resources for our learners. Fortunately, you have OTAN staff available to do some of that time consuming research. In this issue of Online Connection, Linda Swanson provides information about some great supplementary instructional resources appropriate for basic skills instruction.

Best wishes for a safe, productive and economically healthy 2009.
John Fleischman



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