

VALBEC Conference

5 May 2006

Session D1

Meeting the needs of low level adult literacy students in a regional community



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Meeting the needs of low level adult literacy students in a regional community

Presenters

- Julie Neeson - Executive Officer SGAE. Julie has worked in the adult education for over 15 years and has been involved in establishing two adult literacy programs initially in Casterton and more recently in Hamilton. In developing these programs the lack of resources and factors associated with both teaching and learning literacy in a rural community have been very evident.
- Denise Phyland has worked in the adult education field for over 8 years and has been involved in supporting the developments of these course resources as well as co-ordinating a one on one adult literacy program and assisting new students in classes at SGAE

Southern Grampians Adult Education (SGAE) was incorporated in June 1999 as a not for profit, community based, education organisation, with its primary focus to provide accessible, quality education and learning to the community in a friendly, welcoming environment. SGAE provides a supportive structure for community members to grasp the opportunity for “life long learning”.

The geographical service area for SGAE primarily focuses on the Southern Grampians Shire,(approx 14,000) but services also extend into the neighbouring regions.

As a Registered Training Organisation SGAE’s primary focus is on delivering further education curriculum primarily in the adult literacy area through the Certificate in General Education for Adults.

Southern Grampians Adult Education has a well established adult literacy program and prides itself on developing appropriate resources for adults learning to read and write.

Experience in dealing with students who exhibit a resistance to traditional teaching methods and formal educational scenarios has

led to an understanding by teachers at SGAE that some learners require different pathways into re-engaging with education.

Today I am speaking on “meeting the needs of low level adult literacy students in a regional community” and how through an Innovative Approach to Curriculum Development in Adult Literacy the needs of a low level or mixed ability group can be met.

What is literacy?

Literacy is more than reading and writing, it is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture. Those who use literacy take it for granted

Those who cannot use literacy are excluded from communication in today’s world.

The literacy discussion in this session focuses on adult literacy in the functional reading/writing sense although the use of Information Technology as a literacy tool is introduced to students in a number of ways. (The mixed ability groups referred to in this session have been involved in Digital Storytelling)

There are many reasons for adults to become involved in adult literacy programs at SGAE. Literacy needs can vary from very basic lower primary school equivalent through to secondary school equivalent. Attendance frequently is a social activity (although the extra \$60 a fortnight Pensioner Education Supplement is an incentive for students who are on a Disability Support Pension)

SGAE is the only provider of adult literacy in Hamilton(South West TAFE recently closed its General Education Department) Students study the CGEA at SGAE

- in the adult “low abilities group”,
- in the adult “special needs group” and with
- the “youth at risk” in the Youth Education Program

SGAE classes tend to be more informal and geared to a specific theme with a life skills focus. Literacy classes are conducted both with pen/paper/book and on the computer. Students undertaking literacy classes at SGAE are progressing through the accredited Certificates in General Education for Adults.

The adults who attend these classes at SGAE look on them as a social occasion and the variety of work offered becomes an enjoyable time - a "Learning is Fun" ethos (although perhaps not with the Youth or the Youth tutors!!)

In order to engage adult students with limited literacy skills, SGAE has had to develop resources to meet the client's levels of skills and interest.

In country towns such as Hamilton, Adult Learning Centres don't necessarily have the opportunity to split the groups according to their abilities.

The theme of lifestyle/virtual reality television shows was of interest to the students – an adult theme.

The Lifestyle theme approach of DIY Housing was originally developed for a four week period. The interest of the students in Lifestyle television shows such as Burke's Backyard, Changing Rooms, Back Yard Blitz, Location, Location etc resulted in the theme continuing for a six month period. The initial group who were involved in the project ranged in age from 16 to late 40's and attended SGAE for two 2 1/2 sessions a week. The group included students with slight intellectual disabilities as well as very low skilled learners. All but one member of the group lived independent lives in the community, several with young families. More recently the course documentation has been trialed within the Youth Education program.

The DIY Housing Literary Resource Book was developed initially by Adult Literacy Co-ordinator Sue Munro and subsequently further developed by Anna Beilharz at SGAE.

The original author of DIY Housing was Sue Munro. I had worked with Sue for over 15 years. Sue had twice developed an Adult Literacy program from scratch first in Casterton and more recently at Southern Grampians Adult Education in Hamilton.

Sue was loath to develop this resource as she believed what had been developed was “nothing special”. However after some persuasion, Sue agreed to work on the project as she was very aware that resources in the adult literacy field were very limited and that the DIY Housing resource provided a tutor with so many different avenues to follow- a resource she would like to have access when she first commenced working in the adult literacy field. The resource is very much geared to a mixed ability group.

School experiences for the majority of adult literacy students provide bad memories. As Einstein said “you can’t expect to solve a problem using the same thinking that created the problem”

By providing innovative teaching and learning experiences combined with the development of innovative resources provides adult learners a whole new and relevant approach to literacy and learning.

Sue died in October 2004 after a short illness Before Sue died I made a promise to her that DIY Housing would be further developed and published and her second course theme work - DIY Gardening would also be formalised and published as a course resource for low level literacy groups.

In 2005 SGAE Literacy Co-ordinator Anna Beilharz further worked on the resource to expand the many ideas and provide a myriad of pathways of the theme within the CGEA framework.

The CGEA is continually referred to in the resource. With the many cross referenced activities in the resource and the scope to be able to extend the ideas further Learning Outcomes can be incorporated. This resource is so developed that only one section can be used or the whole theme can be followed

The outlines that follow are the Lesson plans Sue developed. The detailed material I refer to later provides the activities that can be included in each session and the levels as the current levels of the CGEA applies. A concern I have with the reaccreditation of the CGEA is how this may affect the ideas developed for each current level.

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Assessment Methods

Lesson 1	<i>Types of Houses</i>
Lesson 2	<i>Houses of the World</i>
Lesson 3	<i>House Plans</i>
Lesson 4	<i>How to Start Building</i>
Lesson 5	<i>Sourcing House Designs and Constructions</i>
Lesson 6	<i>House Design</i>
Lesson 7	<i>Room Design</i>
Lesson 8	<i>Decorating Houses</i>
Lesson 9	<i>House Construction</i>
Lesson 10	<i>House Location</i>

Extra Areas to Cover

Variety of assessment methods

In keeping with the overall approach of the Certificate in General Education for Adults, the assessment methods used in the Housing Adult Literacy Resource Book varied according to the specific activities.

- ~ Verbal &/or written activities
- ~ Practical
- ~ Oral questioning
- ~ Self evaluation
- ~ Informal/formal observations by facilitator
- ~ One on one and group feedback

Most activities are written on a multi level ranging from Introduction – level 3 CGEA. The facilitator determines the level of each individual.

This I believe is one of the reasons why SGAE has developed a successful adult literacy program. By delivering a thematic approach in the literacy classroom students feel equal although their abilities vary significantly.

This innovative approach to course delivery, combined with not only tutors flexibility and sensitivity to the fact that everyone knows everyone in a small community – has resulted in the program growing to become a significant program at SGAE.

Lesson 1	TYPES OF HOUSES
Purpose	To introduce students to housing. To introduce types of houses. Concentrating on local and national (Australian)
Discussion	What type of housing or dwellings do people have? Why do we have so many different types of houses? (town houses, apartments, city block houses, ¼ acre block, units, semi detached, strata units). What type of house do you have?
Activities	Use magazines, eg. Home Beautiful, papers (local, national), Weekly Times, Real Estate leaflets, to find as many types of houses as possible. Discuss and write short sentence or paragraph on who might live in these homes. eg. Town flat – young working couple Large home with garden – family Farm house – farmer with family
Extended activities	Number of different dwellings in town or own area (ask at shire offices), statistics, Make up simple graphs using information found Introduce pie charts, bar graphs, line graphs (for more advanced students) Write short paragraph on result of findings. Write a paragraph on type of home and area you would prefer and support your reason.
Outcome	Reading and Writing ~Writing for Knowledge ~Reading for Knowledge ~Writing for Public Debate General Curriculum Option ~Can collect, analyse & organise information ~Can use mathematical ideas & techniques

Each of these lesson plans have been further developed to provide different ideas. The detailed information that follows links to **Lesson 1 Types of Houses** and provides a range of activities that can be undertaken at each Reading and Writing module CGEA level. Similar detail in the Numeracy and Mathematics and Oracy modules as well as the General Curriculum module is also included in the resource.

Different ideas to be pursued at each level in

Lesson 1 Types of Housing.

Introductory (with assistance)	Level 1 (with assistance as required)	Level 2 (with assistance if necessary)	Level 3 (independently)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brainstorm words for different types of houses THEN ▪ Form and write simple sentences, using topic vocabulary AND ▪ Categorise words into appropriate groups, explaining choices ▪ Make a collage of magazine pictures AND ▪ Add headings and simple sentences ▪ Study the format of newspaper headlines THEN ▪ Write a heading for newspaper articles or magazine pictures ▪ Read and de-code housing adverts, paying particular attention to abbreviations THEN ▪ Write class letters of enquiry in response to given housing adverts AND ▪ Write housing adverts for own house or classroom, as a group ▪ Brainstorm city vs country comparisons: lifestyle, facilities, expenses, transport, entertainment THEN ▪ Make simple lists of the differences and similarities ▪ Design word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brainstorm words for different types of houses THEN ▪ Form simple paragraphs AND ▪ Categorise words into appropriate groups, justifying choices ▪ Make a collage of magazine pictures and add headings and simple sentences or paragraphs ▪ Read and de-code housing adverts, paying particular attention to abbreviations THEN ▪ Write letters of enquiry in pairs, in response to given housing adverts AND ▪ Write housing adverts for own house or classroom, in small groups ▪ Brainstorm city vs country comparisons: lifestyle, facilities, expenses, transport, entertainment THEN ▪ Make simple lists of the differences and similarities AND ▪ Write simple sentences and paragraphs on similarities and differences ▪ Design word puzzles and games using topic vocabulary ▪ Study given 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Write an expository piece about own house, desired house, favourite house ▪ Study the format of housing adverts from newspapers and real estate agent flyers THEN ▪ Read housing adverts AND ▪ Design and write own housing adverts, based on models available ▪ Study letter format THEN ▪ Write letters of enquiry in response to researched housing adverts AND ▪ Write housing adverts for own house or classroom ▪ Design word puzzles and games using topic vocabulary ▪ Brainstorm city vs country comparisons THEN ▪ Make lists of the differences and similarities, backed up by research AND ▪ Write a page on personal preferences, other comparisons between the two ▪ Research architects and architectural trends AND ▪ Write an expository 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compare houses in different parts of Australia and the world AND ▪ Brainstorm city vs country comparisons THEN ▪ Make complex comparisons of the differences and similarities AND ▪ Write an essay in argumentative, narrative, persuasive styles ▪ Research and analyse current national and local housing trends AND ▪ Evaluate trends in comparison with historical, societal and economic trends, backing up evaluations with relevant research AND ▪ Write an expository essay stating findings AND ▪ Write a description and analysis of housing trends, town planning needs, and economic trends, based on research THEN ▪ Write a predictive piece on future housing trends, based on past and present economic, societal and population trends ▪ Research architects and architectural trends AND ▪ Write an expository

<p>puzzles and games using topic vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Study simple information on architects and architectural trends AND ▪ Write a short description of a chosen architectural style or chosen architect ▪ Name animal houses AND ▪ Describe animal houses by size (above and below ground), location, materials used, and so on AND ▪ Match pictures of animals with their homes AND ▪ Describe people as animals ▪ Read stories on homeless people (the Burdekin Report) AND ▪ Write responses ▪ Write about different life stages 	<p>information on architects and architectural trends AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Write a description of a chosen architectural style or chosen architect ▪ Name animal houses AND ▪ Describe animal houses by size (above and below ground), location, materials used, and so on AND ▪ Match descriptions of animals with their homes AND ▪ Describe people as animals ▪ Read stories on homeless people (the Burdekin Report) AND ▪ Write expressive, expository, persuasive responses ▪ Write about different life stages 	<p>essay on them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Study town planning needs AND ▪ Discuss how town planning affects housing trends ▪ Describe animal houses by size (above and below ground), location, materials used, and so on AND ▪ Plot animal houses on maps AND ▪ Describe people as animals ▪ Read stories on homeless people (the Burdekin Report) AND ▪ Write expressive, expository, persuasive responses ▪ Write about different life stages, describing housing environments for them (with parents, sharing a house with friends, moving in with a partner, buying a house of own for investment etc) 	<p>essay on a chosen architectural style or chosen architect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe animal houses by size (above and below ground), location, materials used, and so on AND ▪ Compare and contrast animal and human homes AND ▪ Discuss symbiosis between human and animal relationships ▪ Read stories on homeless people (the Burdekin Report) AND ▪ Write responses ▪ Write about different life stages, describing housing environments for them (with parents, sharing a house with friends, moving in with a partner, buying a house of own for investment etc)
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Where to now?

Having regard to the CGEA currently being reaccredited SGAE is looking to modify and publish this material – not quite sure how to go about it but have been talking to VALBEC. Anyone else any ideas or thoughts

Acknowledgements

This CGEA resource was initiated by Sue Munro, SGAE Adult Literacy Co-ordinator from 1999 – 2004. Thanks to Julie Neeson, Denise Phyland, John Healy and Sally Brown, who encouraged and helped Sue bring the first document to completion.

Thanks to Anna Beilharz, who took the first document and created it into this curriculum project.

Thanks to all of SGAE's tutors, and all of SGAE's students, who have been involved in trialing sessions from this curriculum – it wouldn't be here without you all.



In Memoriam
Sue Munro

16 May 1947 – 12 October
2004