



# Mindquest Matters

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Mindquest Academy Newsletter

Issue 5  
January 2009

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## **Our Third Group**

Following the response we got from interested teachers at the Transitions Conference in October we scheduled a third MQA training in Mankato on December 12. Karen Wolters and I met with seven teachers:

Dona Anderson, Jackson  
Nancy Hislop, LeSueur  
Sue Steele, Dakota Prairie  
Rebecca Strom, Mankato  
Rene Tousignant, Faribault  
Karla Vien, Dakota Prairie  
Pat Wieseler, Faribault

Following the training Dan Hislop (LeSueur) and Lori Stearns (Mn West) received training and joined the group. All will attend the second and third trainings with the metro teachers.

## **Seminar**

A seminar on December 5 brought fifteen seasoned MQA teachers together to share ideas and learn from each other.

The seminar meets MQA goals by providing professional development and support of a community of online adult educators. Teachers gave these suggestions for future seminars:

Time for sharing teaching experiences  
Q and A about teaching techniques  
New ways of delivering MQA resources  
Models of integration  
Problem-solving  
Ways to market  
Making connections to state and program managers  
Learning about college teachers' expectations  
Closing gaps between ABE and community colleges.

Mary Diedrich, Dean of Student Success at North Hennepin Community College, shared information about the NHCC College Prep program, services for students at NHCC, and their development courses and how they align with freshman courses.

## **Second Training**

A second training for metro and southwest Minnesota teachers took place on January 15 and for northern Minnesota teachers on January 23.

Activities included sharing of MQA courses being taught, discussing issues and concerns, and a discussion and practice around the theoretical

approach of cognitive apprenticeship and constructivism.

### **The Relationship Between Literacy Proficiency and the Digital Divide Among Adults with Low Education Attainment**

By Clare Strawn, Portland State University

This technical report from the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning ([www.lsal.pdx.edu](http://www.lsal.pdx.edu)) presents interesting and perhaps surprising findings.

The research studied computer use from a representative sample of 934 adults between 19 and 44 who lived in Portland, OR, who had not earned a H.S. diploma and were proficient although not necessarily native speakers of English. The information was collected in six waves from 1998 to 2000.

#### Some of the findings and conclusions:

► The number of computer users increased from 61% in 1999 to 98% by 2005. A substantial percent of people at every literacy level are becoming computer users over time. However, there is a much lower rate of internet users among those with lower literacy. The author notes two possible explanations: affordability of internet connection and the greater literacy demands of internet use.

► Seeing oneself as a computer user and developing this identity is important.

► Literacy proficiency plays an important role in being fluent with technology. Higher literacy proficiency and reading practices facilitate initial entry into the status of computer user and a deeper understanding of the practices engaged beyond what users learn through experience.

► Not being a computer user is not creating an obstacle to attending programs, but a question rises as to whether adult education programs are facilitating computer literacy development. Only six percent of program participants in the LSAL population reported using internet for school related activities, suggesting computer technology is not as integrated into the curriculum as it might be.

► The participants realized that computer skills are important for their future employability. Eleven percent said computer skills were not needed for the type of work they do. Of the remainder half felt that their computer skills limit their job opportunities and the other half felt they have the skills they need.

► The author recognizes the contextual challenges of integrating technology into adult education – development of content, research into

best practices, policy alignment, infrastructure investment and educator development. (Askov, E., Johnston, J., Petty, L. & Young, S. (2003). *Expanding Access to Adult Literacy with Online Distance Education*. National Center for the Study of Adult Literacy and Learning.)

► She notes also that adults with literacy challenges need flexibility in time and place for study, anonymity, absence of judgment, and patience, all of which are potentially addressed through information technology

Although the author did not address the importance of computer skills for post secondary education specifically, she does note that “new literacy skills are demanded: fluency with computer functions, the cognitive ability to process information and communicate in non-linear and a-synchronistic ways, to evaluate quantities of information presented simultaneously, and to author text in electronic media” (p. 23).

### **Practicing Reading Strategies**

A Research to Practice Brief, “Strategies to Facilitate Reading Comprehension in College Transition Students.” By Kathryn Di Tommaso (May/June 2005), on the National College Transitions Network (NCTN) web site documents reading strategies that assist less skilled readers in doing the skills necessary

for successful comprehension for college study.

Four of the strategies are listed below with references to Mindquest modules which give students practice in the strategies:

#### 1. Visual structures or Graphic Representation

Visual representations provide opportunities to analyze what is read that reading alone and linear outlining can't provide.

Reading for ELL/Effective Reading, Modules 4, 5

Reading Strategies, Modules 2 and 5  
Managing College Success, all modules

#### 2. Question-Generating

Students generate their own questions to become more active readers. They then read the text looking for the answers and are actively engaged in the comprehension process.

Reading for ELL/Eff Reading, Module 3

Reading Strategies, Modules 1, 2, 3, 4  
Biology, Module 1

Literature, Module 2

Study Reading, Modules 2, 3, 5

#### 3. K-W-L Charts

This strategy helps students tap into prior knowledge, set purposes for reading, and identify what they learned while reading.

Reading for ELL, Module 3, 5

#### 4. Self-assessment

In using self-reporting, checklists, and portfolio entries, students monitor their comprehension and recognize when they begin to lose focus.

Learning to Learn, Modules 2, 3, 4  
Study Reading, Modules 2, 3, 4  
Reading Strategies, Modules 2, 3

Not discussed in the article but present in many MQA courses is the strategy discussed in our January meetings, that of “think-alouds.” Think-alouds actively engage the reader in the text by thinking out loud about what they are reading. In online learning think-alouds are represented by a two-column chart. The first column includes the text. In the column at the right the student asks questions of the text or makes notes. This strategy is used in many of the sampler courses, especially Anthropology and Public Health.

#### **Motivating Students to Enroll in MQA Courses**

The priority concern brought up at the January 23 training in Cass Lake was around ways to motivate students to take MQA courses/modules. The group came up with these suggestions:

1. Use a course in a class – everyone does it. Explain that the online course is the textbook.

2. Use a module or part of a module as a lesson, e.g. using charts and graphs.
3. Invite a student who is excited about MQA online learning to speak to students.
4. Use terminology that speaks to them, e.g. “online college prep,” “academic skills”, etc.
5. Show that courses assist in preparing them to be successful in college.
6. Show that courses assist them in building skills for the workplace.
7. Explain that they will learn computer skills useful for them at work and in post secondary education.

If you have other ideas, please send them in to Bella.

#### **Moodle**

It is expected that MQA courses will be transferred into Moodle by the middle of February.

Two trainings are planned to bring teachers into the world of Moodle:

- February 20 Seminar
- March 20 for new teachers

#### **Upcoming Dates**

- Third training in metro – May 1
- Third training in Cass Lake – May 8
- Third Seminar – May 15