



Mindquest Matters

A Mindquest Academy Newsletter

Issue 1 March 2007

Off the Press!

This is the first issue of Mindquest Matters. We feel this newsletter will be one way to stay in touch with all of you on a regular, monthly basis.

We will share information and new resources, toward strengthening effective practice in online learning and exploring the possibilities that Mindquest has to offer.

Thank you to Rita Koon for the name for our newsletter.

I invite you to contribute to the newsletter – links, strategies you have found that work well with MQA, learner profiles, questions for readers to probe, etc. Send any “matter” of importance. We want this to be a valuable resource for you.
-- bellahanson@concast.net

Phase 2 and 3 Training

Teachers in phases 2 and 3 met on Friday, February 16. We discussed

approaches for training next year and how Mindquest Academy might fit into the State’s three-year initiative on transition to postsecondary education.

We practiced using rubrics as guides to instructing students in essay writing and in assignments combining the reading of text and the writing of short answers. We believe the rubrics will be very useful in guiding new teachers in responding to assignments.

We were introduced to audio on Mindquest Academy courses. So very exciting! More to come!

Training Dates

Phase 1 – March 30

Phase 2 & 3 – April 20

Phases 1, 2 & 3 – June 15

Forms

Remember to send student logs and module and course evaluations to Bella on a continuing basis.

ETS Report: A Perfect Storm

According to researchers at Educational Testing Service (ETS) our nation is in the midst of a perfect storm which could change our nation's future. The three sociological and economical forces that are intersecting are:

- substantial disparities in skills levels (reading and math)
- seismic economic changes (widening wage gaps)
- sweeping demographic shifts (less education, lower skills)

They state that there is "little chance that economic opportunities will improve among key segments of our population if we follow our current path. To date, educational reform has not been sufficient to solve the problem."

They suggest that we must raise the learning levels, increase reading and math skills and narrow the achievement gaps.

To read the executive summary, go to <http://www.ets.org/portal/site/ets/>

Link to College Transition Information

The National College Transition Network (NCTN) has a valuable web site for ABE staff. The NCTN

supports ABE staff and programs and states in instituting and strengthening ABE-to-college transition services.

You can have a free membership in NCTN and gain access to a wide variety of resources, including experiences of teachers and programs through the Promising Practice Series and curriculum ideas. Their website is <http://www.collegetransitions.org>.

Supporting ELL's Transitions

In her brief "Supporting Adult English Language Learners' Transitions to Postsecondary Education," Julie Mathews-Aydinli notes that programs should emphasize skills that help learners enter and be successful in academic programs.

Her recommendations for **teaching** these skills include:

- Focus on language accuracy and careful use of language.
- Include extensive reading and genre-based writing.
- Develop vocabulary centered on less frequently used academic terminology.
- Develop conceptual and critical thinking skills.

She describes factors that **administrators** should consider when

planning programs to promote adult ELL students' transitions to postsecondary education:

- Address nonacademic factors.
- Provide orientation to students.
- Address academic factors.
- Strengthen programs through cooperation.
- Solidify economic benefits of post-secondary education.

She adds that student orientation, counseling services, and productive integration of adult education programs with content programs in community and technical colleges to meet the particular needs of adult learners are important.

The article can be found on the Center for Applied Linguistics website at <http://www.cal.org/caela>

From Stephen Brookfield:

"...Reflecting on the experience of [your] learning has some very powerful implications for your teaching. It will make you aware of the behaviors that affirm and encourage students...It will sensitize you to some of the typical rhythms of learning—such as incremental fluctuations and the attainment of learning plateaus...It will give you new insight into why and how people resist learning and what

some useful responses to this resistance might be.

So, if you can, resolve to spend some time each semester, or even annually, in the role of a learner."

Brookfield, S.D. (1990). *The Skillful Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

Learner Profile

Kritsana Pregent has been learning online with Mindquest Academy since September 2006. She started in the GED class in Osseo ABE and is now in the college transition class at North Hennepin Community College. She plans to study to be a dental assistant. Kritsana likes to use the computer to learn because "it is easy for me to learn and do home work online." So far she has completed two courses: Skills for Writing Well and Effective Writing. She is currently working on the courses Reading for ELL, Writing Process, and Academic Skills. Kritsana's advice for students who want to try learning online is, "It is much easier if you have some computer skills; but if you don't, your teacher will teach you anyway."

Kritsana is a student in Paula Freiermuth's classes.