



Mindquest Matters

Mindquest Academy Newsletter

Issue 4
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Mindquest Training in 08-09

MQA staff provided the first of three face-to-face trainings at two sites, one in northern Minnesota and one in St. Paul. These trainings followed completion of online training module 1.

On October 2-3 Bella and Jerry Anderson traveled to Cass Lake to meet with 9 teachers:

Ellen Anton, East Grand Forks
and Northland College

Tracy Chase, Bowstring (AEOA)

Ann Dzenge, Thief River Falls
and Northland College

Sandy Evenson, Grand Rapids,
AEOA

Jean Gardner, AEOA

Sherry Hjelle, Gonvick

Sarah Larson, Cass Lake

Laura Malott, Red Lake

Kerry Rakes, Fond du Lac (AEOA)

The metro training was October 23-24 at the Minnesota Literacy Council with 13 participants;

Merri Dordal, Cambridge-I santi

Heidi Drenchhahg, So. St. Paul

Jeanne Flaherty-Gonzales, South
Washington County

Anne Glassman, Lakeville

Randi Gurban, Hopkins

Toni Groe, East Central

Judy Herzog, Metro North
Forest Lake

Jed Highum, Mankato

Pam Nelson, Minnetonka

Gaby Postiglione, Hastings

Kara Rotramel, Metro North
Forest Lake

Sherry Smith, Metro North, Elk
River

Judy Whalen, South Washington
County

An enthusiastic welcome all of you to our cadre of Mindquest Academy teachers.

Trainers on Board

Six trainers are on staff with Greta Ploetz and Bella. They provide valuable expertise in the training sessions and mentor with wisdom and practical ideas in coaching teachers in the online modules. The trainers are Jerry Anderson, Paula Freiermuth, Bob Maas, Sue Ann Rawlins, Tammy Twiggs, Karen Wolters.

Distance Education

"At its most basic level, distance education takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology (i.e., voice, video, data, and print), often in concert with face-to-face communication." This definition (which you could probably have written yourself) is in an article "Distance Education at a Glance," on the University of Idaho web site. <http://www.uniweb.unidaho.edu/eodist1.html>

The author states that research comparing distance education to traditional face-to-face instruction indicates that "teaching and studying at a distance can be as effective as traditional instruction, when the method and technologies used are appropriate to the instructional tasks, there is student-to-student interaction, and when there is timely teacher-to-student feedback." MQA teacher methods meet these three factors.

Distance education is receiving more attention in Minnesota with both students and teachers. Mindquest Academy and GED-I are online for GED, diploma, ESL and college prep students. St. Paul is launching the Learner Web (see www.learnerweb.org). MQA and MLC have online teacher training.

A Collective Intelligence session was held at the transitions conference on distance education. Susan Wetten-Brandt at MLC and I facilitated this session. Three questions were discussed in groups: making personal connections, cost and access, and effective communication.

We would like you to weigh in with your ideas about distance education. What do you consider the challenges and successes with distance education? Other thoughts?

Continuing Education Seminars

Dates have been scheduled for three seminars for Mindquest teachers who have completed training: November 21, February 20, and May 1.

Teachers have found the discussions at our seminars to be enriching. Topics we will be discussing are how you are using MQA, successes and challenges, growth through teaching, and reviewing constructivist approaches. Please email me with ideas for topics that you want included.

Update on Moodle

Our web designer Troy Zaushny is in the process of the transfer of Mindquest Academy training modules and courses onto a Moodle platform. This means that we can connect with MQA courses directly from the web

without going through the FirstClass platform.

We plan to train new teachers in the use of Moodle at the January training and February seminar.

GOING TO SCALE: 20 Million by 2020

“Education drives the economy” is the first sentence of the Executive Summary of the National Commission on Adult Literacy (NCAL) in their June 2008 “Report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy.”

The Commission presents evidence that failure to address our adult education and workforce skills needs is putting our country “in great jeopardy and threatening our nation’s standard of living and economic viability. ”

They state that... “among the 30 OECD free-market countries, the U.S is the only nation where young adults are less educated than the previous generation.” (*How could that be?*)

They further state, “More than two-thirds of the workforce is beyond the reach of the schools. Yet our current adult education system—designed for a different time and different challenges—is not equipped to address the urgent national need. Federal

adult education, training, and English language programs reach only about 3 million adults a year.”

The report offers an action program through two recommendations:

- ▶ ...transform the adult education and literacy system into an adult education and workforce skills system with the capacity to effectively serve 20 million adults annually by the year 2020.

- ▶ ...make postsecondary and workforce readiness the new mission of the adult education and workforce skills system.

The two recommendations are followed up by nine broad actions for Congress and state governments to act upon.

Action 4 relates to online learning: *“Strong national leadership must be provided to develop and deploy technology-assisted learning, including the creation of a national Web portal for adult learners. ”*

“The Commission believes that...we cannot reach the recommended 20 million goal by 2020 without providing access beyond classroom walls. Properly deployed, technology has the power to provide unprecedented access to adult learners—at times, in places, and at a pace convenient to

their life and job circumstances. It is an absolutely vital ingredient."

Mindquest Academy is on the forefront in Action 4!

Check out the Executive Summary at <http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org> to read the other 8 broad actions that are recommended.

Presentation by Julie Strawn at Transitional Conference

A great deal of information was presented by keynote speaker Julie Strawn at the transitional conference. Julie is the senior policy analyst at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP).

Her information can be accessed in a report, "Policies to Promote Adult Education and Postsecondary Alignment" she submitted to the National Commission on Adult Literacy in October 2007.

In Section 2, she asks, "What stands in the way of more lower-skilled adults entering and succeeding in postsecondary education and training?"

She lists three major factors

1) Lack of alignment between adult education, job training, and postsecondary policies in support of

the workforce education needs of lower-skilled adults.

ABE's role in the lack of alignment is that their education services are not aimed at preparing students for careers or for postsecondary education and training. Postsecondary education lacks alignment in that it doesn't typically coordinate with adult education as it does with high schools.

2) Financial, personal, and family challenges facing lower-skilled adult students

3) Weak capacity in adult and postsecondary education and training institutions for effectively responding to these students' challenges or for innovating for better alignment

Strawn points out that adult education programs are hampered by severe under-funding of the system.

Minnesota state ABE and local ABE programs are working to address these factors in the three-year initiative. Mindquest Academy is placed in a strategic position to play an integral role in aligning academic needs of ABE students with success in postsecondary education.

Strawn's article may be found at <http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org>.