

Notebook

Resources for the Adult Educator

A Membership Publication of ProLiteracy

In this issue



Workplace Literacy



Writing



Classroom Management



Health Literacy



Exploring Resources



Tutor Profile

Notebook is published three times a year by ProLiteracy, the largest adult literacy and basic education membership organization in the nation. *Notebook* is just one of the many resources we provide to our members, who consist of organizations and individuals that share a passion for adult literacy and its potential to improve lives.

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Editor's Corner

The fall always conjures images of new classes in adult literacy. Even if your program continues classes through the summer, there seems to be a new energy associated with classes and tutoring sessions this time of year. It makes for a perfect time to reenergize some ideas for your teaching.

One important area of workplace literacy is communicating with co-workers, managers, and customers. Our story "Understanding Safety Signs" tackles one area where communication is especially important—workplace safety. Use our excerpt from the New Readers Press book *Communicating at Work* to cover some common workplace signs in English. You'll help keep your students safe next time they're at work.

The next story in this issue, "Unique Graphic Organizers for Students' Learning," shares two graphic organizers that students can use as they organize their ideas for a range of topics. We chose these two organizers as they take different approaches, but they are both great tools for students to use while learning.

Keeping track of all you have to do at the start of a school year can get overwhelming, right? Since the fall is the beginning of a new school year for many programs, we thought it would be the ideal time to share "Your Beginning-of-the Year Checklist." You'll likely find many tasks on here that are required by your program or that are just good practices when classes start again.

Health literacy is a topic that's relevant for all adult literacy learners, and our article this issue addresses something all adults should know about—prediabetes. Many learners may be aware of the dangers of diabetes, but they may not know that prediabetes can be a warning to change your habits before Type 2 diabetes develops. Use our short lesson to educate students so they can follow up with a health provider if needed.

Exploring Resources includes the usual mix of New Readers Press and ProLiteracy Professional Development promotions and helpful links.

Last, but not least, our Tutor Profile this issue features Ronna Gray, a tutor with Literacy Volunteers Charlottesville/Albemarle in Charlottesville, Virginia, who participates in an interesting conversation group at her program. Please stay in touch with your story ideas.

—The Editor

Understanding Safety Signs



Purpose

To help English language learners (ELLs) and basic literacy learners better understand safety signs they may see at work.

Rationale

In almost any workplace setting, learners will see safety-related signs, some of which may be required by law to be posted and others of which the employer decides to post. Whether their workplace setting is a warehouse, office, hospital, or other location, it's important to understand safety signs to avoid potential dangers.

The page shared in this article is excerpted from the Beginning level of *Communicating at Work*, published by New Readers Press. The lesson is slightly modified from the Teacher's Guide that is part of the series. This particular lesson would fit in well with a focus on workplace skills in general or workplace safety. See the sidebar on this page for more information about the *Communicating at Work* series.

You can find this page excerpt on ProLiteracy's Education Network (<https://www.proliteracy.org/education-network/>). Log in as you normally would, and search for "Understanding Safety Signs page, Notebook, Fall 2025." The page will say "Look Out!" at the top. If you don't have an EdNet account, you can create one for free.

The Basic Activity

1. **Make enough copies of this page to share with readers, or be ready to share it electronically.**
2. **Write "Look out!" on the board or another area where all students can see it.** Ask, "What do you do when you hear this?" Elicit answers. Ask students how they know about dangers in a workplace. Make sure that someone mentions signs. Look around your classroom or hallway to see if there are any signs you can point out. Let students know that they will learn about some common workplace safety signs.
3. **Provide students with a copy of the page from Education Network.** Give them a couple of minutes to review it. Ask them what they see and notice on the page.

Workplace Literacy

More Information About Communicating at Work

<https://www.newreaderspress.com/Communicating-at-Work-Beginning>

<https://www.newreaderspress.com/Communicating-at-Work-Intermediate>

This two-level series transitions learners from general English to authentic workplace English, helping them develop the essential communication skills needed to thrive on the job in the U.S. and Canada.

Practical, interactive lessons in high-frequency workplace vocabulary and language structures are designed to build learners' comprehension, fluency, and confidence so they can speak up, ask questions, contribute, and develop their skills at work.

Highlights of *Communicating at Work*:

- Authentic dialogs, discussion, role plays, writing, and collaborative tasks.
- Topics on work schedules, pay and benefits, following instructions, safety, teamwork, and more.
- Aligned to ELPS, CEFR, NRS for ESL, CCRS, and WIOA objectives.
- Integrated math and digital literacy in every unit.
- Appropriate for groups or one-to-one teaching.
- Ideal for preparing learners for IET and career pathway programs.
- Free online audio for learners to listen and practice at any time.

A combined Teacher's Guide for both levels includes teaching strategies, essential background information, lesson objectives, and more.

More Information

Video: Learn Workplace Safety Words

<https://tinyurl.com/y579fb59>

This video by YouTube channel Jay's English Podcast teaches viewers safety-related words like *first aid kit*, *flammable*, *safety gloves*, *work boots*, and more.

ESOL Courses: Health and Safety

<https://www.esolcourses.com/topics/health-and-safety.html>

The website ESOL Courses has several short lessons about workplace safety. The most relevant for the lesson in this issue of *Notebook* include "Health and Safety at Work - Useful Words to Learn" and "Health and Safety at Work - Picture Matching Quiz."

50+ Safety Messages of the Day

<https://safetyculture.com/topics/50-safety-messages-of-the-day/>

The website SafetyCulture shares several short, teachable safety messages grouped together by topic, including fire safety, electrical safety, first aid, and more. You could pick a topic that is most relevant to your readers and teach its related phrases.

4. **Review the vocabulary associated with each sign in whatever way you usually would.** For instance, you can read aloud each word below the sign and have students repeat. You can also talk about each sign, asking students if they know what the sign means and providing more information if needed. Or you could give students time individually or with a partner to practice pronouncing each vocabulary word associated with each sign.
5. **Next, let learners know that they will learn some safety phrases associated with each sign, found under the area "Read about describing dangers."** Read each sentence aloud with students and answer any questions they may have about meaning or pronunciation. Let them know that *PPE* stands for personal protective equipment (this is something taught earlier in the book). You can also review the Vocabulary Tip to reinforce the use of words like *danger*, *caution*, *warning*, and *attention*.
6. **Ask comprehension questions to ensure students understand the vocabulary.** Their answers could include information that goes beyond what is on the page. For example:
 - What noises could be dangerous? (loud machines)
 - What chemicals are toxic? (cleaning supplies, paint)
 - What PPE should you wear to protect yourself against toxic chemicals? (mask, gloves)
 - What PPE should you wear to protect yourself from sharp objects? (gloves, hard hat)
7. **Have students talk with a partner about the warning and safety signs they see at work.** If students don't work, ask them to identify warning signs they see in daily life (for example, wet floor signs at stores, fire danger warnings on clothing, toxic chemical warnings, and road signs).
8. **Point out the phrases they have learned that help to give warnings, such as, "Look out," "Be careful," "Don't touch that," and "Watch out."** Have students work together to try and make new sentences using these warning phrases.
9. **Ask students to look out for any safety signs they see between now and the next class.** Encourage them to take pictures of the signs or even draw them. Next class, you can discuss some of the signs they have seen.

UNIT 5
Lesson
15

Look out!
Workplace Accidents and Dangers

OBJECTIVES

- Understand simple warning and safety signs.
- Give warnings.
- Communicate workplace dangers.

Vocabulary Preview

88 Use the pictures to check the meaning of the words in 1-8. Listen and repeat.

 1. wet floor	 2. heavy	 3. noise	 4. heat
 5. electrical shock	 6. sharp	 7. toxic	 8. fire

Read about describing dangers.

Look out! The floor is wet.
That's heavy. You need two people to lift that.
The noise can be dangerous for your ears. You have to wear earplugs.
Be careful of the heat. It's very hot today.

Don't touch that. You could get an electrical shock.
Be careful. There are sharp objects in there.
Those chemicals are toxic. Make sure to wear the correct PPE.
Watch out for fire in this area.

VOCABULARY TIP
Warning signs can use different words to get your attention: *danger*, *caution*, *warning*, and *attention*.

What warning and safety signs do you see at work? Tell a partner.

You can find this page on ProLiteracy's Education Network to use with students.

Unique Graphic Organizers for Students' Learning



Purpose

To present two graphic organizers that adult literacy teachers/tutors can use in their classroom.

Rationale

Graphic organizers are a great way for students to organize their thoughts on something they are reading or learning. Many teachers likely know the K-W-L graphic organizer, where learners write what they know about a new topic, what they want to learn, and then what they learned after reading about that topic. Teachers are also likely familiar with Venn diagrams, where learners compare what's different between two people, things, or ideas and then write what they have in common where the two circles overlap.

This article presents two graphic organizers: the Podcast organizer and the Then/Now organizer. This article includes a summary of each organizer and how you might use them. Both graphic organizers were shared originally by the website Ditch That Textbook (see sidebar on page 6).

Writing

Benefits of Graphic Organizers

Here's why you may want to consider using graphic organizers with your students. Graphic organizers can:

- help students organize thoughts on complex ideas
- clarify what information is most important
- encourage critical thinking
- help with memory retention



Graphic Organizers: Tools for Instructors and Students

<https://www.proliteracy.org/courses/graphic-organizers-tools-for-instructors-and-students/>

ProLiteracy has a free 1.5-hour course on using graphic organizers. In this course, instructors will learn how to use graphic organizers to:

- help students visually connect their thoughts and ideas
- organize information to easily understand it
- guide and direct students as they apply strategies and processes to reading, writing, and math

Graphic organizers are also a useful tool for instructors and tutors. They provide a visual representation of how the student thinks, processes information, and applies information. The tutor or teacher can use this to inform and target instruction as well as to document progress.

More Information

50 Free Graphic Organizers – and How to Make Your Own

<https://tinyurl.com/4cn2nw69>

For even more detail on graphic organizers, check out this comprehensive article from Matt Miller at Ditch That Textbook. His article, where we originally found the two graphic organizers, showcases 50 graphic organizers and details how to create and share them with students.

If you're in a rush, you can scan through the different types of graphic organizers in the article to find something suited for your students. If you have more time, you can peruse the dozens of graphic organizers shared by Miller to find the right one(s) for you.

Here are just a few of the graphic organizers shown in his article:

- Shades of Meaning (to understand nuanced differences between words)
- Top 3 (for making a favorites list related to a topic of your choice)
- Cause and Effect Chain
- Word Web/Semantic Map (to bridge the link from a main topic to subtopics)
- What Happens Next? (a life cycle graphic organizer)

The Podcast Organizer

Nowadays, many people learn by listening to podcasts or audio clips online. This organizer, shared by Andrea Clutts on X (@acluttsSVHS) via Ditch That Textbook, gives students a chance to reflect on what they learned from a podcast. As you can see on page 7, students are asked to write a short summary of what they heard. This gives them practice with summary writing. They also have the chance to write any questions (this can be done before listening or as follow-up questions after listening) and a favorite quote. Students also can visualize the podcast in some way, perhaps drawing a picture of a scene from the podcast itself or a picture of the subject. Finally, students have the chance to share whether they'd recommend the podcast to others and, if so, to what age group.

The Then/Now Organizer

The Then/Now graphic organizer is somewhat similar to a Venn diagram because students can write about similarities, but they will go into more detail. The organizer shown here, created by instructor Kate Nicholson, focuses on immigration. However, you could revise it to focus on another historical topic you're studying in class. Have learners write about who, where, causes, effects, reception, and obstacles in the past compared to now. They should focus on how things are similar—although, you could also revise the organizer to compare how things differ.



Title of Podcast:

Topic:

Audience:

Length:

Source:

What questions do you have?

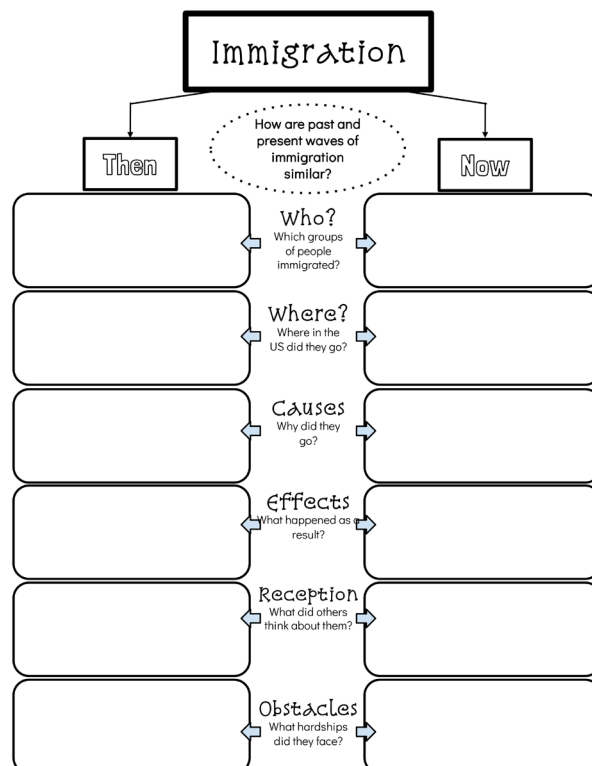
Favorite Part/Quote:

Summary of Podcast (Include at minimum 5 specific details or references.)

Visualize It

Would you recommend this to others? If so, what age group? Why?

@ACluttsSVHS <https://creativetechclassrooms.blogspot.com/>





Classroom Management

Conversational Activities to Use with Students

Get students out of their seats and talking. Here are a few activities you can use to help students get to know each other:

- **What about you?** Provide students with a few introductory questions, such as “Where are you from?”, “What is your favorite food?”, and “Do you have children?” Pair up students to ask and answer these questions.
- **Conversation grid.** A conversation grid expands on the idea above and gets students chatting with more than one student. Using a grid format, students write four or five questions at the top of their paper, leaving space on the far left for each person’s name. Learners will write each person’s answers in a short format.
- **What’s your favorite...?** Have students stand in a circle. Have a lightweight ball or other item you can throw. Have a question in mind, like, “What’s your favorite food?” Throw the ball to someone and have them answer the question. Next, they’ll throw the ball to someone else.
- **Tell your story.** Have learners write a short story about themselves. You can model the story, so students know to give information such as their name, where they are from, family details, what type of work they do, and maybe another fact. Ask for student volunteers to share their story.

Your Beginning-of-the-Year Checklist

Purpose

To present a checklist that helps teachers and tutors get organized for the start of a new school year in adult literacy.

Rationale

“Back to school” can mean many things for adult literacy students. It also can mean a lot of responsibilities for teachers and tutors. Having a checklist that takes you step by step through what needs to be done when school starts can be a big help. Find our checklist on page 9, and use the instructions below to help understand each item on the list.

Make sure to check in with your program administrator for any other items you should add to this list, as all states may require different tasks.

A Short Explanation of Checklist Items

1. **Attend any orientations or training geared toward the start of the year.** Your program will let you know if there are any required orientations or trainings/in-services to attend. These can be a helpful way to gather more information and meet fellow instructors.
2. **If you have a classroom, decorate your space.** Consider hanging up posters, quotes, and even funny pictures.
3. **Obtain any forms to handle attendance.** Every program handles attendance records a little differently. Find out what your program expects so you get in the habit of following their requirements.
4. **Find out how or where students can obtain textbooks.** Will students order textbooks on their own? Does your program sell them? Is some of the information they need digital rather than printed? Ask your program coordinator for details.
5. **Meet with students to discuss and note their semester goals.** Some examples of goals students might have include reading to their child, obtaining a job, earning their U.S. citizenship, and more. Setting goals is meaningful for students but also provides information that your program may require.

6. **Perform any testing with students (if applicable).** Most of the time, testing takes place in advance to determine what level they are. However, your program may have other testing it requires.
7. **If working with more than one student, facilitate a conversation-based activity for students to get to know each other better.** The start of the school year is an ideal time for students to spend some time together and find out what they have in common. See our sidebar on page 8 for more conversation-based activities you may want to use.
8. **Provide students with a way to contact you if they will miss class or have a question.** You can follow whatever your program recommends, whether it's providing an email address, a phone number, or the program's phone number/email address.

Beginning-of-the-Year Checklist for Teachers/Tutors



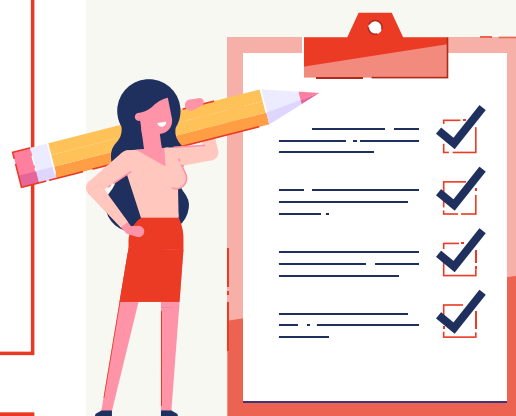
- ☐ Attend any orientations or training geared toward the start of the year.
- ☐ If you have a classroom, decorate your space.
- ☐ Obtain any forms to handle attendance.
- ☐ Find out how or where students can obtain textbooks.
- ☐ Meet with students to discuss and note their semester goals.
- ☐ Perform any testing with students (if applicable).
- ☐ If working with more than one student, facilitate a conversation-based activity for students to get to know each other better.
- ☐ Provide students with a way to contact you if they will miss class or have a question.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Helping Students Get Ready to Start the Year

Students may appreciate having their own checklist to start the school year. You can use the short checklist below to assist them.

CHECKLIST:

- ☐ Register for my program.
- ☐ Pay any fees.
- ☐ Get login information and materials for my class, if needed.
- ☐ Complete any testing.
- ☐ Meet with my teacher about learning goals.
- ☐ Get my textbook.
- ☐ Find out my teacher's contact information.
- ☐ Start to talk to other students.





Health Literacy

More Information

The links below show other diabetes-related infographics that may be helpful for students. Review them first to make sure they aren't too hard for your students to understand.

TCOYD Talks Type 2 Diabetes

<https://tinyurl.com/599k4may>

The organization Take Control of Your Diabetes has a one-page infographic that covers diabetes risk factors and complications.

TCOYD Talks Type 1 Diabetes

<https://tinyurl.com/mphjadz2>

Similar to the infographic above, Take Control of Your Diabetes covers type 1 diabetes symptoms in an easy-to-follow, one-page format.

What Is Type 2 Diabetes?

<https://www.fda.gov/media/151823/download>

This two-page infographic from the FDA covers type 2 diabetes in general and its prevalence in older adults.

Diabetes and Heart Disease Risk

<https://tinyurl.com/mryh9cz9>

The American College of Cardiology has a one-page infographic that links diabetes and heart risk.

What Is Prediabetes?

Purpose

To introduce the concept of prediabetes to adult literacy students.

Rationale

Your students probably have heard about diabetes, but do they know what prediabetes is and how it can be a warning sign before diabetes develops?

Prediabetes is when your blood sugar is higher than normal but not yet at the level of diabetes. More than 1 in 3 adults in the U.S. have prediabetes, or about 97.6 million people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The majority of people with prediabetes don't know that they have it.

This lesson on prediabetes presents an infographic from the CDC (pages 12 and 13 of this issue) that covers important facts about prediabetes.

The Basic Activity

1. **Review the CDC infographic on pages 12 and 13 of this issue (before you do the lesson).** Have copies of the infographic available for all students, or have it available electronically if that's how students will access it. You can find the infographic at: https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/images/library/socialmedia/prediabetescoulditbeyou_web.jpg
2. **Ask learners, "What is diabetes?" and "Do you know anyone who has diabetes?" Some students may share that they have diabetes.** Here is a simple definition that you can provide to students: *Diabetes is when your body doesn't use the hormone insulin like it should. That makes your blood sugar too high. That is bad for your health.* You could also ask learners if they know the number of people in the U.S. who have diabetes. Give some time for guesses. The correct answer: 38.4 million people, or 11.6% of the population, according to the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/php/data-research/index.html>).

3. **Ask learners if they know what prediabetes is.** Before you fully answer the question, provide them with the infographic that is part of this issue, either a printed copy or digitally. Give learners a couple of minutes to review the infographic.
4. **Review the infographic as a class.** You can read the different information chunks aloud and briefly discuss each area. You can also let learners know that type 1 diabetes is another type of diabetes. It's less common than type 2 diabetes.
5. **As you review comprehension of the infographic, students may have questions about some words that are on it.** Here are a few words and definitions:
- *stroke*: a loss of blood flow to part of the brain
 - *complications*: problems
 - *half*: 50%
 - *CDC*: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
6. **Put students in groups of two to three to discuss the following questions about prediabetes.** Or, if you're in a one-to-one tutoring situation, you can discuss the questions with students:
1. Were you surprised by how many people in the U.S. have prediabetes? Why or why not?
 2. What are two of the health risks associated with diabetes?
 3. What are two things you can do to lower your risk of diabetes?
 4. How can you find out if you have prediabetes?
 5. Will you go to the doctor to get tested for prediabetes?
 6. What do you do to try and stay healthy?
- Answers will vary for most of the questions above. For any factual answers, make sure students follow what is found in the infographic.
7. **Depending on the proficiency level of your students, you could also have them write their answers to the questions above.** Discuss with learners the importance of having their blood sugar tested. If there's more interest in this topic, you could follow up with other diabetes-related lessons using diabetes infographics (see sidebar on page 10 for ideas). Or consider inviting a nurse or diabetes educator to your classroom to give a brief talk.

New NRP Series: *To Your Health! Language Skills for Health and Wellness*

<https://www.newreaderspress.com/>

To Your Health! Language Skills for Health and Wellness is a new three-book series from New Readers Press on health literacy for ELLs at the Beginning and Low Intermediate levels, including a book focused on women's and children's health.

The series helps to develop ELLs' knowledge of health, safety, and wellness topics; health-related vocabulary; and their ability to navigate, communicate, and advocate for themselves in the North American health care system.

A sampling of topics in the series includes:

- Healthy eating and healthy habits
- Making an appointment and virtual medical appointments
- Health insurance
- An annual checkup
- Accidents and injuries
- Prescriptions versus over-the-counter medications

Each 120-page book features 16 lessons, a glossary, and answer key. Audio and teacher's guides are available online for free download.



PREDIABETES

COULD IT BE YOU?



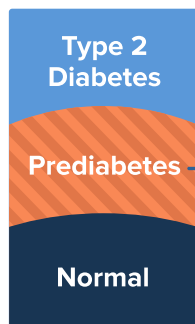
98
Million

98 million American adults—**more than 1 in 3**—have prediabetes



More than 8 in 10
adults with prediabetes
don't know they have it

BLOOD SUGAR



With prediabetes, your **blood sugar levels are higher than normal**, but not high enough yet to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes

PREDIABETES RISKS

Prediabetes increases your risk of:



Type 2 Diabetes



Heart Disease



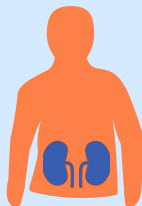
Stroke

TYPE 2 DIABETES HEALTH RISKS

If you ignore prediabetes, your risk for type 2 diabetes goes up — **type 2 diabetes increases your risk for serious health complications:**



Blindness



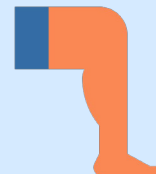
Kidney Failure



Heart Disease



Stroke



Loss of
toes, feet,
or legs

REDUCE YOUR RISK

If you have prediabetes, losing weight by:



Eating
healthy



Being more
active

Can cut your risk of
getting type 2 diabetes
in half.

YOU CAN PREVENT TYPE 2 DIABETES

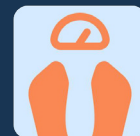


Find out if you have
prediabetes— See your
doctor to get your
blood sugar tested



Join a **CDC-recognized**
diabetes prevention
program

- ✓ Eat healthy
- ✓ Be more active
- ✓ Lose weight



Learn more from CDC and take the **Prediabetes Risk Test** at
www.cdc.gov/prediabetes/risktest/

REFERENCES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Diabetes Statistics
Report. Atlanta, GA:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Dept of Health and
Human Services; 2022.

CDC's Division of Diabetes Translation works
toward a world free of the devastation of diabetes.



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



Exploring Resources



TABE® Mastery 13&14 and Scoreboost for TABE® 13&14

<https://www.newreaderspress.com/tabe>

Assist students who are taking the TABE test to improve their academic skills and measure their progress. New Readers Press has released its *TABE Mastery 13&14* and *Scoreboost for TABE 13&14* series to help students master the reading, math, and language skills needed to succeed on TABE 13&14.

Each workbook within the *TABE Mastery 13&14* series features:

- Scaffolded lessons with learning goals, instruction, and examples for key TABE 13&14 skills using real-life content
- Guided practice to facilitate critical thinking skills
- Independent practice to practice applying each skill
- Pretest, unit skill checks, and a practice test to demonstrate skill mastery

The previous series, *TABE® Mastery 11&12*, is fully aligned to college and career readiness standards to reflect the basic skills needed for today's job market. However, customers who are receiving federal funds are required to switch to 13&14 by July 2026.

New Readers Press will continue to sell TABE 11&12 materials until that sunset date.

Tell Us About Your Outstanding Tutors and Students!

Do you have an outstanding tutor or student in your program? Tell us about them! We're always looking for new candidates for our *Notebook Student Profile* and *Tutor Profile* sections. Email Notebookeditor@proliteracy.org with brief information about the person. We'll follow up if there's a match. The right candidate must be open to speaking with our editor briefly and sharing a headshot of themselves.

Advocacy Consultations for ProLiteracy Members

<https://outlook.office.com/bookwithme/user/113b9c627cca4d7c874070cb39b013cf@proliteracy.org/meetingtype/xliYemRrdUynSB1jQz14hQ2?anonymous>

ProLiteracy is pleased to offer advocacy consultations for its members. It is a crucial time to build awareness and support for adult education, so look to build new connections through your advocacy efforts. You can schedule a consultation at the link above with Lauren Osowski, Director of Field Services. Stay tuned to future issues of *Network News* and *Notebook* for more advocacy tips, resources, and other information.

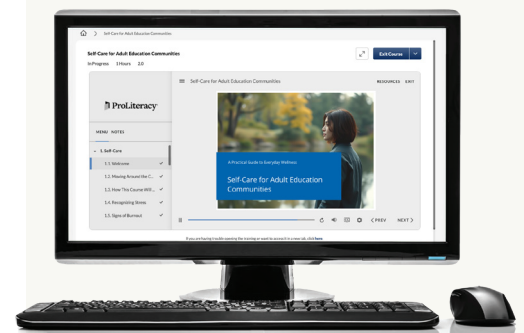
Self-Care for Adult Education Communities

<https://www.proliteracy.org/courses/self-care-for-adult-education-communities/>

As adult education providers, your primary focus is on empowering learners. Yet to effectively support them, instructors and program administrators must prioritize self-care. Why is this important? The daily challenges faced—such as limited resources, student retention concerns, and administrative demands—can lead to stress that hinders the ability to achieve goals.

By the end of ProLiteracy’s “Self-Care for Adult Education Communities” one-hour, course you’ll be equipped to:

- define stress and burnout,
- understand the benefits of self-care,
- set healthy boundaries, and
- identify personal self-care needs.



Notebook

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Tutor Profile

Conversation Group Gets English Learners Out of Their Seats and Laughing



Ronna Gray does what it takes to get students laughing. Laughter and movement are two key components of the Low Level Conversation Group led by Gray at Literacy Volunteers Charlottesville/Albemarle in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Gray has led the conversation group for about a year but has volunteered with Literacy Volunteers for more than 13 years. Gray has a career background in occupational therapy but says her non-teaching background gives her a fresh perspective.

The conversation group is held for one hour on Wednesdays and attracts up to 12 students. Participants range in age, where they are from, whether they

have children, and their English level.

Just how do Gray and co-leader Barbara Mann keep things flowing with such a diverse group?

“My emphasis is on having a good time and enjoying it. If they’re laughing, they’re going to learn more,” she says.

“Ronna is such an amazing conversation group leader because of her energetic personality,” says program director Steven Reid. “Many of her students will stay after they get matched (with a volunteer) because of how much fun it is and how much they are learning.”

Gray uses a mix of games and activities to get these lower-level students talking.

One time, learners got stuffed animals and put clothes on them to give directions such as, “Put a shirt on the monkey.”

Another time with an all-women group, Gray brought in a few women’s bras and led a discussion of clothing and bra numbers—an unexpectedly good practice of numerals.

Gray has advice for other programs looking to start a conversation group for lower-level English speakers: Get them moving and talking to each other, and be flexible about your plan.

And, of course, have a good time yourself.