



The Literacy Forum

The Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy
April/May 2000

P.O. Box 6085, Santa Fe, NM 87502-6085 website: www.nmcl.org email: nmcl@newmexico.com

The Literacy Forum is published bimonthly by the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy. News and commentary may be submitted to the Coalition using our mail address, e-mail address, phone, or fax number. We look forward to hearing from you!

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From the Executive Director

Role of the Volunteer Board

The following is excerpted from an on-line discussion group. I felt that it was a concise and thoughtful summary of the role volunteer boards play in any non-profit organization. The italicized paragraph was from a previous message.

I hope all will agree with the following statement. " It is the function of the volunteer board to set the organization's policy, and it is the function of staff to implement these policies. "

No, I don't agree with this old dictum! I believe that it is a dangerous oversimplification. In a healthy, decentralized organization, everyone including the janitor makes policy.

For all of the debate about Carver's "Policy Governance" model, there is one principle that he articulates through his "salad bowl" metaphor that I believe should be adopted by most, if not all organizations. For those who haven't had the

pleasure of getting the story first hand, my simple version is this: The purpose of the Board is to establish broad, comprehensive policy for the organization, that guides and, where necessary, constrains the actions of the ED in carrying out the mission. This body of policy Carver likens to the largest in a set of nested, inverted salad bowls. The next-larger bowl is the body of more-detailed policy articulated by the ED to provide further guidance to staff, within the limits of the larger "bowl" (umbrella?) of Board policy. In like manner, as authority is further delegated within the organization, program managers, office managers, etc. create further detail, as necessary. For the Board to assume responsibility for policy at an operationally-detailed level is to assure the board's focus on minutiae and, given the restrictions on Board time, to assure that while (for example) personnel policy is refined down to the dotting of "i's", other areas of policy (typically

policies on what outcomes the agency should be held accountable for) are never addressed. Remember C. Northcote Parkinson's observation on time being spent on a topic in inverse proportion to its importance?

Further, this "total top-down approach" stultifies staff.

I also question the implication that the Board, even in larger organizations, has no role in the carrying out of policy. How often, for example, do we harp on the need for the Board to play an active role in securing the resources necessary to carry out the "ends" policies established by the Board. All in all, I'd really like to give this old canard a decent burial!

Yes, I know, I need to get off of the soap box. I know that many fine folks agree with this statement, but I find it more harmful than helpful. (My\$.02)

Richard Parsons, M.A.
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"Antes de Mis Padres/Before My Fathers" Receives National Recognition

After reviewing dozens of educational web sites, The Pennsylvania Department of Education has recognized the Coalition's "Antes de Mis Padres" project as an exemplary web-based curriculum for literacy programs and will promote it in the April issue of *Focus*, a professional

development newsletter that is distributed nationwide. The project can be found on the Coalition's website at www.nmcl.org in the "Resources" section and consists of a number of Internet-based exercises for teaching New Mexico history and the genealogy of common

Hispanic names. It is designed for use by students with or without the assistance of tutors and is presented in three different reading levels. Literacy and adult education programs should find it useful in teaching basic reading and Internet navigation skills.

STORIES FROM NEW MEXICO LITERACY PROGRAMS

GTE Literacy Lab in Espanola

“People who thought they were too old to learn new skills realized they could learn and everyone found out that computers are a lot of fun”.

The new computer lab at Let's Read in Espanola is up and running, thanks to David Godsted of the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy, who spent many hours working with cables, connections and software to successfully network six computers with the server. Everyone at Let's Read thanks the New Mexico Coalition for Literacy and GTE for giving us the opportunity to be the first computer lab site.

Throughout the setup time, students and community members have been using the computers. Since September, fifty-four people have logged about 130 hours in the lab. This includes students who come each week, tutors and community members who come in to use the Internet

or the word processing program, and people who have attended our introductory workshop. A number of our students are developmentally disabled, and they are making wonderful progress using the computers.

Many people use the word processing program, writing stories, letters and poems, and making impressive-looking resumes. We have learning programs for English as a Second Language and for basic reading, from alphabet skills up to improving reading comprehension. Some students are using Mavis Beacon, a typing program that lets people learn touch typing at their own speed. There are also fund programs that improve reading comprehension, like,

“Curious Creatures”, about bats, snakes, spiders, wolves and owls, or *“Postcards”*, which lets students “travel” to four different countries. We even have a program that lets students design and test a car.

For those working towards passing the GED tests, we have a wonderful program called *“Pre-GED Interactive”*. Students can do practice tests, study for all the five tests and check their progress in a step by step program that helps them learn the material while also gaining computer skills. Another interesting program is called *“A Day in the Life”*. This is a job skills program which also improves reading comprehension and math

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Literacy Volunteers of America—Dona Ana County

“Working in alliance with the public libraries and church outreach, our program continues to spread the word of literacy.”

Literacy Volunteers of America—Doña Ana County came into existence in 1982 and has been an agency based program at Doña Ana Branch Community College since shortly after its founding. Over almost twenty years, this affiliate has been in the forefront of adult literacy in Doña Ana County, offering county-wide tutoring opportunities through ABE Learning Centers in Anthony, Chaparral, Sunland Park, and Las Cruces. Our outreach continues to grow with tutoring opportunities offered through the Catholic Diocese of Las Cruces at the Women's Intercultural Center in Anthony, and in Hatch under the auspices of the Hatch Public Library and Our Lord of Mercy Catholic Parish. This year, for the first time, we are

offering tutorial and educational assistance in the Colonia of Salem, north of Hatch. Working in alliance with the public libraries and church outreach, our program continues to spread the word of literacy.

We average 110 volunteers on our active mailing list, and on a monthly basis approximately 50 volunteers are providing program assistance from tutoring to active participation of the LVA-DAC Advisory Board. Our current president, RoseAnn Hernandez, is a Pre-Release instructor at the Southern New Mexico Correctional Facility, and through her efforts and on-site facilitation, we provided the first inmate and staff tutor training program in the state prison system. Jane Kuemmerle, Past

President of NMCL, provided the expert guidance to the sixteen inmates and ten educational staff members who completed the two day Laubach based training.

With this program year, we began offering monthly curriculum strategies and new resource information to our volunteers as a feature of our monthly *“A Literacy Update”* newsletter. Through board action, we are preparing for mailing our first issue of *“Never Too Old: A Newsletter for Adult Learners,”* featuring the writing of our learners. Board member, Gail Bamert, is heading up this initiative, working with our adult learners to produce a newsletter by and for those we serve.

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(Continued from page 2)GTE Lab

as students work in a simulated job situation. The program is challenging but fun and several students are making very good progress with it.

We are very lucky to have a wonderful volunteer from the Los Alamos National Laboratory, Ruy Ribeira. He is going to help our evening ELS class use the various English programs we have as a supplement to their work with their ESL tutors.

We have Internet access, so people can look for websites or search for topics they are interested in. Recently, several students "traveled" the Under-

ground Railroad during Black History Month at the National Geographic website.

Fifteen people have attended our very basic introductory workshop. Most of the people who attended the workshops have never touched a computer—as one person expressed it, "I have never even dusted a computer", and within a few minutes they are using the mouse like pros, clicking and dragging and double-clicking their way through the mouse tutorial. By the end of the workshop, everyone has written something, made changes and printed it on the very nice LaserJet printer. Everyone

who has attended the workshop has enjoyed it. People who came feeling scared and worried left feeling confident and enthusiastic. People who thought they were too old to learn new skills realized they could learn and everyone found out that computers are a lot of fun.

The GTE Literacy lab provides a whole new range of educational possibilities for students. Tutors, and community members at Let's Read. We would like to invite people from other programs in New Mexico to visit and see for themselves how technology can add new dimensions to group work and one-on-

one tutoring, not replacing human teachers and tutors, but providing varied opportunities that enhance and expand literacy learning. If anyone would like to come and visit, or would like to hear more about the GTE Literacy Lab, our phone number is (505) 753-9300, our mailing address is P.O. Box 1094, Espanola, NM 87532, and our email is gtelab@espanola-nm.com.

Submitted by Frances Wilmeth, Coordinator of Let's Read, Inc.



(Continued from page 2)Dona Ana

As a result of the Board's September Planning Retreat, we now have six active board committees at work in six areas: public outreach, administration, program, partnering/collaboration, funding/finance, and evaluation. The adult learner newsletter has grown out of this work, and the administration committee is in the planning stages for the development of an affiliate website."

filiate to host winter and spring tutor/learner socials in the north end at "Our Lord of Mercy" parish hall, in Las Cruces at the Quintana Learning Center, and in the south end at the Anthony Learning Center.

We appreciate the support of NMCL from training through technical assistance that continues to make a difference in this important work in Doña Ana County.

Submitted by Harry Pearson Literacy Services Coordinator

We have conducted two cycles of tutor training to date and are in the planning stages for one final cycle in late spring. It has become the practice of the af-



*GTE Lab opening on November 9, 1999
Let's Read, Inc.*

LVA Volunteers students and staff enjoy themselves at the Annual Winter Social held on December 11, 1999 in the DABCC Quintana Learning Center.

13th Annual Meeting

PUT THIS ON YOUR CALENDAR!!

The 13th Annual Meeting of the Coalition's members, interested others, staff, and board members will take place on Friday, June 16, 2000 in Rio Rancho. Details will soon be available, and the registration brochures will be in the mail around the first part of May. Please verify that we have your correct address so you will not miss out on this informative, fun event!

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Training Corner

<u>DATES</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>	<u>PHONE #</u>
4/14, 15	LVA BR	LVA-Otero (Alamogordo)	Joyce Reynolds	473-5015
4/26, 5/10	LLA-LWR	Carlsbad Literacy Program	Amy Pence	885-1752
5/5,6,12,13	LVA ESL	LVA Santa Fe (SFCC)	Letty Naranjo	428-1353
5/5,6,12,13	LVA ESL	TVI Literacy Program & Literacy Center of Abq.	Donna Aragon	224-1313
5/5,6,12,13	LVA BR	TVI Literacy Program & Literacy Center of Abq.	Donna Aragon	224-1313
5/6,13	LVA BR	Valencia Cnty. Lit. Council	Pat Waltner	864-3511
6/9,10,16,17	LVA ESL	TVI Literacy Program	Donna Aragon	224-1313
6/16-24	LVA BR	ReadWest (Rio Rancho)	Elizabeth Thomsen	892-1131
8/25,26 9/8,9	LVA BR	TVI Literacy Program & Literacy Center of Abq.	Donna Aragon	224-1313
8/25,26 9/8,9	LVA ESL	TVI Literacy Program & Literacy Center of Abq.	Donna Aragon	224-1313
10/6,7,13,14	LVA ESL	TVI Literacy Program & Literacy Center of Abq.	Donna Aragon	224-1313
SPECIAL WORKSHOPS				
4/11	Reading w/children	Literacy Link, Silver City	Judy Bailey	534-0188
4/17,18	LLA/LWR	Lea Cnty, Literacy Alliance	CLOSED	