

Follow-up Discussion

Professional Development Monthly Advisor and Planner (PDMAP)

ADULT NUMERACY

January 2010

Discussion Questions:

1. Which resources from the PD MAP regarding adult numeracy you read?
2. One key idea across several of the articles is the evolution of instruction from an emphasis primarily on computational math skills to a greater emphasis on “numeracy” - the use of math as a tool for decision-making and problem solving in real world contexts. Think first of your learners – what percentage of them come to you without basic computational math skills? Next, imagine a pie chart in which one section is instruction on computational math skills and the other section is instruction on numeracy for the real world. Thinking of your instruction, how is that pie divided? Are you comfortable with the balance between computational math skills and numeracy instruction?
3. The Focus on Basics panel discussion on **Transitions and Math** mentions the teachers’ own skill level in math as a critical component when thinking about numeracy instruction for adult learners. How did you learn your math skills? What were your experiences in learning numeracy versus computational math? What kind of training have you received for teaching math and numeracy to adult learners? What do teachers need in order for them to feel comfortable teaching computational math **and** numeracy instruction?
4. Difficult emotions about math are a real barrier for many adult learners. Kate Nonesuch, in her manual **Changing the Way We Teach Math** mentions five negative emotions adults may have around learning math – fear, anxiety, boredom, anger and humiliation. Share some strategies you use to help adults overcome their negative emotions around doing math.
5. The 2006 **GEDTS Statistical Study on Math** identified the three specific math areas that give students the most difficulty: Geometry, Calculation, and Tables and Graphs. How do the findings of their study align with the emphasis you and or your program puts on math instruction? How do the findings align with the instructional materials available for learners?

6. The Phillips article ***A Foundation for Learning Math*** discusses how one teacher uses individual computer work, large group instruction for real world math problem solving, and small groups for focused practice of particular math. What grouping strategies do you use for adult numeracy instruction? Does the nature of the math task influence your decision of which grouping strategy to use?
7. Our AEFL programs typically have a pretty good collection of GED prep textbooks. What materials other than textbooks and worksheets do you use with your adult learners to teach computational math or numeracy? How do you go “beyond the book” to help adults master math and see its application to their lives?
8. Several resources in the PD MAP included lesson plans, descriptions of techniques. Did any of the resources describe a specific strategy that you could use with learners at your program? Describe that strategy and tell us how you could implement it .
9. Of all the ideas that we have discussed today, what is the most important idea you can take with you to your classroom or your program?