This ERIC FAST Bib presents annotations concerning four major areas related to workplace literacy: (1) the definition and design of curriculum; (2) trends, issues, and challenges in workplace literacy; (3) model programs and projects; and (4) reference materials for practitioners. Contents include annotations of 45 journal articles, conference papers and other ERIC publications published between 1989 and 1992. (RS)
The need for a literate and versatile workforce has never been more acutely felt than in today's competitive world market. Employers, unions, literacy educators, government officials, and employees themselves must be involved in workplace literacy initiatives for real success to take place.

This ERIC FAST Bib lists citations concerning four major areas related to workplace literacy: 1) the definition and design of curriculum, 2) trends, issues, and challenges in workplace literacy, 3) model programs and projects, and 4) reference materials for practitioners.

Two types of citations are provided in this bibliography: ERIC documents and journal articles.

Citations of ERIC Documents

These citations are followed by an ED number. Full-text copies of these titles may be obtained from ERIC microfiche collections located at over 800 libraries around the world. Alternatively, you may order copies of the document from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) at the following address:

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Citations of journal articles

Full-text copies of these journal articles are not available through ERIC microfiche collection or from EDRS. Articles are most economically obtained from library collections. Articles from some journals are available through University Microfilms International at (800) 732-0616 or through Original Article Tearsheet Service at (800) 523-1850.

Definition and Design of Curriculum


Supports the need for adult basic educators to design and implement retraining programs at the worksite. Provides suggestions for designing custom-made basic skills instruction using work-related materials.


Includes thoughts and comments by three experts in the field of basic skills training on giving employees and/or job applicants proficiency tests and, when necessary, remedial training in reading, writing, and mathematics.


Emphasizes the need for vocational educators to collaborate with business and industry in literacy program development. Recommends advocating policy changes that integrate basic skills into vocational education curricula.


Predicts that most successful workplace literacy programs will be based on a partnership model involving companies, unions, and educators. Discusses barriers to developing a workplace literacy program.


Describes a community-based needs assessment as a means of addressing workplace illiteracy. Lists criteria for increasing the effectiveness of the assessment.


Reports results of a survey taken of manufacturing and service firms. Suggests goals for a business literacy agenda.


Describes evaluation of workplace literacy programs as specified by the U.S. Department of Education. Outlines criteria for a well-designed and operated workplace literacy program.

Provides a conceptual overview of four studies on management writing included in the issue. Relates research on written management communication to evolving conceptions of workplace literacy. Argues for a stronger emphasis on innovative methods of directing organizational attention to managers' writing as both process and product.


Discusses the following topics: the need for a consumer's guide to workplace literacy, labor's stake in literacy, educators' negotiations with businesses in providing services, and program evaluation in Canada and the United States.


Describes six key changes expected for the workplace and seven minimal entry-level competency areas. Includes references to the six national educational goals and a strategy for achieving them.

Trends, Issues and Challenges


Examines the need for supervisors to be involved with and supportive of Workplace English as a Second Language programs.


Explains the use and misuse of standardized tests in adult literacy programs. Discusses the recent movement toward nonstandardized assessments in adult basic education.


Includes interviews with thirteen national leaders and their discussions of pertinent adult education issues.


Explores the different approaches to workplace literacy taken by unions and management. Describes successful programs conducted by unions.


Describes issues related to two areas of workplace literacy: a prevailing attitude that workers are deficient or lacking in basic skills; and the development and implementation of curriculum, assessment, and evaluation.


Contains six reports addressing these issues which affect workplace literacy: welfare reform, the success or failure of literacy programs, training for 'slave labor,' adjusting to higher skills, language barriers, and 'falling through the cracks' in the system. Presents conclusions based on studies done in various areas of the country.


Includes evidence of the following areas of strength: a higher awareness of the need for literacy programs; more contextual curricula; increased collaboration between educators, unions, and management; more staff training; better evaluation techniques; and increased funding. Describes areas of weakness in workplace literacy programs, and suggests strategies employers can use to correct the situation.


Lists the fundamental educational standards necessary for the U.S. workforce to be competitive. Suggests that these skills should be the base of a more flexible set of standards that would permit greater transferability of community college credits for an increasingly mobile workforce.


Examines increased print communication demands in business organizations. Identifies three employee needs for management consideration.

Workplace Literacy: An Update

Examine the demographic and workplace trends experienced by the largest county government in the U.S.: Los Angeles County. Describes the unique challenges presented by its diverse, multilingual population.

Model Programs and Projects

Describes ten grant-funded programs from around the country that are designed to raise the awareness of linkages between local economic development and basic skill performance.

Outlines Georgia’s state-supported, community-based Certified Literate Community Program. Claims that the program provides all levels of instruction to adults at all educational levels.

Explores the reasons small businesses invest or do not invest in basic skills instruction for their workers. Determines typical offerings and expenditures by small businesses.

Illustrates the design and implementation of a whole language approach to workplace literacy. Project conducted with the help of Central Missouri State University.

Describes a workplace literacy program designed by Milwaukee SER-Jobs for Progress, Inc. which enabled the participating company to upgrade its employees’ basic skills, increase productivity, and eliminate the need for layoffs.

Examines projects funded during the first year of operation of the National Workplace Literacy Program. Includes a review of research literature and analyses of data and site visits. Outlines successful elements of workplace literacy programs. Recommends required data collection, longer grant periods, better dissemination of information, more effective evaluation, and the development of instruments to assess participant literacy levels.

Presents an overview of the first year’s operation of “Learning in the Workplace,” a project designed to develop industry-specific training materials and model programs with a peer tutoring component.

Emphasizes the need for literacy educators to learn about the work and lives of industrial workers. Describes the Academy at Eastern Michigan University as an alternative, collaborative form of adult education.

Describes the basic skills program at United Electric Controls (UEC) which led the company to increase its productivity and profitability and to eventually win the North American Shingo Prize for Quality in Manufacturing. Reports higher worker self-esteem and increased input from workers in streamlining work processes.

Describes a workplace literacy demonstration model designed to provide adult basic education services for multiple employers. Focuses on job-related instruction, increasing safety, productivity, and employee morale.

Reference Materials for Practitioners

Outlines steps in developing a workplace literacy partnership.

Provides various options and processes that can be used for formal evaluation of workplace literacy programs.

Includes ten how-to guides and assessment tools, fifteen policy and research reports, and four surveys.

Examines the major issues involved in helping private business and industry face the challenge of effectively training employees with limited English proficiency.


Presents research findings from recent workforce literacy programs and resources for community colleges and technical institute personnel to use in forming partnerships with business and industry.


Outlines the roles of the essential partners in work-force development: employers, unions, educational institutions, and government.


Describes a successful workplace literacy program necessitated by increased skill requirements of employees. Discusses mistakes as well as good decisions.


Considers the essential elements in successful workplace literacy programs that recruit and retain workers who might not otherwise participate.


Examines organized labor’s views on adult literacy. Describes several union-sponsored workplace education programs and suggests how a union can plan and operate a worker-centered literacy program. Lists members of the technical resource group involved in developing the guide, outside funding resources, additional books and articles, and labor organizations whose programs are mentioned in the guide.


Includes analysis tools that assist educators and employers in identifying the basic skill competencies required for adults with special learning needs who enter vocational training and/or employment programs.

**Related ERIC/RCS Publications**

**Books**

*Adult Literacy: Contexts and Challenges*, by Anabel Powell Newman and Caroline Beverstock. Co-published with the International Reading Association, 1990. Surveys the history of the adult literacy movement, reviews the research, details the organized efforts, renews the challenges, and defines adult literacy as "a new American value." (G12; $10.50)

*Adult Literacies: Intersections with Elementary and Secondary Education*, by Caroline Beverstock and Anabel P. Newman. Co-published with Phi Delta Kappa, 1991. Part of PDK's Hot Topics series, this is an anthology of the best readings written by the top thinkers in the fields of workplace literacy, adult literacy, literacy research, intergenerational and family literacy, and the points at which these literacies connect with school education. (G21; $20.00)

**Digests** ($1.00 each; 2 free with the purchase of G12 or G21.)

An ERIC/RCS Digest is a concise narrative on a topic of current interest in education. A bibliographical essay, the substance of each Digest is drawn from the ERIC database and then augmented by a recognized expert in the field.

D54 Multiplicities of Literacies in the 1990s
D45 The Issue: Adult Literacy Assessment

**FAST Bibs** ($1.00 each; 2 free with purchase of G12 or G21.)

F70 Adult Literacy: Instructional Strategies
F71 Adult Literacy: Overview, Programs, and Research
F1 Workplace Literacy

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This publication was prepared with partial funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. R18805001. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.