

# **WORKSHOP ON LITERACY AND DISABILITIES**

## **WORKSHOP NOTES**



**INDEPENDENT STUDIES  
AT FRONTIER COLLEGE**

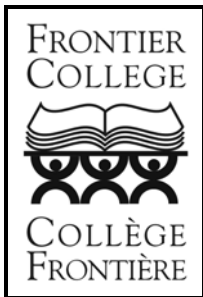
**MAY 27, 2004**

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Workshop Notes by David Greig



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Thank you to Great West Life for providing funding for this event.



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# WORKSHOP FLYER

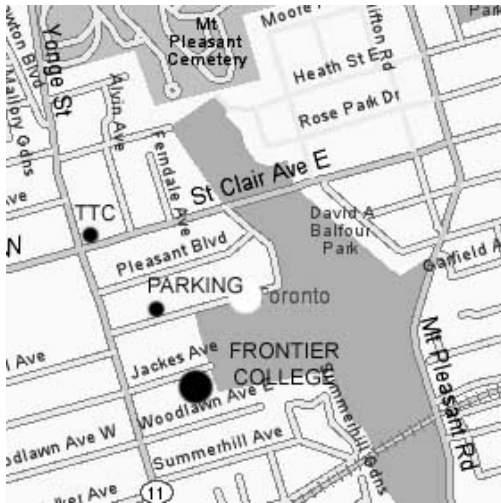
## Workshop on Literacy and Disabilities

presented by Independent Studies at Frontier College

Thurs May 27, 2004 from 10-3

Frontier College, 35 Jackes Ave., 416-923-3591

Directions: South of St. Clair off Yonge; TTC get off at St Clair and Yonge and walk south for three streets then turn east on Jackes;



**NO PARKING AT FC** but there is Green P Parking on Rosehill, one street north.

This workshop is designed to **bring together** literacy program workers and others who work with people with disabilities (physical, developmental, learning, cognitive, psychiatric, etc.) and who want to discuss their work: both challenges and successes.

Many programs working with people with disabilities struggle to prove success to funders. Many programs struggle to find ways to teach and support learning for people with disabilities. There are very few forums where we can get together and **network and share ideas**.

We ask each participant to **bring in one scenario** based on a student (or students) with whom you work that outlines some problems or challenges. The group will look at selected scenarios and offer ideas and suggestions on methods and approaches. We will also have discussions about relevant issues (see attached Agenda)

**Contact Please RSVP and direct any inquiries by email to David Greig at [dgreig@frontiercollege.ca](mailto:dgreig@frontiercollege.ca)**

LITERACY AND DISABILITIES WORKSHOP  
THURSDAY MAY 27/04, 10-3PM  
INDEPENDENT STUDIES, FRONTIER COLLEGE

### AGENDA

- 1) INTRODUCTIONS
- 2) PLENARY SESSION: ISSUE MAPPING AND VALUES CLARIFICATION
- 3) CASE SCENARIOS – BRAINSTORM IDEAS
- 4) WORKING LUNCH (PROVIDED)
- 5) CASE SCENARIOS CONTINUED
- 6) PLENARY DISCUSSION: NEEDS AND WANTS – WHAT HELP DO WE NEED TO ASSIST US IN OUR WORK?
- 7) WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS

## WORKSHOP NOTES



## GENERAL ISSUES

- more students with disabilities in programs
- moving students on from programs
- job supports
- LDs – decoding OK but comprehension not or vice versa
- computer software costs
- students with no verbal communication
- need for new ideas
- medications/stress
- strategies for instructors
- undiagnosed LDs
- reading disabilities
- “terminal 2s” – students stuck at Level 2
- mixed level classes – tasks too difficult
- advocacy
- independence
- isolation

## **“Disabled” – Definitions and Discussion**

- learning in a different way from “normal”
- vulnerable
- externally imposed social label or “box”
- personal/life issues become barriers – trauma
- social context and supports and self-esteem are critical
- time restrictions on conventional learning curves
- what is learning/progress?
- class issues re: accessibility (are wealthier students better able to access programs through parents, etc.)
- challenged by barriers because they are perceived as different
- disability is something that stops someone from doing something
- internalised attitudes
- need for technology including pictographic output devices
- numbers “game” – minority means lack of resources
- is the structure of funding, etc. defining the “disability”
- integration versus special ed.
- special ed. as a ghetto or trap
- credentials versus skills
- mismatch with finite “levels”
- inconsistencies – what to leave behind
- integration recognizes different kinds of intelligences/learning and where they learn from one another
- special ed is homogenizing downwards – warehousing
- however special ed. serves purposes such as transitioning – though this should be explicitly named
- special ed. and no supports means a poor experience

- person-centred integration with everyone else plus supports means self-esteem and self-advocacy
- learning is a social function
- alternative or qualitative ways of recording learning (academic and Non-Academic Outcomes) are needed
- community participation
- civic involvement and awareness
- re-imagining dreams – linking dreams
- methods of recording such as anecdotal reports, multimedia approaches, project work, etc. need to be developed
- needs and barriers must be stated
- need for essential skills
- build on strengths
- how learning happens – transferability
- clues to educational strategies
- need to return to original ideas about “literacy”

## Case Study Examples – Notes

### Case Study 1: “Moving on to further Levels”

- special ed. class of 20 students – meets 4 hours a day
- mid Level 2 students
- some students want to move on to regular LBS class
- issues include academic focus with goals of high school diploma; size of classes; workload of instructors
- how to help with this transition?

#### Ideas

- mixed classes with part special ed. and part not
- students going into new class for blocks of time
- are there distance issues to the new location
- culture of the classroom
- tutorials – get volunteers in class to help (begin in special ed. class and transition with students to new class)
- specialized tutor trainings
- enrol transitioning students in a Community-based literacy program for extra support
- monitor new class with a buddy system
- strengthen the content in pre-LBS to prepare
- group work skills
- interpersonal skills
- balance the transition with overlap periods
- instructor communication between classes is essential



## Case Study 2: “Non-verbal Students”

- students who do not communicate verbally and do not communicate consistently (autism, DD, etc.)

### Ideas

- try to get ODSP funding for technology aids
- identify skills and interests, dreams and goals, their history, people who support them, schedule of activities – to get to know student
- patience
- talking dictionaries
- music
- locate alternative methods of communication
- closed captioning on TV might be a possible technique to explore
- trial and error
- utilize support people or others in their lives to learn how they communicate with the person
- get to know their support workers
- visual/drawing/maps: photographs, pictures, symbols
- locate and talk to the person inside
- liaison with other people who work on communication skills (speech pathologists, etc.)

### **Case Study 3: "Trauma"**

- emotions interfering with learning
  - trauma, medication, etc.
  - progress but then gaps – memory lapses, loss, grief, health, mental health, etc.
  - degrees of awareness of medication, drugs, alcohol, etc.
  - case management issues
- We did not get to this Case Study

### **Case Study 4: "LDs"**

- learning disabilities and everything about them
- We did not get to this Case Study

## **Next Steps**

- develop advocacy
- explore OCAB – business opportunities for people with disabilities
- develop a (web based) clearinghouse on literacy and disability issues
- develop better referrals by understanding what other groups do
- develop qualitative documentation methods
- for students lost in the system, explore case management approaches
- possible specialized tutor training (at MTML?)
- want to finish discussing case studies (which we did not have time to finish)
- explore technology (WYNN, Dragon, etc.) – contact Lisa at Global eText
- need information about how to navigate ODSP to get technology aids for people with disabilities
- need for a next meeting

**NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 2004 –  
INDEPENDENT STUDIES WILL SEND OUT NOTICE IN EARLY  
FALL.**

## Evaluation of Workshop

- great sharing – meeting front line people
- concrete
- technology info useful
- case study info useful
- fluidity, passion – info on moving on
- reflection – connection
- isolation broken down
- good food
- useful information
- good to get out of program – good ideas
- talking about what we really do
- talking about the word “disabled”
- not alone – shared challenges
- brought back to values
- learning experiences
- ODSP info useful
- stimulating
- helps to evaluate programming
- good to know about augmentative communication technology
- getting back to working with non-verbal students
- doors opening