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The BC Adult Literacy Cost-Shared Program

Naming the Magic: Non-Academic Outcomes in Basic Literacy

National Literacy Secretariat
Human Resources Development Canada

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Naming the Magic: Non-Academic Outcomes in Basic Literacy

by
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for the
National Literacy Secretariat
Human Resources Development Canada
the
British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education
and the
Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology

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Abstract

Forty basic literacy instructors, at a conference in May 1999, drafted six techniques for the documentation of non-academic changes that may occur in the lives of learners as a result of participation in literacy instruction. Several conference participants in consultation with the project coordinator, Evelyn Battell from Malaspina University-College, further developed the documentation techniques. The techniques were then field-tested by literacy practitioners including instructors, tutors, and tutor coordinators. The final report presents a description of the following techniques for documenting non-academic outcomes (NAOs) for literacy students: *A Multi-Media Approach*, *Using Journals*, *Goal Setting by Learners*, *Anecdotal Reporting and End -of-Term Reports* (combination of two techniques) and *Questions for Developing Awareness.* The final report also documents the difficulties encountered during the field-testing, outlines what was learned during the field-testing process and identifies six recommendations, based on the project, that call for more extensive and focused study of non-academic outcomes.

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Preface

I wrote this report after reviewing the data and analyzing the results with Marina Niks, a Doctoral Candidate at the University of British Columbia who works with literacy instructors in BC on research projects.[1] While writing, I talked with colleagues and occasionally showed them pieces of the work. Marina worked with me on drafts, to push my clarity and organization. The committee also reviewed a draft and contributed ideas and pushed the analysis even further. The report, therefore, is a collection of the thoughts of many people, but it is important to note that only Marina Niks and I saw the actual data.

Evelyn Battell, Project Coordinator

Acknowledgements

This *Naming the Magic: Non-Academic Outcomes in Basic Literacy* report is dedicated to Audrey Large. She has, for years, brought courage and curiosity to being an adult learner and she inspires me.

- I would like to thank the committee for being colleagues who care as much as I do: Mary Carlisle, Diane Morrison, Kate Nonesuch, Vicki Noonan, Judy Rose, Audrey Thomas, and Helen Thomas.

- Thank you to Audrey Thomas and Yvette Souque, the women who represent the funding agencies and who care about our work and spend themselves on the behalf of students.

- A special thanks to all those who came to the Outcomes conference and who are the community this process is trying to represent.

- The field-testers and writers are important to this process: Darcy Allen, Debbie Booth-Johnson, Maureen Butler, Phyllis Cann, Mary Carlisle, Mary Anne Darney, Paula Davies, Janice Edmonds, Karen Erickson, Judith Forman, Vern Geisbrecht, Linda Jay, Katherine Johnston, Moira Kovats, Bev Kreiger, Mary Norton, Kate Nonesuch, Martha Partridge, Andrea Pheasey, Judy Rose, Lynda Sampson, Carol Schoen, Iris Strong, Helen Thomas, Mary Thompson-Boyd, Diana Twiss, Michelle Van Nice. Thank you. I enjoyed all our conversations and your insights.

- Thank you to all the students who are always so willing to try something new and bring us new insights and knowledge. We can't do it without you.

[1] Marina Niks was available on a part-time basis to help strengthen the research capacity in the literacy field in BC. This service was coordinated by the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology with funding support from the National Literacy Secretariat through the Adult Literacy Cost-shared Program in partnership with the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education.

- Thank you to those at Malaspina University-College, Cowichan Campus, who support my work–from fixing my desk to arranging for me to get paid. A very special thank-you to Joanna Robinson, who has done a wonderful job–and spent many hours doing it–of typing and formatting and keeping track of the many drafts and the final report.

- Kate Nonesuch and Marina Niks contributed their skill and experience to the design of the final document and also helped with rewriting.

- Arleigh Trail edited the final document and wrote the *Executive Summary*. It was nice to be able to concentrate on content, not commas, while I was writing.

Executive Summary

In May of 1999, forty basic literacy instructors met to discuss a very important, but often unacknowledged, aspect of their work: the non-academic changes in the lives of learners as a result of participation in literacy instruction. A decision was made to attempt to discover and document just what these changes, or outcomes, are and how they come about.

At the conference, the process was started, and six documentation techniques were drafted. Subsequent funding from both the federal and provincial (BC) governments allowed the process to continue, albeit not to the extent first imagined. Evelyn Battell was designated coordinator of the project. The six documentation techniques were then further developed and written either by individuals or groups of individuals who had attended the conference and by the project coordinator. An emphasis on safety and respect was written into each of the techniques, as well as other considerations, concerns, or cautions, as deemed necessary. The techniques for documenting non-academic outcomes (NAOs) for literacy students are: *A Multi-Media Approach*, *Using Journals*, *Goal Setting by Learners*, *Anecdotal Reporting and End of Term Reports*, and *Questions for Developing Awareness*.

The next step was field-testing the techniques by literacy practitioners, including instructors, tutors, and tutor coordinators. The results from the first round of field-testing were analyzed and rewritten for clarification. A second draft of the techniques was then sent to the field-testers, followed up by a telephone interview with the project coordinator. This new data was then analyzed and written into report form.

This *Report* does three things. It documents the difficulties encountered during the field-testing: timing, writing for instructors with a range of experience, and confusion about instructions. It also outlines what was learned during the process about the techniques, the non-academic outcomes themselves, the field, the field-testing, and, importantly, about self-reflection. Finally, the report identifies six recommendations, based on the project, that call for more extensive and focused study of non-academic outcomes. The emphasis of the *Report* was on the techniques for identifying and documenting non-academic outcomes; clearly, the next step is to study these outcomes with a view to perhaps shifting–or at least expanding–the paradigm of literacy instruction and the language that we use to describe it.

What We Recommend

1. More extensive work be done to build a case for Non-Academic Outcomes (NAOs) being a raison-d'etre for literacy instruction

2. Research the NAOs that occur in literacy programs

3. Research to determine which other NAOs are dependent on self-reflection

4. Determine what kind of regular classroom activities develop self-reflection and other NAOs, and which activities are more effective as catalysts to this development

5. Find out how observing NAOs acts as a catalyst to self-development for learners, including self-reflection

6. Conduct more research projects involving literacy instructors and learners. As described in the *Report*, both instructors and learners showed their interest and willingness to participate in research projects. While they do not have the time and resources to fill out proposal forms and design the projects themselves, one instructor with research experience could be supported to put together a proposal that would involve the participation of instructors and learners in the field.

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Introduction

Every literacy instructor has seen them; we all deal with them, hope for them, and expect them. These non-academic outcomes (NAOs) are some of the changes that have occurred since the student began coming to class. Students change their bearing, their walk; they hold their heads higher and smile more readily. They get up in the morning more easily; they go to bed earlier at night. They often also drink more coffee. They may drink less alcohol and party less during the week because they know they have to get up to go to classes. They talk to their kids about school and homework. They look forward to reading or doing math, they read to their kids, they present ideas and speak up for themselves at home with spouses or parents, they are more ready to talk to school personnel and make phone calls to social workers. They report joining local organizations, going to the library, and having opinions on community matters. They feel more confident with family; at school, they speak to their classmates and strangers in the cafeteria line-up. They may begin to plan for a career. They give gifts of their artwork to classmates and volunteer to make coffee or take notes in a class discussion. They help each other and ask others for help in class. All of these are mentioned as changes that have occurred since the student began coming to class.

In the spring of 1998, a small group of instructors met and decided that we wanted to hold a conference for experienced literacy instructors to discuss the NAOs that occur for our basic literacy-level students. We applied for and received a grant from the National Literacy Secretariat and the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education.

History

Outcomes Conference

The conference took place in May 1999. For two and a half days, 42 people discussed the topic. During the conference, we confirmed for ourselves and each other that there are indeed NAOs, and we could even talk about them among ourselves quite successfully. It became clear that we were all able to name the NAOs that we saw regularly in our work. However, we needed some way to articulate these NAOs to other community agencies that concern themselves with the whole life of the learners–health agencies, addiction agencies, justice workers, community development workers, social workers, parenting groups, housing groups and women's agencies.

We decided to develop some techniques to document NAOs in the classroom and in one-on-one instruction. By the end of the conference, we had six very rough techniques that we would field-test. We first dreamed of having these NAOs named in such a way that the whole community could make sense of them, and literacy could take its place in a team approach to improving our learners' lives. We intended to do a literature search and to attempt to use the terms common to these other social agencies in our work. We planned to have a researcher work with the field-testers to see if what they were finding could be put in these terms, or if there were new findings we could bring to the whole field of social development. This aspect of the work had to be dropped due to a shortage of funds, but presumably it would have helped instructors and students use their results to influence a wider audience.

The original committee then applied for and received funding for the second phase of the process–writing and field-testing the techniques we had developed. The second phase of the project started in January 2000; its focus was the documentation of the NAOs, not the NAOs themselves. Do the techniques work? Can they be improved? How?

Getting the Techniques Written

It was agreed at the conference in May 1999 that a member of each of the working groups would act as a contact with the committee. When I contacted these people in January 2000, they agreed either to be part of writing up their technique or to find others in their group who would do so. This was important because it was necessary to ensure that the techniques that emerged were more or less what the group had intended.

I also was involved in the writing to make sure we had a set of consistently written techniques.

Writers came forward, about a third of them members of the committee. We worked from the rough drafts prepared the last day of the conference. There were many struggles, but eventually the writers, Marina Niks, and myself produced six techniques. I then edited them for style and presentation and the committee approved them.

A Brief Description of the Techniques

A Multi-Media Approach

These methods were developed to allow learners to keep a record of outcomes using pictures, diagrams, and objects as symbols of changes in behaviour, skills, attitudes, and goals. Some possibilities are self-portraits, action figures, the web diagrams, collages, photographs, fabric, computer art, scrapbooks, or folios. The process can take place in a session or over an entire year. It can be done individually or as part of a group.

Using Journals

This method of evaluation involves learners writing in one of three different kinds of journals: the personal journal, the dialogue journal, or the learning journal. These journals vary in how specific the writing assignment is and who else is involved as a reader. An individual writes the journal, but it may be shared with classmates, an instructor, or others outside the classroom. Journals need a number of weeks, at a minimum, to be effective.

Goal Setting by Learners

This is quite an elaborate technique used to give the learners leadership in their evaluation including the decision to do evaluation right from the beginning of the process. The learners themselves decide on the goal, the steps to reach the goal, how long it will take them, how they will know when they have reached the goal, who is affected by this development, and whom they will inform. The instructor is a voice of experience and a facilitator, but the learners run the process. This could be done with an individual or a group, but it is more likely an individual process. At a minimum, it will take a number of weeks and cannot be started until there is considerable trust between learners and instructors or tutors.

Anecdotal Reporting

This technique involves the instructors or tutors or tutor coordinators making notes of incidents and stories that demonstrate positive changes that are happening for the learner. It can be done with the assistance of the learner, but the onus is on the instructors or tutors or tutor coordinator. This technique is used with individual learners. At a minimum it will take a number of weeks but could take an entire year. This is a time-consuming technique for the person writing the report.

End-of-Term Reports

This technique is a guide for instructors or tutors or tutor coordinators to develop a written report for others to see. It takes into account academic and non-academic development. It includes using a portfolio of learner work and a checklist kept by the learner; these are then brought to a session where a report is drafted.

Questions for Developing Awareness

This technique involves asking questions about the changes and developments in the learner's life, including their school life. The questions assume that "no change" is a reasonable answer and that no one changes in all areas, but that all people experience change when they take on new challenges. This technique allows learners to consider many aspects of their lives and to hear from others. It can be written or oral, private or group; it could take one session, many small sessions, or periodic sessions spread as far apart as the term allows.

The Field-Testing

At the same time as the techniques were being written, I was writing, with Marina, the other parts of the package: Letter to the Field-tester; An Introduction to Evaluation[2]; and Instructions to the Field-tester[3], which included a form for collecting demographic data on both instructor and learners. The committee vetted all these items.

I was also working to line up field-testers. At the end of March 2000, two months later than we had hoped, the package was ready. It was sent to those who were still interested in field-testing in the spring period.

We had decided there needed to be two rounds of field-testing. The spring period had become so short that many potential testers were unable to participate because their programs ended within a month. We felt that if we opened up the possibility of field-testing in the fall, we would have more tests. Furthermore, we would have a period of revision after the first round based on some feedback to improve the wording of the techniques.

In June, the results came back from the first round of field-testing; Marina and I met for a day to draft a preliminary analysis. In the end, there were nine reports from field-testers. One report was lost in the mail. he reports led us to rewrite the techniques and instructions. It was clear that they were too wordy and too confusing. Also, in some cases, field-testers were not using the tools the way they were intended to be used. We were concerned with the techniques being used as we intended because we were trying to find out what differences there were between them, their comparative effectiveness, etc.

This second version of the techniques and instructions was called Draft Two. We changed the concept from "tools," which was misleading, to "techniques." We believed that calling them "tools" had contributed to some field-testers using them exactly as they were written, without adapting them to their own situation.

Also we decided that, in round two, I would phone each field-tester after I received their report. We believed that it would be difficult for field-testers to answer all our questions on paper in the detail we wanted. Also we felt that once we saw what they had written, other questions of clarification and expansion would occur to us. This would make it possible to conclude more from the reports because we would be certain that we understood what the tester meant. In December and January 2001, I interviewed each field-tester on the phone for one-half to one hour. There were nine telephone interviews–eight from the fall field-test and one from the spring.

[2] Appendix A
[3] Appendix B

Who Volunteered

Charts of who volunteered for various jobs and where they are from are shown in this section.

Chart #1 shows who participated in various jobs out of those who attended the conference.

Chart #1

Total at conference	42
Wrote techniques (including coordinator)	10
Wrote techniques and also field-tested	6
Considered field-testing	21
Field-tested but did not write techniques	11

Chart #2 is a breakdown of everyone who took part, both those who came to the conference and those who did not.

Chart #2

Considered field-testing	39
Started to field-test (received the info, decided on the technique, told us the numbers they would use it with) but withdrew	9
Expressed interest but did not pursue	12
Started field-testing	20
Completed field-testing	18
Reports lost in mail	1
Final reports in	17

In both rounds, those potential field-testers who withdrew often did so because the class didn't happen, or they were reassigned to other classes (in one case, three times in one semester!). In at least two cases, there were tutors involved, and there was not enough time to introduce the field-test because the meetings between tutor and student were few.

Chart #3 compares the instructors who considered field-testing and those who completed the field-testing work.

Chart #3

	Considered field-testing	**Completed field-testing**
Camosun College	1	0
Capilano College	5	3
College of New Caledonia	8	2
Douglas College	1	0
Edmonton Learning Centre	3	3
Kwantlen University College	2	2
Literacy Society of Ft. St. John	1	0
Malaspina University-College	4	3
North Island College	1	1
Northern Lights College	1	0
Northwest Community College	1	0
Prince George Friendship Centre	1	1
Project Literacy West Kootenay	1	0
School District 72 Continuing Education Centre	1	0
School District 56 Adult Education Program	1	0
School District 91 Adult Education Program	1	0
Vancouver Community College	2	1
Victoria READ Society	4	4
Total	**39**	**20**

Some of the factors that may have influenced the differences described in the above chart include the following:

- The support provided to instructors that enable them to take on a project like this
- The encouragement instructors have from administrators and/or colleagues
- The kinds of students who are served that make the topic of this study of interest to them and their students
- The kinds of reports instructors write to justify their program funding
- The sources of information instructors access that enabled them to know about the opportunity to participate in field-testing
- The timing and organization of the program that would allow students to be present over the period of the field-test

Problems During the Field-Testing

A. Timing

In January and February, most literacy practitioners are involved in applying for literacy cost-shared grants, which becomes a time-consuming priority. Therefore, we had trouble reaching people and receiving responses during these months.

B. Writing for Instructors With a Range of Experience

The writers who came forward varied in their experience in the classroom or with students, and this became a problem. As long as we were talking to experienced instructors, we could safely say less about such things as how to be respectful or how to keep everyone safe. We could skip a lot of information about things like how to run a group or how to be "authentically present."

Some of the technique writers did not write enough, assuming everyone knew the rest. Others did not write enough because they were unclear about the actual process. Others wrote instructions that suited their own situation but needed expansion for other settings.

We were aware that we were writing for new tutors, instructors, tutor coordinators, as well as for experienced tutors, instructors, and tutor coordinators. For less experienced instructors and tutors, we wanted to provide many cautions and a distillation of ideas that might make the process more successful–this led to extensive writing.

Less experienced instructors tend to follow instructions more slavishly. When we wrote out all the steps, they just followed instructions instead of altering the process to suit their situation and students. Experienced instructors tend to read every set of instructions with an eye on how they are going to do it, including what they are going to change; they read for the germ of an idea and proceed from there. They know the plans are going to change many times in the course of any sessions with students, so they do not attempt very specific plans to begin with.

Many instructors reported that they liked the instructions because of the flexibility. "(Instructions were) flexible, student focused...not curriculum driven." "The instructions are clear but there is room for the instructor/tutor to change/adapt as he/she sees fit."

Also, it became apparent in the course of the field-test that experienced instructors and novices alike do not read lengthy directions. Everyone is too busy. Experienced instructors just want "do this, do this," and they will do with it as they like. On the other hand, less experienced instructors do not understand many of the cautions until they are experiencing the situations themselves.

Even after the second field-test, this was not resolved. Many field-testers in the second round reported that the instructions were too long and complicated. But are we free to merely write a list of steps? The original conference participants would certainly answer "No."

C. Working With Tutors

We encouraged tutor coordinators to get their tutors to field-test, but we asked that, if possible, the tutor use the technique with more than one learner. We also asked that I deal directly with

the tutor if possible. In the end, only two coordinators and three tutors became involved. My conversations were not directly with tutors, and each tutor used the technique with only one learner. Furthermore, the coordinator rather than the tutor chose the technique. It is not clear how much these tutors knew about the whole field-test or even the purpose of using the technique.

One tutor coordinator who used a technique herself was unable to finish the field-test, which only involved one student, because of time and personal interruptions.

Some tutor coordinators who had considered taking part simply found the time restriction too difficult. By the time the tutor-student pair was operating, there was not time left in the field-test period to introduce the technique effectively.

Any coordinator who wants tutors to use these techniques will need to introduce them carefully and monitor them thoroughly, as this field-test has not begun to determine the special problems and/or issues that may arise in the tutoring situation.

D. Combining Two Techniques

Right from the beginning, we struggled with the techniques of *Anecdotal Reporting* and *Checklist, Portfolio and End-of-Term Reports*. They seemed, to those of us outside these two working groups, to be very similar, or at least, to fit into each other. When field-testers read these techniques, they sometimes reported they wanted to use them both.

When the writers talked to each other, they came up with distinctions and then tried to incorporate them into the instructions.

- One of the distinctions was that *Anecdotal Reporting* was intended to be used by tutors with individual students. In fact, two out of three of the field-tests of this technique occurred with groups of students, albeit small groups of six and less.

- Another distinction was that *Checklist, Portfolio and End-of-Term Reports* included more parts; however, it is clear that if instructors have time, they may choose to use all the parts or only some.

- Finally, the two techniques differ in who has greatest responsibility for generating anecdotes or notes on observed behaviours. *In Anecdotal Reporting* the responsibility is on the instructor or tutor or tutor coordinator. In *Checklist, Portfolio and End-of-Term Reports* the responsibility is, in large part, on the student. When this latter technique is used with beginning students, the difficulty is that they often have neither the writing ability nor the self-reflective ability to do their job. The technique may be more effective when used with students of higher academic ability.

For our final product, we have blended the two techniques and have explained these difficulties in the instructions.

E. Illness Interrupts

Draft Two was sent out in September 2000, and field-testing began again. Because of a temporary change in staff (I was ill), the fall process was a bit muddy. It was not clear until the middle of November who was actually field-testing. In some cases, field-testing may not have happened because we were fairly non-directive over this period.

F. Lack of Experience With Formal Research

In the second round, I interviewed each person by telephone after receiving the field-test report. These conversations were enlightening, but they could have been taken in different directions if a trained researcher had done the interviews. As an instructor, I tended to pursue questions of what worked and why, what was the makeup of the class, what had been the field-tester's experience in past teaching, etc. I often forgot to probe about the actual field-test as a test. In conversation with Marina later, I became aware of other questions I could have asked.

There were a number of times, in the course of conducting this field-test, when I was aware of how differently it could have been done by someone trained in research. Often Marina would say, "Oh that's very interesting. You should make a note of that." Usually it was in relation to how the field-test process worked or what my assumptions were behind certain tasks. In most cases, I would reply, "I don't have time to note all this stuff and what would I make of it in the end anyway?" This response on my part was not simply bad humour; it was partly tension. I also believed that it would be interesting to look at all these questions, but I knew I would not be able to do it in the time and with the resources allotted to this project.

G. Confusion About Instructions

In some cases, instructors reported that students chose not to participate because the results were going to be shared; the students were not willing to do that.

This was a misunderstanding on the part of field-testers; we did not ask them to send the actual responses to us. Clearly, we did not state strongly enough that they were not to send in the NAOs. We only wanted their understanding of which NAOs were revealed. So this was a problem with the field-test, not with the techniques. In every technique, the directions state clearly that before any results are shared with anyone, the students must choose to do that.

What We Learned

What We Learned About the Techniques

1. We know that experienced instructors use the techniques in various ways, adapting to their group or individual student.

2. The techniques do raise awareness of non-academic outcomes (NAOs). The techniques themselves are catalysts; both the instructors and the students thought more about NAOs and reported more changes because they were using a technique.

3. In every instance, the technique did help those involved to document NAOs. They may want more results, more specifics or more tangible proofs, but it did help provide actual examples.

4. The techniques can and should be used in certain ways. They require certain circumstances that vary from technique to technique. We have tried to indicate these in the instructions for the techniques.

5. In spite of the above, we knew early on that all the techniques were going to get pretty much the same information from the students. We did not detect a difference that would lead us to recommend a certain one over the others. The act of concentrating on NAOs and helping students reflect is what matters, not which technique is used.

6. Given the similarity of the information that the techniques generate, it is interesting that instructors were generally very certain which one they wanted to use. The manner of working and the process used is of great importance to instructor comfort and effectiveness. Instructor comfort is essential to effective use of the technique.

   It should be noted that six testers wrote or were in the group at the conference that helped develop a technique–one did not use the technique she wrote. When asked why, it appeared that her experience with a technique much like the one she wrote had become frustrating with beginning-level students. Other instructors may have shied away from techniques they had used previously. We did not enquire systematically what other techniques they would or would not have used.

7. Instructors chose particular techniques for particular reasons.

   a. It was something the instructor had done before

   Some reported that they "had always used journals." One instructor reports about writing her own journal along with the students: "It's fun and interesting to hand off your journal and see what comes back." Another said, "I wanted to see how effective journalling is as a self-reflective tool." About the *Asking Questions* technique: "I often check in with students asking them questions about their learning, and this usually results in informative class discussion." and "I've always had an end-of-term interview." About the *Multi-Media* technique: "This is a technique I've used before." and "We've used collages before." These

comments indicate they have had success and are confident with a technique, so adapting it to a new purpose is not difficult.

In another situation the instructor using the *Asking Questions* technique found it was harder to adapt than expected. he found the questions to be intrusive. "Rather than questions, we find it works to invite people to talk about what they've learned, how they're using their learning and what they want to do/learn next. We also introduce ideas based on our observations. The conversations may appear unstructured, but we seem to have a guide in our head."

b. They wanted to generate student input and believed this technique would work better than the others
One instructor, speaking of the *Using Journals* technique, said all journals are about non-academic outcomes in that you can see progress in how students express themselves. Of the *Goal Setting by Learners* technique the field-tester said, "I felt it was very important that students have a clear idea of what they want to get out of the program even if that idea changes over time." Finally, some field-testers said that interviews "would best enable me to glimpse the learners' worlds–how they saw things and how they articulated those perceptions."

c. They felt the technique fit their program
Some of the considerations cited were continuous intake or fixed intake, level of academic ability, time available, private time available for one-on-one discussions, the type of reporting they had to do, level of comfort in the group.

d. They had been part of developing the technique at the conference or of writing it

8. Aside from the above reasons the *Multi-Media* technique was also chosen for some distinct reasons. It gave students a chance to be creative and even artistic. "Creativity is something I thought they would buy into, enjoy and benefit from." One student said, "It's so nice to express yourself as a picture, not a paragraph." Another instructor wanted to try something she had never tried before that would challenge her to see her students in different ways.

9. All the techniques were more effective if the instructors already knew their students and if trust had been developed. The importance of this varied from technique to technique, with it being most important for the *Goal Setting by Learners* technique.

What We Learned About Non-Academic Outcomes (NAOs)

We knew there were NAOs to literacy instruction and that they were key to the success of literacy learning. The committee that put on the conference knew this, everyone who attended the conference knew this, and everyone who wrote or field-tested the techniques knew this. As a result of participating in the field-test, many students are now aware or more aware of their own NAOs.

But the proposal focused on the techniques, not the NAOs. As a result, how to use information about NAOs continues to be a puzzle. Most instructors still see the results mainly in terms of interaction with their students. In Appendix C, I show how field-testers ranked the usefulness of their results. These charts seemed to confuse some testers. They would add notes like, "I have no idea how valuable it was to the learner who seemed to have her own measures," "I'm not sure what you mean," "Useful only as I interpreted it," and "The usefulness of the technique varied with different learners." In interviews, I often got more ideas about how these results might be used other than for the edification of learner or instructor, but it sometimes sounded like the possibility of using it beyond the classroom was new to the instructors.

What We Learned About the Field

A. Instructors Willing and Apologetic!

The quality and detail of the observations recorded by instructors shows us what a wealth of information is available if we were to attempt further research on NAOs or many other aspects of literacy instruction. These instructors have a sea of information in their heads about students, learning, the classroom environment, etc., and they do not normally have the time to record or analyze what they know.

Instructors said things like, "This research gave me an opportunity to reflect upon my own techniques and processes which I don't often take the time to do." "I was constantly reminded/required to observe, support, validate, recognize these types of learning developments." "It made me more aware of them even compared to myself and my teaching–focus on them (the students) not what was a hit."

Another aspect of the project that appealed to instructors was that they did not have the whole responsibility for the project. Having us assist them and do the analysis for them pleased them; they wanted to be part of the analysis. They did not have to do the whole framework, apply for the money, write the report; they just did their in-the-classroom piece and then thought about it!

In particular, they enjoyed the conversations on the phone as much as I did. The conversations held that elusive pleasure we get when we go to conferences–a chance to talk about our work to an interested, experienced audience.

On the other hand, some were inexperienced at reporting. What you do in the classroom is essentially a private activity between you and your students.

This field-test required that they reflect and report. It also required that they articulate assumptions about what had gone on and explain enough details so that someone outside the classroom could picture the event.

Also, some instructors do not realize how much they know. During this process, even some of those who have been teaching six years or more struggled to see themselves as having a lot of knowledge about their classroom that everyone might not know.

Finally, we found that many of the field-testers were apologetic about the lack of time spent on the field-test, the field-test report, and the quality of their work. (In some cases, even though a funding crisis had essentially put their whole program on hold, they were still apologetic.) Others expressed surprise and dismay that they would be paid the honorarium for their work, which they felt had not been thorough enough. Cover letters to me contained phrases like; "I wasn't satisfied with my results so I was reluctant to send this report in." In one case, the field-tester felt she needed to explain what she would spend the honorarium on. Given the years of experience these instructors have, it is sad to realize they have so seldom been given recognition of their "extra" work. "Nobody ever thanked me for doing my job and I can't believe you're paying me for it!"

B. Students Keen

We had a strong response from students. "They were glad we were looking at (non-academic) aspects of learning." "When I told them it was for research, they were glad to participate." Those few who hesitated wanted assurance that the results, their own discoveries about their own NAOs, would not be shared.

What We Learned About Field-Testing

A. What Made Our Field-Tests Successful?

Generally we had much more successful tests in the second round. Instructors seemed to be able to complete the test and knew what they had learned from the process. Furthermore, they used the techniques as they were intended, with only one exception. In the first round, there were five exceptions.

We can propose some reasons for the second round being more successful:

- There were no tutors involved, so there was no confusion about who made the decisions and who understood the intent of the field-test. There may have been no tutors involved because the pursuit of field-testers was less rigorous than the first round. We tended to work with those who carried through on their own. Eight tutor coordinators did not call back and so were never pursued. (I am not sure that they were all tutor coordinators, but many were for at least some of the time I was in touch with them. Some of them had left their jobs and were replaced by others. That many of them worked for College of New Caledonia is a testament to the efforts of those working there to continue to develop their tutors.) Also, the time period was a restriction, particularly for tutors.

- Five out of the eight field-testers in the second round had been at the original conference. Perhaps this ensured their understanding of the process; they would not be so dependent on the success of our writing. Of the first group of field-testers, five out of ten had been at the original conference.

- In the first group, average years of experience teaching literacy was 8. In the second group, average years of experience teaching literacy was 15. Understanding of these numbers is complicated by including, in the first group, 3 tutors and 1 instructor who has only worked part-time.

- Perhaps the techniques were clearer.

Another factor in our success was my experience with many different teaching styles and situations. This made it possible for me to imagine what instructors were dealing with and describing. Someone with less experience may have misunderstood some of the crucial descriptions and issues.

B. What Could We Do Better?
We have reached some conclusions that would improve the process another time:

- A second round was useful and important.

- Closer monitoring of the field-tests, as they were happening, would have forestalled some of the problems.

- Field-tests that lasted one full winter would have been most effective in terms of fitting into people's schedules.

- A literacy project in this province should not be started in January.

- Many aspects of the use of the techniques and the results for instructors and students were noticed but not analyzed or recorded. This would have required the participation of trained researchers (or additional training in research of some literacy instructors), more time, and, mostly, more money.

What We Learned About Self-Reflection

The ability to reflect about oneself is a NAO. All the techniques would be most effective if the students were accomplished at self-reflection. Many basic literacy students are not, and, particularly if they have some cognitive disability, self-reflection is very difficult.

A. Techniques Dependent on Self-Reflection
It is true that all the techniques are intended to help learners become more self-reflective. But some of the techniques are intended to be more dependent on the instructor's ability to observe and reflect on the students' behaviour than on the students' ability to do it themselves. Because they keep their own checklists and hopefully note anecdotes about themselves, two techniques, *Goal-Setting by Learners* and *Checklists and End-of-Term Reports*, are the most dependent on the students' abilities to self-reflect. On the other hand, *Using Journals* and *Anecdotal Reporting* can be entirely dependent on the instructor or tutor noticing and interpreting behaviours.

Some field-testers were confused about whether they had succeeded or not depending on their expectations about student self-analysis. One field-tester was convinced that her work was not useful because the students only marginally improved in their self-analysis. She did not write about changes *she* may have observed.

Another instructor using the *Questioning* technique reported only the answers to her questions and specified that she "didn't use the prompts–possible answers–because it is too easy to put words in the mouths of literacy students." She commented that she often was uncomfortable with their answers because they left out things she had observed. Further, she asked all the questions (10 in Draft Two) because she wanted to know about all the areas; she did not want to miss areas that she and the students had not previously talked about. At the same time, she knew that there were too many questions. (This instructor was working with a group, not one-on-one. This may have led to her extra care not to influence the process.)

Other instructors were satisfied that they could "interview" and follow the student's lead, pursuing any line of inquiry. Another instructor, using the *Journal* technique, was convinced that her work was completely valid even though the students took no part in looking specifically for changes in their behaviour; the instructor could see non-academic changes, so, in her opinion, the use of the technique was successful.

B. Who Does the Analysis?

The tension about who does the analysis, student or instructor, also affected the writing of the techniques and much of the discussion at the conference. We attempted to discuss this in *An Introduction to Evaluation* (Appendix A). Whether any of the field-testers read the document, or what they thought of it, we never pursued–a large error, perhaps.

As literacy instructors, we have no fear about telling students when we see changes in their reading or math ability and giving them examples to prove the point. Also, we are all concerned with improved self-esteem, particularly connected to academic skills, because it enables progress, and so we are constantly noting it, testing for it, and describing it. However, many of us are unwilling to trust ourselves, or perhaps to see it as our responsibility, to look for other NAOs, or even other aspects of improved self-esteem. This may be an attitudinal conundrum for many literacy instructors, but it may also be part of not having the confidence to value our observations, as discussed above in *What We Learned About the Field*.

The question of who has a right to interpret ultimately goes to an underlying question about a teacher's role and power versus a student's role and power. It was interesting to note at the conference that one group decided to split up because of either misunderstandings or different beliefs about this question; student and instructor roles seemed absolutely crucial to a decision about how to approach documenting NAOs.

C. Further Analysis Needed

Sometimes in the field-test reports, it was hard to determine whether the use of the technique:

- reflected a change in evolving non-academic outcomes
- caused a change in the students' non-academic outcomes
- merely documented a change in non-academic outcomes

- helped students develop self-reflection.

It may have been the class activities that:
- caused a change in non-academic outcomes, or
- helped develop student self-reflection.

What We Recommend

1. More extensive work be done to build a case for NAOs being a raison-d'etre for literacy instruction

2. Research the NAOs that occur in literacy programs

3. Research to determine which other NAOs are dependent on self-reflection

4. Determine what kind of regular classroom activities develop self-reflection and other NAOs, and which activities are more effective as catalysts to this development

5. Find out how observing NAOs acts as a catalyst to self-development, including self-reflection

6. Conduct more research projects involving literacy instructors and learners. As described above, both instructors and learners showed their interest and willingness to participate in research projects. While they do not have the time and resources to fill out proposal forms and design the projects themselves, one instructor with research experience could be supported to put together a proposal that would involve the participation of instructors and learners in the field.

Techniques for Documenting Non-Academic Outcomes in Basic Literacy

A Multi-media Approach

Using Journals

Goal Setting by Learners

Anecdotal Reporting and End-of-Term Reports: A Combination of Techniques

Questions for Developing Awareness of Literacy Outcomes

A Multi-Media Approach

by Kate Nonesuch [4]

Since some learners have difficulty with reading and writing words, and sometimes with expressing themselves orally, this method was developed as a way for learners to keep a record of outcomes using pictures, diagrams, artifacts and objects to express and document changes in themselves, their actions and their goals, as a result of learning. (The technique is also valuable for learners with stronger literacy skills.)

You will provide time and space for learners to use collages, pictures, and diagrams to describe their starting points and on-going learning and some method of keeping the created works so they provide an ongoing record.

In general, this is a qualitative way to record outcomes. It is also participant-centered; documentation will vary in content and form. However, over time, learners may be able to identify themes in what they document. For example, "speaking out," "reading more," or "using writing to get my feelings out" may be goals or changes that are noticed. These themes could be a focus for assessing change over time. For example, a learner may note that "I am writing more," or that "I write at home."

1. What is Hard About Using Multi-Media?

It is absolutely essential to find or create culturally appropriate material. If you are asking learners to do collages, you must have pictures and artifacts that reflect their lives. Back issues of newspapers and magazines written for First Nations or South Asian communities, for example, may provide pictures of the right kind of people. It is hard to find pictures that reflect the economic status of many learners. Learners may identify with "art" photos of ordinary people, if you can find copies that can be cut up.

Learner (and instructor or tutor) resistance may make for slow going at first. "It's not real school." "I'm no good at art." If you are interested in using multi-media methods to show outcomes, you probably already have some ideas about overcoming resistance. If you are just starting to use multi-media, persevere. After a few months, it will seem like "real school" because that's what they do in your class. It will become "real school."

Making time for regular reflection may be difficult, in part because of the resistance mentioned above, but also because it is hard to find time in an already busy schedule and hard to make changes to a routine that is already established.

[4] Writing based on ideas developed by a group of instructors at the Outcomes Conference, May 1999 in Victoria. Final version edited by Evelyn Battell.

When I am trying to introduce something new and unusual, I find that it is helpful to:

- Recognize feelings of reluctance, fear, and scepticism
- Recognize the increased vulnerability that comes with opening ourselves up symbolically; state my confidence in their ability to keep themselves safe by choosing what to share or not to share with others
- Say why I think the new activity will be useful to us all
- Offer people the choice of participating in the new activity with me or doing something more "normal" by themselves (preferably something very boring and normal)
- Set aside a time for it, and carry through, even if only a few learners participate
- Model the enjoyment of the activity by participating–make my own collage, or keep my own scrapbook, or whatever I am asking learners to do; I'm willing to share my creations with them
- Make sure everyone gets another chance to do the activity soon after the first time, so we can build on the positive experiences of the first time and make adjustments to things that did not go so well.

2. The Technique

a. **What to Create?**

There are many ways to create a multi-media representation of outcomes. The ones described below are examples. Some creations will be the result of specific questions; others will give a more general view of the learners' understanding and reflections about their learning.

Self portraits

A self-portrait at the beginning of a term offers a chance for learners to introduce themselves to others and to reflect on their strengths, goals, and support systems. Another self-portrait at the end of the term provides a way of assessing the effects of the program. Invite the learners to use photographs, drawings, pictures, words and small objects to show who they are, where they came from, and what is important to them.

Snapshots

The diagrams attached at the end of this technique allow learners to make a fairly quick representation of what is going on in their lives. Done weekly or monthly, they provide an ongoing representation of what is changing. Be sure to date each one.

i) The action figure (page 26): Each person writes or draws on their figure. On the head, show what is being thought about or what is being learned. On the heart, show feelings or changes in feelings or dealing with feelings. On the hands and feet show what will be

done next, what steps will be taken. Add the date and a title that shows what problem or situation is being described.

We have provided a blank figure for those who feel uncertain about drawing their own.

A larger figure could be used to show a response to a situation by the whole group. Be clear whether you are evaluating–taking a snapshot of–the group's handling of a situation or of each person's contribution to the group's handling of the situation. Doing analysis of the group is more complicated and may not be the focus you want.

ii) The web (pages 27 and 28): Learners mark a point on each line to show their satisfaction with each phase of their lives, closer to the centre showing less satisfaction and the outer end of the line showing greatest satisfaction. For example, a learner with many financial problems would mark a point very near the centre; someone with no money worries would mark a point at the end. When learners have marked all the lines, they join the marks they have made to make a web. The web shows instantly what areas of their lives give most satisfaction, and what areas they want to make changes in.

The web can be adapted to measure other things. For example, in setting goals for academic work, the lines could be marked with such things as "asking questions," "keeping a journal," "spelling," "taking part in class," "adding fractions," and so on. As well, themes identified when learners do a self-portrait could be used as labels for the lines of the web.

Learners might revisit a web at a later date and use a different colour to add another web for comparison.

Collages

These are easiest to do if they start from a specific question or theme. For example:

i) A large collage that represents the class might have space on it for each learner. Some questions might be, "What strengths do I bring to the class?" "What do I do that helps the class achieve goals?"

ii) An individual collage may be divided into two parts, labelled "Then" and "Now," where the learner is asked to reflect on changes in abilities and attitudes.

Collages are often made from pictures and words cut from magazines. Look for magazines that reflect your learners!

Consider having one session when learners collect their pictures and another where they actually do the collage. This gives time for reflection and conversation that may stimulate the final collage.

b. **Some Resources for Your Creations**

Photographs

Take pictures in the classroom. Take them yourself, or invite a different learner each week to take pictures. The purpose is to make sure that every learner appears in at least one photograph that week. Take pictures of class activities. They will show who works alone, which learners like to work with each other, who contributes what; comparing body language over time will show changes in self-esteem; pictures can show highlights in academic life, such as a book read or a math problem correctly done at the board. Some photos can go in an album, or in learners' scrapbooks, but most of them might end up in the box of collage material, to resurface in another form.

Take pictures as a permanent record of large or small collages that will hang on the wall for a while, and then fall apart.

Digital cameras, while initially expensive, may be less costly in the long run than using conventional cameras. You can take many pictures and people can choose and print the ones they want. Reprints are easily made too.

Fabric and textured paper

Fabric is wonderful in collages–it provides colour and texture and is more abstract than pictures. It can be used to show emotion or mood without needing to find a picture of the right person doing the right thing. Any size will do, from quilters' scraps to 20 cm remnants.

Old wallpaper sample books also provide a source of textures, patterns, and colours.

Clip Art and Typed Words and Phrases

If learners are familiar with the clip art you have available, they may be able to print out exactly what they want. As well, you may want to print an assortment of images that you think might be useful. The pictures may be stereotypical, depending on the program you have, but such things as arrows, happy faces, question marks, hearts, rings, etc., will be useful.

You might also print, in a variety of fonts, words that learners request, or ones you see them cutting from magazines.

Found Materials and Objects

Learners can bring in small objects that will help them express what they want to say. You could also start a collection of objects that people could use. Look in a craft supply store or Imagination Market to gather material.

c. **How to Keep an Ongoing Record**

Keeping an ongoing record is a challenge when you are using symbols to show outcomes. A scrapbook for each learner or for the class provides a way to keep things in order, although things have to be small enough to fit on the page somehow. (Creative folding is an art.) A folio keeps things separate, but whole.

Learners could put many things in their books–an important piece of writing, a picture of themselves at some moment of achievement, the top of a test that has their name, the date and the great mark they got, a photocopy of the cover of a book they loved, the action figure or the web diagrams mentioned above.

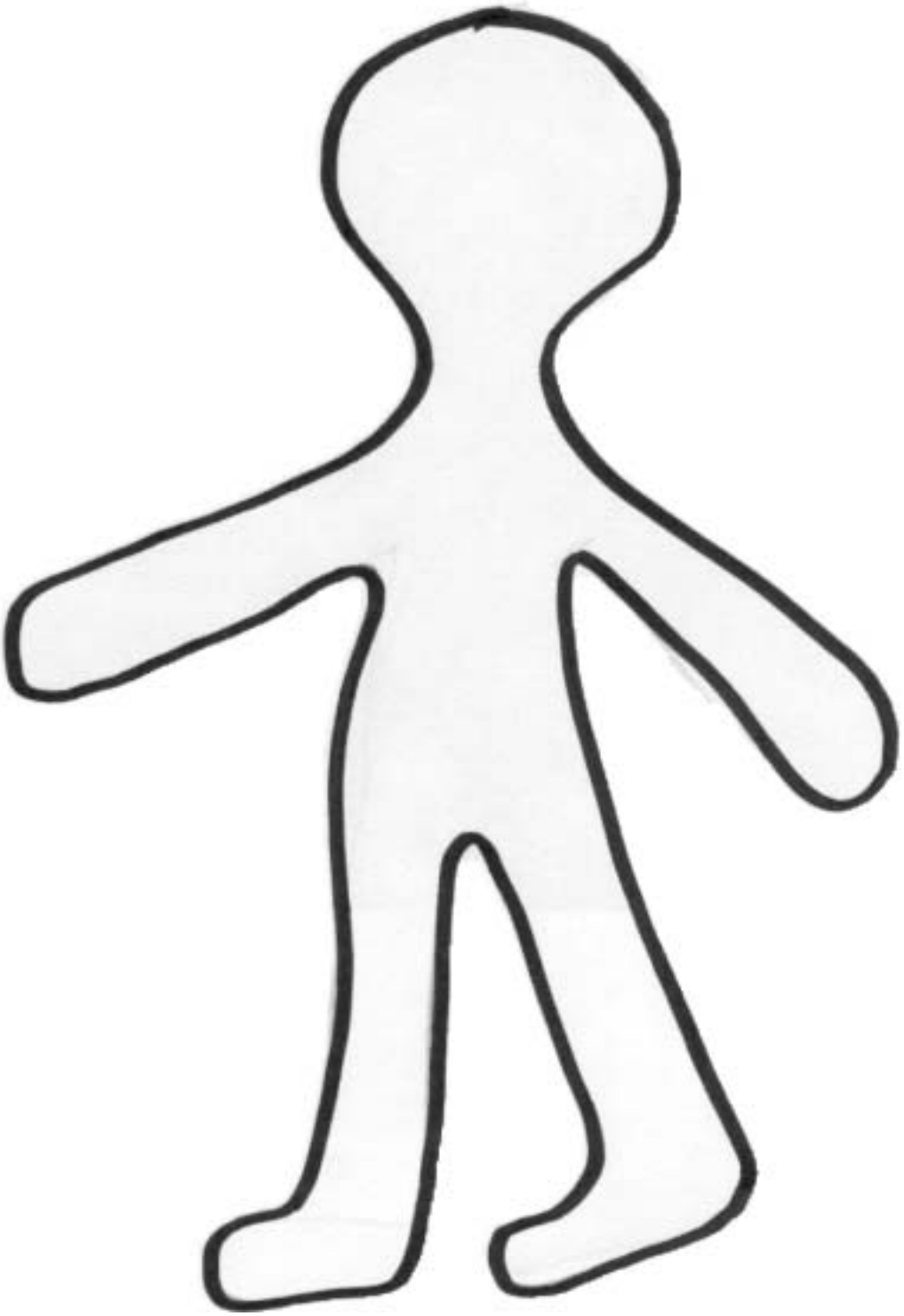
If you have room on the walls, you might make a "time-line" of important events, starting with the first day and adding pictures, words, and things regularly to the end of the class.

When it is time to take down a collage that has been on the walls, take a picture of it. Learners may want to take large things home to their own walls if you can lend a big mailing tube to transport them easily.

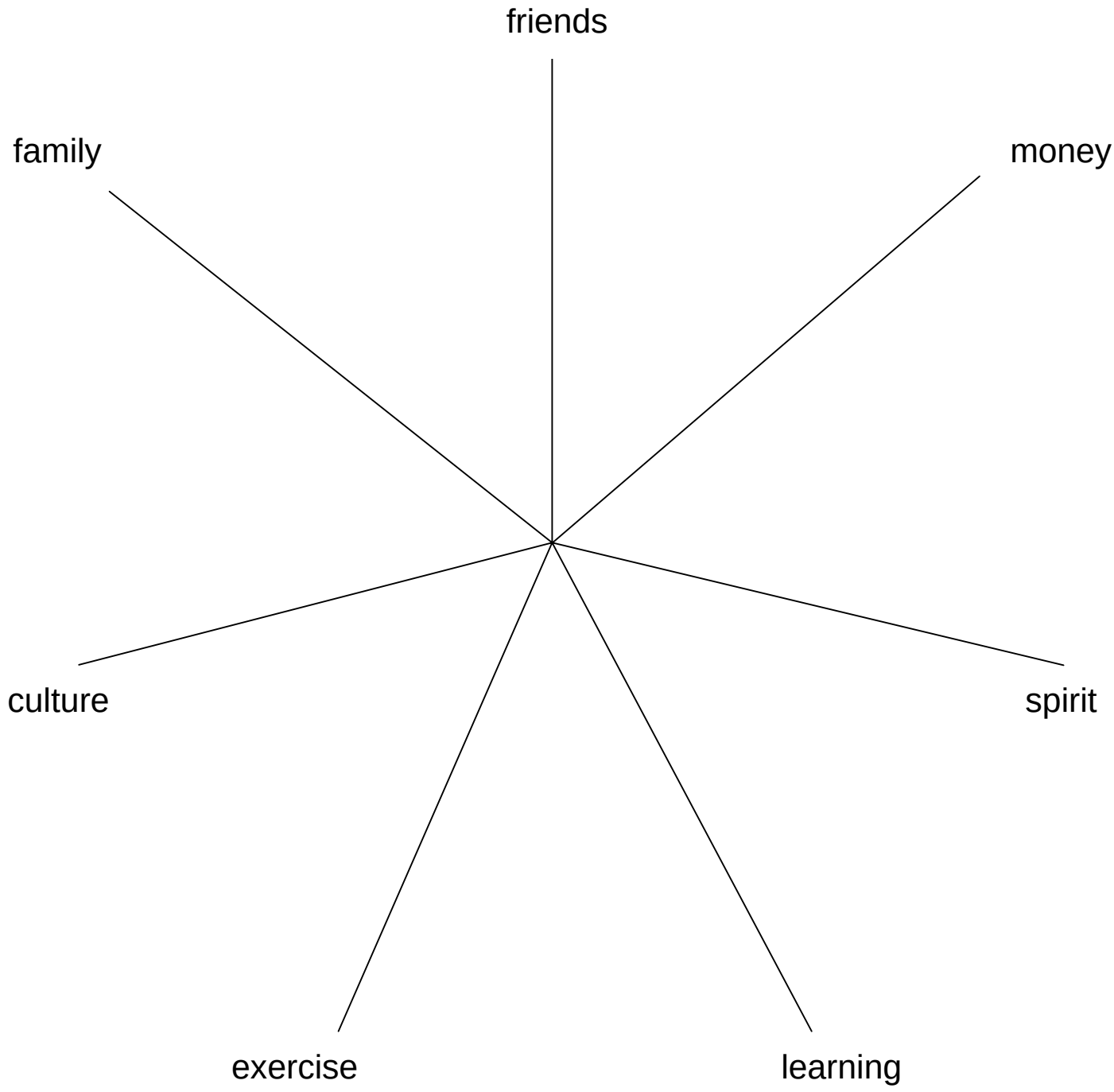
d. **Reflection on the Record**

If learners are keeping scrapbooks or portfolios, you can invite them to talk with you about their creations on a regular basis. The creations provide a focus for discussions about change and goals. If you write some comments about the discussion on a sticky note, the learner may decide to stick the sticky to the relevant page, adding to the ongoing record.

A photo album or a "timeline" collage helps everyone remember how things were, to make comparisons, and to notice change. For example, if the class is taking on a large project like a learner event, a field trip, or inviting the community in for any reason, you might start by putting up a large piece of paper on the wall. As the class works through the project, choose some symbols or pictures that show the process, the challenges, and the moods. After the event, when you are evaluating the activity, use the collage as a starting point to remind people of the various stages, challenges and emotional ups and downs that occurred along the way.

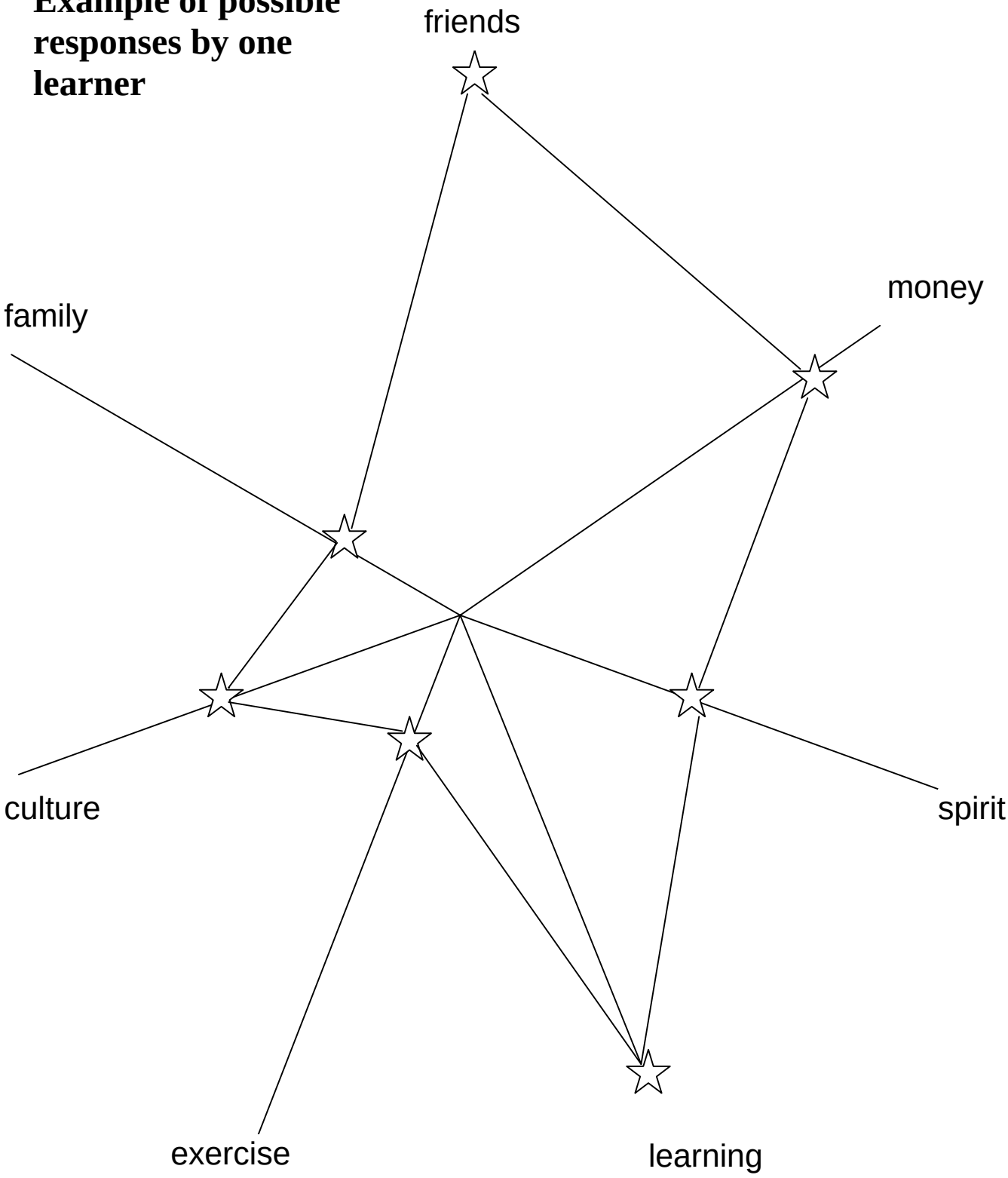


Example of topics



other possibilities–fun, work

Example of possible responses by one learner



other possibilities–fun, work

Using Journals

by Karen Erickson and Evelyn Battell[5]

The underlying philosophy behind this technique is that communication is the foundation of literacy. We write to communicate thoughts, feelings, experiences, and ideas. Sometimes we write to communicate with ourselves, sometimes we write to communicate with another person, and at other times we write to communicate with a much wider audience.

Since Journals require writing, this technique is easier to use with those who have some writing ability. If you have a mixed-level class, you may need to scribe for some of the learners.

Although journals can be used for academic purposes, we are interested here in helping learners become more aware of changes in their lives since becoming a learner; in other words, to assess non-academic outcomes. The first type of journal is a personal journal, the second type is a dialogue journal, and the third is a learning journal. Each journal has a different purpose and audience, and requires learners to move from a private to a more public voice.

You will engage the learners in writing journals. You will choose which type or types of journals you want to use and begin the process by explaining journals. As the journalizing goes on, there will be regular sessions to discuss what has come to light and to pose questions that may produce further reflection. Probably, you will write a journal yourself about the process.

1. Using the Technique

These journal-writing activities are designed to form an ongoing process and structure to help learners track their journey as a learner over the course of the program. Therefore, it is recommended that the journals be introduced near the beginning of the program.

The journals can be used individually or in sequence. The decision about the types of journals used should be guided by the learner's interest, their self-confidence, their abilities, and your relationship with the learners. Private, personal writing is the safest and most comfortable form of writing and may be the best starting point for many learners. However, as trust and relationships develop between the instructor or tutor and the learner or learners within a group, writing can be shared with a wider audience.

2. The Journals

a. **Personal Journal**

An instructor or tutor could begin with a discussion of what areas of life are affected when one takes on the role of learner. This discussion might spread over a number of sessions. One possibility is to discuss the four areas used in traditional First Nations philosophy: physical, intellectual/mental, emotional/social, and spiritual. For example, in the physical area, learners might consider such questions as: What has changed about the physical

[5] Writing based on ideas developed by a group of instructors at the Outcomes Conference, May 1999 in Victoria. Final version edited by Evelyn Battell.

activity I do (or don't do) each day? What has changed in how much or when I eat or drink coffee? Has anything changed in my sleep pattern? Once the group or learner has some ideas on this topic, move to introducing the journal technique.

Alternatively, the instructor or tutor might have learners start journalizing and slowly introduce non-academic outcomes as the topic of the journals.

The personal journal will probably be the first writing journal that is introduced to the learners. The instructor or tutor may introduce the topic by engaging the group in a discussion about personal journal writing, perhaps providing examples of journals, and the reasons people use personal journals.

Personal journal writing provides an opportunity for learners to write about and express thoughts and feelings that may not be expressed anywhere else. It can help learners break down the fear of words and help them begin to develop their voice.

Guidelines

- Personal journals are not shared unless the learner chooses to do so. It is a risk-free form of writing. If the journal is to be used eventually for evaluating outcomes, the learner will decide what parts and when the instructor or tutor can read it. You might let the learner photocopy those pages they want you to see or paperclip together the pages that are not to be read.

- If the learner chooses to share the journal, the learner and instructor or tutor will determine in advance what types of responses the instructor or tutor will provide. These responses should not focus on the technical aspects of the writing; the responses should focus on the content.

- Time will be provided each day for personal journal writing.

- The instructor or tutor and the learner(s) need to agree on whether there will be a topic each day and whether it is understood that they will write on it or not. This is a chance to introduce new possible outcomes for analysis.

b. **Dialogue Journal**

Dialogue journal writing is an opportunity for the learners to express their opinions, respond to comments and questions, and develop their ideas. It can help learners develop the ability to exchange ideas with others.

The dialogue journal could be introduced once learners have established a degree of comfort with personal journal writing, i.e., they regularly write in their journals, talk about their evaluation/ideas, and ask for comments about what they have said. The dialogue journal, like the personal journal, is about the learners' personal changes and changes in their role in the group or their larger community/family.

Alternatively, if the class/learner is comfortable and relatively able and confident in writing, the instructor or tutor might begin with a conversation about non-academic outcomes, as in the personal journal activity, and begin directly with the dialogue journal.

The instructor or tutor can introduce the dialogue journal by engaging learners in a discussion about writing as a process for exchanging and building on ideas. Topics to discuss in the dialogue journal could be suggested by the learner or instructor or tutor, but they would be issues important to the learner, instructor or tutor, sponsor, or community. The instructor or tutor and the learner use the journal to read, reflect upon, and respond to each other's ideas and comments. Reading other learners' journals may give learners ideas about themselves and their own changes.

Guidelines

- Dialogue journals are a form of dialogue and exchange with others.

- The instructor or tutor or the learner can pose questions. The pair or group may agree to a discussion before writing actually begins. In these discussions, care must be taken to pose questions and get people thinking as compared to finishing an analysis.

- Learners are expected to respond to topics and questions in the dialogue journal.

- Whatever other outcomes the learner is writing about, (the outcomes agreed upon for analysis, the question posed for that session) the instructor or tutor may also point out the extent to which their ideas are changing or developing and the degree to which they are engaging in real dialogue. These are particular communication skills that are evident through dialogue journalizing. As in the personal journal, the outcomes should not include technical skills like spelling and punctuation unless specifically requested by the learner.

- Set aside time for dialogue journals as often as the program allows. A session may take 30 minutes or more to introduce the topic and make the original entry and equivalent amounts of time to respond to the return entry.

- As with the personal journal, the learner decides if any section is to be used for a wider audience than originally agreed upon.

c. **Learning Journal**

A learning journal is an opportunity for learners to reflect upon the learning process and contribute to its direction. In addition, it is an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences with others. It can help learners see that they are both receivers and producers of knowledge.

Learning journals should be introduced in the early part of the program since they are intended to help the learners reflect on their journey within the program. The instructor or tutor can introduce the learning journal by engaging learners in a discussion about the learning process. It is particularly useful to identify some of the common struggles and high

points that learners have encountered as they learned new things as a parent, a worker, a community member, or a learner.

Use some metaphor to help track the learning journey. Any process that has a number of steps would do. Below we use the metaphor of a making a trip.

Take one example and follow it through in discussion. This gives everyone a chance to see how the process works. An example of a learner charting her journey to Chairing a Meeting is described below. This learner had a very specific goal. Another learner might chart a more general process such as being comfortable in the classroom or learning situation.

Planning the Journey
Pick a destination: Where are you going?
To learn to chair a meeting of my classmates.

Pack your bags: What do you need to take with you?
My confidence. My desire.

What can you leave at home?
Failures from the past.

Chart a route: How are you going to get there?
Practice with instructor. Watch others do it. Plan the first one very carefully.

Companions: Whom are you going to take along?
Instructor and a classmate/friend.

To whom will you send post cards?
My husband.

Recording the Journey
Travel Journal: Where did you go? What stops did you make along the way? What did you discover? What did you learn about the people? Their culture? Their world? What potholes or roadblocks did you encounter? What happened? What detours did you take? Why? What surprises happened?

I met with the instructor and three other students that wanted to do this also. We talked about the parts of the meeting, we made up sample agendas, we practiced, and we talked about how to handle problems and to ensure everyone was heard from. We went to Rotary for one of their meetings to observe them chairing. We offered to chair one meeting each and after we met and talked about what went well and what didn't.

I learned that my classmates are really easy to handle in a meeting and that everybody gets irritated when George talks on and on. It isn't just me. I talked to him about that and he agreed to try to help me when I'm chairing a meeting! I learned that the Rotary has a lot of fun at their meetings and not nearly as much discussion as we have at ours. I

was surprised how easy it was and I wonder why I took so long to try it. I also gave up my spot twice to others in our group until I was really impatient for my turn.

Travel Review and Tips

Travel Guide: What were the highlights of the trip? What suggestions would you give for other travelers?

It was really interesting to go to Rotary, but the highlight was when I did the meeting successfully. I would suggest others all take turns doing this too.

Guidelines

- Learning journals are public forms of expression that contribute to the learning of others.

- Learners will be expected to record their responses to the questions put forward in a learning journal outline.

- Time should be set aside to record responses around *Planning the Journey* once the learners are comfortably settled into the routine of the program and have a general sense of where they are going in the program. The learners' responses would be shared with the instructor or tutor who would provide comments on the travel plan.

- In addition to whatever personal non-academic outcomes the learner is interested in tracking, the instructor or tutor might comment on the learners' abilities to set, refine and adjust learning goals and their ability to identify and use learning resources and supports.

- Time should be set aside to record responses to *Recording the Journey* once learners have completed some definite milestones (i.e., completion of a book, passing a test, stopping smoking, attending for a month, or some other event that is significant to the learner). It is best to record significant events in a journey when they are still fresh in people's minds. The learner's responses would be shared with the instructor or tutor who would provide comments on the journey. If the learner is part of a group, the responses could be shared with peers who could provide additional responses to the learner.

- Aside from whatever personal goals the learner is tracking, the instructor or tutor might comment on the learners' abilities to learn from their experiences, the tenacity to overcome barriers, and their wisdom in recognizing and celebrating success.

- Time should be set aside to record responses to *Travel Reviews and Tips* at the end of the semester or at the end of a definite program of study (i.e., reading independently, movement from Fundamental 020 to 030). One outcome learners may not notice here is their ability to provide guidance and strength to others.

2. Context

All of these journals can be used with individuals or with groups of learners. The personal and dialogue journals do not require an audience beyond the learner-instructor or tutor dyad. However, part of the intent of the learning journal is to share learning with others. If the program operates for a group of learners, they could share parts of their learning journal with each other. If the program is provided to individuals, the instructor or tutor and learner could arrange to share the learning with a trusted group of family and friends. Finally, the learner could decide to share parts of the journal with sponsors or other parts of the wider community. If instructors, tutors or tutor coordinators see some sections as valuable, they must consult the learners who would then agree to its use in a report if they felt safe.

Goal Setting by Learners

by Helen Thomas, Judy Rose, and Evelyn Battell[6]

When learners decide to return to school and start learning in a more formal setting, they are often at a place in their lives where they are ready to examine their progress and are, in fact, looking for ways to assure themselves that they are getting ahead, while at the same time feeling extremely vulnerable.

Your learners and you will design this whole process together. Right from the beginning, it is a shared activity. You will find a way for your learners to generate the suggestions as well as to choose which ones to use. Most learners will never have been involved in such a project– certainly not at school.

You and the learners will, among other things, choose goals to be evaluated, decide how to reach the goals, establish the time frame for the change, and determine to whom and how to report the change. When the steps in this technique have been completed and the questions answered, the learners will see any report that might be written and authorize the use of any information coming from the goal-setting exercise.

We have many suggestions and many explanations to help you in this process of goal setting.

1. Using the Technique Effectively

Learners who have little experience in goal setting may need to develop skills to learn to recognize what constitutes progress and what is valuable to measure. Participants in a process such as this one will need to feel comfortable with the aspect of their learning that is being highlighted. Learners will need to feel ownership of both the process and the product.

It is essential for the effectiveness of this technique that trust be established before the process is started. If the technique is done as a class activity, the class must be able to work together as a group. The instructor or tutor may feel that some critical communication issues need to be worked on before the learners are ready for goal setting.

2. Learner's Role

The learner or group of learners makes the decisions. It is essential that the participants feel that they are in charge of the process; their job is to make choices and work toward a goal or goals that are "realistic, as specific as possible and clearly expressed."[7]

[6] Writing based on ideas developed by a group of instructors at the Outcomes Conference, May 1999 in Victoria. Final version edited by Evelyn Battell.

[7] Goals and Needs, http://www.csd.uwa.edu.au/job/guide/ex_1.htm.

3. Instructor's or Tutor's Role

The instructor or tutor introduces the topic, leads discussion, and ensures that everyone has an opportunity to participate without feeling pressured to contribute.

The instructor or tutor helps the learners to match their goal with a reasonable time frame and to appropriately estimate the time required to make real changes or the number of small steps on route.

The instructor or tutor also provides opportunities for the learners to recognize their progress, examine or change their current goal, and report to their selected audience on their progress.

4. The Technique

a. Beginning the Process

One way to begin a discussion about goal setting would be to ask the class, "What is a goal?" This could become the start of a brainstorming session that generates many possible goals, both big and small, from asking questions in class to being a better parent. Remember that brainstorming requires that every response be treated seriously and written down. This is very important to encourage contributions from all members and to help the learners feel safe.

One good way of describing goals is, "You can look at goals as a kind of map of your future. If you were about to set off on a very long car journey, chances are you wouldn't even think of travelling without a map. You would plan out where you were going to stop overnight, the distances between towns, and the route that you would follow. Otherwise you might end up in the middle of nowhere with a flat tire and no gas."[8] You could use this analogy to explain short-term goals, long-term goals, and obstacles.

Another way to start the discussion would be to talk about experiences that the learners already have that involved working toward a goal. Learners who attend literacy or upgrading classes are normally working towards a goal. Some possible goals for learners attending classes might be to improve their education in order to help them find work or qualify for training, help their children with school work, improve their self-esteem, read to their children, etc.

Learners often can provide excellent examples of working to meet their goals from the process that they went through to get into class. They often had to overcome obstacles including securing funding, filling in forms, attending interviews or orientation sessions, finding suitable day-care, overcoming a partner's or parent's objections, etc. You could have them work through the steps in part b, *Key Steps and Questions*, for a goal that they have already completed.

[8] Goals: setting and achieving them, http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/5866/goals.html.

Another way of introducing the subject of goals would be to read a story about someone who has had a goal. There are many possible subjects, but Terry Fox's goal to raise money for cancer research by running across Canada would be one excellent possibility. This could also show that, even if you don't succeed in meeting your goal, it is still worthwhile to attempt it.

b. **Key Steps and Questions**

Once the subject of goals has been introduced, the following steps need to be followed and these questions need to be answered.

Step One: Set goals based on the learners' own needs or ones that they recognize as important.
Question One: *What will I try to accomplish and why*? Examples include: progress with issues of addiction, assertiveness, decision-making, cooperation, communicating better with others, listening, participation, getting along with others, being ready for class, risk-taking, etc.

Distinguish between goals for the learner as an individual and goals for the group as a whole. The latter are definitely harder to track and more complex to analyze. In the case of learner's personal goals, each learner will have an individualized list and answer the rest of the questions in terms of those goals.

Step Two: Determine the steps necessary to reach a goal.
Question Two: *What will I do to accomplish this?*

Step Three: Decide on the time frame for the change. See Section 5, *Time Frame*, for more ideas.
Question Three: *When will I be able to accomplish this?* How long will it take?

Step Four: Decide how the achievement of the desired outcome could be measured.
Question Four: *How will I know when I have achieved my goal?*

Step Five: Decide how to track the behaviours/process. See part c, *Recording the Process*, for assistance.
Question Five: *How will I keep track of these changes?*

Step Six: Decide where the behaviour is relevant (class, home, community).
Question Six: *Who will be affected by or involved in this accomplishment?*

Step Seven: Decide who the audience would be.
Question Seven: *Who wants to know about this change or development and whom do I want to tell?* Examples include: learner, training consultant, sponsor, funder, probation officer, instructor or tutor, other learners, family members, friends, program funder, administrators, instructor's or tutor's colleagues, learner's colleagues, etc.

Step Eight: If reporting to the audience is desired, how it will be done.
Question Eight: *How will I report these changes?*

c. **Recording the Process**

Some people think that one essential feature of goal setting is writing down the goal as clearly and specifically as possible. Some advocate writing a long-term goal down on a card and reading it first thing in the morning and last thing at night.

Another method would be to visualize yourself achieving the goal and, if possible, finding a picture in a magazine or newspaper and putting it in your binder or on your fridge so that you see it all the time. Some instructors or tutors or learners may prefer to talk about the goal rather than write it down. The main thing is a true commitment to the goal and a willingness to adjust the goal as circumstances change, or as you achieve one part of it.

Once the goal is established and the key questions are worked through, each learner begins tracking the chosen behaviour. Recording progress or reporting results can be done in a number of ways, but the following are some suggestions.

- *Establish a time in the week for a discussion on goals.* "Can you see evidence that you are moving toward your goal? Have you set a new goal for this day? week? month? How do you plan to record this new goal?" This discussion could also take the form of a Talking Circle.

  With small groups or individuals, the "goal" discussion can be established as part of the routine to be followed by the instructor or tutor so that when meeting with the learner to talk about the learner's work, they also discuss goals.

- *Dated portfolio development* is an excellent way to routinely collect evidence to support the movement toward the stated goal. The instructor or tutor may facilitate the process by suggesting a piece of work as supporting the learner's goal and encouraging comparisons with earlier work to see developments.

- The learners may *develop a standard form* to record their achievements. The form may be a single page with a number of columns for the date, evidence, and goal achieved.

- *Journal writing* is an effective way to encourage learners to reflect on their goals or to consider such questions as, "How do I know I am moving toward my goal?"

  Journal writing is an example of a goal that could be either process or product. If writing in a journal twice a week is the goal, then the writing of it achieves the goal. But in the journal, a learner might be talking about how the process is affecting him or what value he sees in it.

  He might discuss what it takes to make himself do this task or what other tasks it is similar to. In this case journal writing is a process that helps the learner observe himself at work and prepares him to discuss his achievements with others.

- Some learners could express themselves through some symbolic means such as collage, drawing, or music.

Achieving goals conjures up an image of celebration and acknowledgement, so there could be parties for major accomplishments and formal recognition.

5. Time Frame

The participant might choose one goal and then, when that goal has been tracked for the desired length of time, choose another. Alternatively, the learner might begin with a number of goals and work on them all at once.

Some learners may be ready to use this technique on academic skills (reading, spelling, math, etc.) early in a program, but are only able to examine non-academic issues when they have developed an understanding of the process and feel more self-confident.

Some behaviours might be recorded or reviewed on a daily or weekly basis as part of a longer-term goal in order to compile enough information to recognize a pattern.

6. Context

In the technique's most highly developed setting, the learners would spend approximately one month preparing to start the goal-setting process. During that time, group guidelines would be developed and life-skills workshops would take place to support the goal-setting model, including workshops on communication, valuing diversity, learning styles, self-care, assertiveness, teamwork, etc.

This technique can be used with more or less emphasis on the above preparation depending on the commitment and skills of the group of learners.

Remember that the instructor or tutor may facilitate or provide information, but whoever is involved (a group of learners or a learner/instructor or tutor pair) must find a process that leaves the learner making the decisions and, as much as possible, contributing the ideas.

Alternatively, the instructor or tutor can begin with only a little preparation for goal setting and build on the learners' skills in communication, self-care, etc. as they progress. This is a challenge, but definitely possible, in a group where trust is developing.

Other ways of working on the self-evaluation process are to have one learner working with an instructor or tutor or to have an instructor or tutor working with individual learners who may or may not choose to report to a larger group.

This process is a useful personal technique for independent evaluation throughout life.

Anecdotal Reporting and End-of-Term Reports: A Combination of Techniques

by Carol Schoen, Paula Davies and Evelyn Battell

This process involves the instructor, tutor, or tutor coordinator observing and recording behavioural changes in the learner throughout the duration of a literacy program. Possibly, the learner is also keeping a checklist of behavioural changes. Finally, you may choose to consider a portfolio of the learner's work. All these will contribute to the writing of an end-of-term report. Ideally, you will write a draft of the report together with the learner.

End-of-term reports have traditionally emphasized academic results. As instructors, we have often been uncertain about describing the other changes and developments we have seen. This technique gives us a basis for discussing and/or reporting these changes in the end-of-term report. It also helps convince learners of the importance we place on these changes; they, too, are worth reporting to outside audiences.

This technique has a number of steps. You will choose those that suit your needs.

You will observe and record anecdotes about each learner during the field-testing time. We suggest that you date each anecdote as you record it. These anecdotes will be used to illustrate claims about behaviour changes. These anecdotes are discussed with the learners to check their understanding of what the situation exemplifies.

Also, learners will contribute anecdotes to illustrate changes they think they have made. We have suggested a check-list to help the learner keep track of the changes that are occurring.

We have suggested some behavioural changes that you might look for, but you will develop a different list for each learner.

When the time comes to write the report, the two of you look at the portfolio, discuss the learner's checklist information and your anecdotal notes, and write a draft of the report together.

1. Using the Technique

This technique is intended to help formalize and validate some of the behavioural changes that we see in learners as they work on literacy development. Often funders, tutors, and learners themselves measure progress only in terms of grade levels or test scores. We hope this checklist, which leads to an anecdotal oral or written report, will provide a language for the literacy field to talk about progress in other areas. The open-ended questions are to be used as prompts to stimulate further reflection. We hope that this technique will direct instructors or tutors and learners to look for and value progress outside the traditional categories.

Sometimes adult learners are very eager to be re-tested after entering a literacy program. They have attended regularly, worked hard, and want to see this reflected in some tangible way.

Having these learners write a standardized test may not result in scores that reflect the kind of change they feel and want to see. This process provides a starting point to acknowledge the progress that the learner is experiencing.

Cautions
This technique is not intended to be used as a static, quantifiable checklist (i.e., I have observed you doing 6 of the 11 listed behaviours). Rather, it is intended to be a dynamic technique that serves to focus attention on what changes are happening for the learner. Therefore, choose behaviours that you or the learner thinks represent significant developmental change. The learner has the major voice in developing the checklist.

In addition, it is important for the learner to know about the kind of behaviours you are looking for. Some behaviours, will not be comfortable for some learners because they come from a different cultural background. For instance, it would be useful to talk with a learner about eye contact. If it is not acceptable in their culture in certain circumstances, they may or may not want to learn to change that behaviour. Another example might be the desire, in some cultures, to agree in public situations. They may not accept the idea of disagreeing, especially with an instructor. The learners may be interested in learning some phrases that allows them to respectfully disagree. At any rate, the instructor or tutor or tutor coordinator must be careful about assumptions that come from one cultural base.

Furthermore, the items suggested in the attached checklists are mostly value-laden. It is almost impossible to suggest a list that doesn't express the "good" behaviours that we value. It is important to recognize that, for any number of reasons, learners may not be aware of these "good" behaviours. For example, they may not realize that many of those in authority value an upright posture. If they come to realize it through developing this checklist, that is a valuable learning. If they choose to reject it as a goal of theirs, that is also valuable. At least, after the discussion, they know that others, such as their instructor or tutor may value upright posture.

On the other hand, their posture may improve even though they are not thinking of it or particularly valuing it, simply as an expression of feeling prouder and more confident. Then that behaviour is a success we can share with them, another positive aspect of their development that will make them even prouder.

All of this is to say that we need to be analytical at all times regarding the values we are reading into behaviour and, whenever possible, we need to check with the learner to see if the value is shared.

Finally, we want to record changes, not judge things that don't change. The reason for a behaviour may be safety at some very deep level, a level more essential to the learners than pleasing their current instructors or tutors. For further discussion of this, see *Making Connections: Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective* edited by Kate Nonesuch and published by the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1996.

2. Role of the Instructor, Tutor or Tutor Coordinator

The instructor's or tutor's role is to spend time with the learner for the initial set-up of the learner's checklist and later for the one-on-one discussions. Further, you will make your own observations and record behaviour changes in the learner on an ongoing basis. You may also choose to develop for yourself an actual checklist, with room for the date and an anecdote next to each behaviour. When requested, the instructor or tutor would share these observations with the learner, record learner reflections and anecdotal additions, and produce an oral or written report.

3. Role of the Learner

The learner's role is to be self-reflective while creating and keeping the checklist. (Some learners may require a scribe to record their observations.) Also, the learner will submit work, anecdotes, or other materials to explain her conclusions. The learner decides which goals she will track. The items we have included in our checklist are merely suggestions of topics; they are in no way an exhaustive list. Topics should be developed to suit the needs of the learner, instructor or tutor, and cultural context.

4. Time Frame

The learner checklist will be most effective if used every month or 6 weeks. It is essential that there is a period of time for the learner to work on desired changes and then have time to reflect on these changes with an instructor or tutor. Within a school term of 16 weeks or more, discussion of the checklist with the learner could occur 3 or 4 times. The checklist should be refined, if necessary, at each meeting of the instructor or tutor and the learner.

On the other hand, the instructor or tutor is making anecdotal notes at every opportunity. This has been tried with a class of six students and, although it was time consuming, the instructor reported it was invaluable. Obviously it would be easier if a tutor were only working with one learner and could make anecdotal notes after every session.

5. Some Samples of Instructor or Tutor Anecdotes

The following anecdotes are examples of demonstrated non-academic outcomes in literacy learners.

A learner came to school on the last day of term in spite of worries about her husband who was having heart difficulty. When we asked her about why she came she explained that she had a job to finish here. She also said she was worried about her husband's health partly because it meant she would not be able to come back in the fall.

This anecdote illustrates that the commitment of the learner to the program ranked as high as her family concerns. This had not been true in the past. Her behaviour also demonstrated what participation in the program meant to her. T he possibility of losing this place/activity where she belonged was a real worry for her. This sense of belonging had not been present in the past and she was able to say approximately, when, in the year this had occurred.

Commitment of the learner to the program and a sense of belonging are the two non-academic outcomes illustrated by this anecdote.

A learner who had not taken part very much, but rather sat in the corner reading, asked one day if the instructor "minded" her just sitting and reading. The instructor answered, "No, but you might find some value also in the other activities." The learner then explained she didn't know what else she should be doing.

This anecdote shows how the learner demonstrated sensitivity to the relationship with the instructor and a slowly developing ability to ask for information and admit confusion.

In a conversation about the women's washrooms, a learner said, "I don't want to talk about that. If we're going to talk about washrooms, there are some problems with the men's washroom." He then accepted that after we finished discussing the women's washroom, we would discuss the men's problems.

With this behaviour, he demonstrated a willingness to raise his issue, willingness to wait for it to be dealt with, and an ability to clearly state that he felt uncomfortable in a discussion. In the past, this learner had occasionally made it difficult to carry on with discussions because he was fairly bursting with tension.

A learner was seen going through her binder and throwing away scrap paper.

This learner had had difficulty finding things because of the mess in her binder. This behaviour demonstrated she was learning to keep her materials sorted.

A learner agreed to produce on the computer a sign for a display. She had maintained that she "couldn't do computers." After this, she readily volunteered to make things on the computer.

She demonstrated a willingness to be led into new tasks and to realize when she had learned a new skill and was making use of this skill.

6. Some Sample Non-Academic Outcomes from the Perspective of the Instructor or Tutor

- Expresses desire to learn
- Attends class more, more regularly, more promptly
- Participates
- Listens
- Shows changes in personal bearing
- Increases/decreases quantity of speaking/writing
- Shows willingness to examine/re-evaluate own opinion/stance
- Demonstrates willingness to accept feedback
- Demonstrates a decrease in anxiety
- Shares work willingly

- Reads to tutor/instructor/family
- Brings personal or non-assignment writing to instructor or tutor
- Shows willingness to publish if opportunity arises
- Interacts with school/community
- Resolves conflict

7. Some Samples of Learner Checklists

Personal Responsibilities	**In Class**
I get to class on time I have the things I need (keys, books, paper, etc.) I attend regularly I call in if I'm going to be away	I ask questions if I don't understand I find out what the homework is I ask for help if I need it I listen to other learners I help other learners I don't leave class as often
Personal Reflections	**In the Community**
I am healthier I watch different TV shows I feel different about myself I read more I write more I think differently about people I think differently about old/new situations	I am more willing to talk to my child's teacher I have changed how I deal with my kids I have started new activities I have changed how I deal with my job I have changed how I deal with my neighbours

8. A Sample Form for a Learner Checklist

The learner fills in the first column with the chosen outcomes. Then, before each meeting with the tutor or instructor, she evaluates her progress on that item. Either she is successfully doing it, and circles "yes," or it still needs work. An item that continues to be done successfully for two or three times will probably be dropped from a new checklist. New checklists can be developed whenever there are a lot of changes to make in the list of desired outcomes. Leave room at the bottom of your checklist for notes.

Item	**Date:**	**Date:**	**Date:**
	Yes Work On	Yes Work On	Yes Work On
	Yes Work On	Yes Work On	Yes Work On
	Yes Work On	Yes Work On	Yes Work On
	Yes Work On	Yes Work On	Yes Work On
Notes:			

9. Questions to Ask the Learner to Enhance Anecdotal Reporting

- In what way (if any) has coming to school changed your life?
- Do you feel different about yourself now that you are in school? Please explain.
- Do you speak up more? Can you give an example?
- Is there anything you do now that you wouldn't have done before starting school?
- Has anyone commented on changes in you? Can you give an example?

Questions for Developing Awareness of Literacy Outcomes

by Diana Twiss and Phyllis Cann[9]

This technique involves asking questions which lead the learners to a growing awareness of various changes in their lives. The questions we suggest here grew out of conversations with learners in which they described changes they had noticed and with which they were pleased.

Think about your learners. Design or choose a few questions you will ask. Decide if it's possible or practical to do the activity in a group. Decide if you also want them to write after the conversation or if you are going to make notes. Assistance with making these decisions will come from your learners.

This technique was developed particularly to obtain non-academic outcomes. You will get data about academic outcomes; learners may not make much of a distinction, but you will be able explore non-academic outcomes.

What follows is our collected wisdom, so far, about asking questions. You may find it helpful. Some possible questions are listed at the end.

1. Using the Technique Effectively

a. Be Comfortable and Be Safe

The idea of asking questions is uncomfortable for some instructors or tutors and invasive for some learners. You will have to gauge comfort levels for yourself and the learners when deciding to use this technique.

Most learners will prefer to answer these questions one-on-one with their instructor or tutor. One-on-one allows students to reveal many personal aspects of their lives, but doing this work in a group allows learners to learn about each other, and in the process, develop respect for others in their class. It helps to bond the group and reassures individuals that others are also struggling with problems or experiencing changes in their lives.

The suggestions below for working in a group may also be useful if you are working one-on-one.

b. Working With a Group

An important guideline for working in a group is not to ask any question that you wouldn't be willing to answer yourself. Another way to gauge the comfort is to take part in any round of questioning and to answer the questions as well.

Also establish a rule of confidentiality and be sure that everyone understands that nothing anyone says will be repeated outside the room. This confidentiality includes writing that may flow from the process.

[9] Writing based on ideas developed by a group of instructors at the Outcomes Conference, May 1999 in Victoria. Final version edited by Evelyn Battell.

You may want to go around in a circle, or to have people spontaneously answer any question when and if they are ready. The disadvantage of the second method is that you have to be sure that different response speeds are not penalized. Some learners will consider it polite to leave a longer silence before stepping in. If your group has different cultural components in it, you may find that one group, for instance First Nations learners or women, will end up speaking last. If this is a repeated pattern, there may start to be pressure on them not to be last or to hurry up. Using the circle format may relieve this. It is also important that learners not speak more than once until everyone has had an opportunity to be heard.

c. **Working in Stages to Develop Comfort**

Another way to develop comfort with the idea of asking questions is to do it in a series of stages. In the first stage, you would ask the "safe" questions or the "low risk" ones. What is considered safe for one learner may not be so for another, so this is a judgement call on behalf of the instructor or tutor. In the second stage, as the trust develops and as the learners become familiar with the process, you may move to more challenging questions. Finally, in the third stage, when all participants feel a sense of safety and comfort, you could probe as deeply as you feel you need to, or want to, in order to gather the necessary information on literacy outcomes.

d. **The Option to "Pass"**

Whether you are working one-on-one or in a group, preface the session with the reminder that the learners always have the option to "pass" on any question. Their need to pass on a question will not be challenged or held against them in any manner. They may have nothing to say, or they may decline to talk in that particular setting. The learner may choose to speak in another setting or at another time.

One possibility is to follow the oral session with an invitation to write about what they felt, said, or thought. Often learners will say more at a later time, after they have thought about the question more. Another way to help everyone feel safe is to remind them that as adults they have a right and a duty to keep themselves safe. They have to know what feels safe and useful and what doesn't and not put out more than they are comfortable with. Many activities in the literacy class have the potential to touch tender or guarded spots for different learners and for instructors or tutors as well. Only the individual can know if they want to touch those spots at that time. With this emphasis on their being in control, the session can be more relaxed and much more spontaneous.

e. **Be Aware of Your Comfort Level**

It is also critical to remember that some of these questions may be uncomfortable for instructors or tutors as well. You have as much responsibility as the learner does to keep yourself safe. Your difficulty may be that you don't want to reveal or think about a certain area in your life in the school setting or that you don't want to hear about someone else's difficulties in that area because that may trigger issues you have yet to resolve. Keep yourself safe and comfortable so you can do your job of leading the class and being a resource to the class. Do not hesitate to discard questions or put them aside for another time.

f. **Choosing the Questions**

The questions you choose will depend on what you are going to do with the information they generate. If you need to report to a sponsor who is interested in the "citizenship" outcomes of the literacy class, then choose questions that will elicit information about parenting and community involvement. If parenting and health are the needed information, or if a student is dealing with the legal system or an addiction program that you or they need to report to, choose the questions accordingly. If your program has an employment connection, ask questions that deal with good qualities for a worker. Finally, you may want them to consider four aspects of life such as mental/intellectual, social/emotional, physical and spiritual.[10]

Before you begin to ask questions and document the responses, the learners must be aware of what you are doing and how you intend to use the information they give to you.

It is useful to make notes, both for the instructor or tutor and for the learner. If you agree to make notes, they must be kept confidential until the learner is willing for them to be seen.

Writing might be assigned after the session, suggesting that each learner try to recall some of the things she said and anything more she would like to say. These writings should be kept until a later time in the term; after another session on the same or related questions, they could be brought out and compared to observed changes that have occurred.

2. Context for Using Questions

You may use the technique with only one learner at a time, a couple of learners if they trust and know each other and are clear about the purpose and goal of the activity, or with a group. Finally you may use some of the questions as part of a focused writing activity or journal entry.

3. Time Frame for Using Questions

As a minimum, it is best to use this process at least twice with any group or learner so that answers can be compared to notice any changes. If you choose to work with the questions in a series of stages, you could repeat the questions you used the previous time (and thus be able to compare responses) and add more questions with each stage.

You may ask a certain set of questions near the beginning of a term and again toward the end. You might ask a couple of questions each session for a couple of weeks and then start in again after a break. You will have to decide, depending on the purposes of your program, your learners' willingness, and the time available.

[10] The question on spirituality may be the most difficult for some of us. Ironically, it is often a very comfortable one for learners. We have to be sure our own limits don't blind us to an area of their lives that may be a source of great strength. One method of using this question might be to have a speaker on spirituality first, then discuss what it means to the members of the group. Another method may be to put it in a list of questions and see if learners choose it. If they do, they might be able to introduce it to the others. Finally, you could just put forward some definitions of spirituality such as 'your private inner life,' 'the you that exists aside from your roles,' 'the drive that makes you take part in religion or ritual,' 'the drive behind prayer,' etc. In fact, when they become students, learners do experience change in this area of life as well as the others and may even be coming to school as a result of spiritual renewal.

4. Instructor's or Tutor's Role

Both the instructor or tutor and the learner have many roles to play in the process of using questions. First, the instructor or tutor has a leadership role and will initiate the process. The instructor or tutor may have considered some questions that might be used or may even ask the group, or individual learner, to choose from a number of questions before starting the actual answering process. If the learners are used to working with words and critical questioning, they may even suggest the questions.

5. Learner's Role

The learners' role is to willingly participate with a complete understanding of what the responses are for and how they will be used. Above all, the learners' role, as mentioned in detail earlier, is to keep themselves safe.

6. Some Possible Questions

Most of these questions are closed questions that will elicit "yes" or "no" answers. Remember there are no right answers and, "no change" is an acceptable (and common) answer.

These are only samples. Construct your own conversation-starters with the learners.

1. Are there any changes in the way or the amount that you speak out?

2. Are there any changes in the way or the amount that you listen?

3. Do you express yourself in different ways than you did before? (music, art, reading, conversation, gardening, hobbies)

4. Are there any changes in your TV viewing habits or your other leisure activities?

5. Are there any differences in the way you manage your health? Do you eat, drink or smoke, exercise differently?

6. How safe do you feel
   - in class?
   - in the community?
   - at home?

7. Do you feel you have less, more, or the same control in your life?

8. Are there any differences in the way you handle conflict
    - in class?
    - in the community?
    - at home?

9. Are you more, the same, or less active in the community?

10. Are there any changes in your spiritual life?

Appendices

Appendix A: An Introduction to Evaluation

At the Victoria Outcomes conference in May 1999, we quickly discovered that we all knew that many changes go on in the lives of learners when they are enrolled in a literacy program. We had no trouble regaling each other with story after story of the developments in the lives of learners we knew.

We knew that we wanted the learners, funders, administrators, and many others in our communities to recognize and value these developments as well. So we decided to design some techniques that would help us document these changes. We believe that these non-academic changes represent progress, and that not enough credit is given to the learners (or our programs) for these accomplishments.

In short, the whole process of assessing non-academic outcomes is seen as a way of accenting the positive and encouraging the learners. These are not quantitative or competitive processes; they all require whole-hearted acceptance by the learner and are all intended to be under the learner's control.

To quote from Paula Davies, "often funders, tutors and learners themselves measure progress only in terms of grade levels or test scores. We hope [these techniques] will provide a language for the field to talk about progress in other areas,… to look for and value progress outside the traditional categories."

"Sometimes adult learners are very eager to be re-tested after entering a literacy program. They have attended regularly, worked hard and want to see this reflected in some tangible way. Having these learners write a standardized test may not result in scores that reflect the kind of change they feel and want to see. [These techniques provide methods] to acknowledge the progress that the learner is experiencing."

Furthermore, the processes described here help convince learners of the importance we place on non-academic changes; they too are worth reporting to outside audiences.

Keeping Safe

The entire process of evaluation, as we see it, is dominated by the need for the learner to feel safe. There are many ways you can do this.

"The process and the audience must be as clear as possible to the learner at the beginning. If they are to contribute eagerly to the final report, they must know who else will see it." Carol Schoen

The following suggestions come from Diana Twiss and Phyllis Cann, writing about the technique, *Asking Questions*. However, these guidelines are useful for any type of group activity.

"Whether you are working one-on-one or in a group, preface the session with the reminder that the learner always has the option to 'pass' on any question. Their need to pass on a question will not be challenged or held against them in any manner. They may have nothing to say, or they may decline to talk in that particular setting. The learner may choose to speak in another setting or at another time."

"One possibility is to follow the oral session with an invitation to write about what they felt, said or thought. Often learners will say more at a later time after they have thought about the question more."

"Another way to help everyone feel safe is to remind them that as adults they have a right and a duty to keep themselves safe. They have to know what feels safe and useful and what doesn't and not to put out more than they are comfortable with. Many activities in the literacy class have the potential to touch tender or guarded spots for different learners and instructors/tutors as well. Only the individual can know if they want to touch those spots at that time. With this emphasis on their being in control, the session can be more relaxed and much more spontaneous."

"It is also critical to remember that some of these questions may be uncomfortable for instructors/tutors as well. You have as much responsibility as the learner does to keep yourself safe. Your difficulty may be that you don't want to reveal or think about a certain area in your life in the school setting or that you don't want to hear about someone else's difficulties in that area because they may trigger in you issues you have yet to resolve. Keep yourself safe and comfortable so you can do your job of leading the class and being a resource to the class. Do not hesitate to discard questions or put them aside for another time."

[A note from the editor: It is also important to remember that when discussing life changes, students may choose to reveal violence in their home situations. It is worth being prepared for this. Be prepared to validate the learner's experience and to help her find help. If you react with shock or disbelief, impatience or defensiveness, your message is that it is not acceptable to talk about this subject, and you may reinforce her feelings that the abuse is her fault. Also, you must remember that it is the law in BC that if you hear of a situation that means a child may be at risk, you are required to ensure that it gets reported. A useful resource for learning more about how to handle disclosures is *Making Connections: Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective* edited by Kate Nonesuch and published by the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1996.]

You may want to go around in a circle, or to have people spontaneously answer any question when and if they are ready. The disadvantage of the second method is that you have to be sure to watch that different response speeds are not penalized. Some students will consider it polite to leave a longer silence before stepping in. If your group has different cultural components in it, you may find that one group, for instance First Nations learners or women, will end up speaking last. If this is a repeated pattern, there may start to be pressure on them not to be last, or to hurry up. Using the circle format may relieve this. It is also important that learners not speak more than once until everyone has had an opportunity to be heard."

Dealing with Resistance

Coming directly out of this concern for everyone feeling safe is the problem of resistance. Kate Nonesuch, writer of *A Multi-media Approach*, including drawing, has this to say. Again her ideas do not only apply to resistance to artwork, but to many new activities.

"Learner (and instructor or tutor) resistance may make for slow going at first. 'It's not real school.' 'I'm no good at art.' If you are interested in using multi-media methods to show outcomes, you probably already have some ideas about overcoming resistance. If you are just starting to use multi-media, persevere. After a few months, it will seem like 'real school' because that's what they do in your class. It will become 'real school'."

"When I am trying to introduce something new and unusual, I find that it is helpful to:

- Recognize feelings of reluctance, fear, and skepticism
- Recognize the increased vulnerability that comes with opening ourselves up symbolically; state my confidence in their ability to keep themselves safe by choosing what to share or not to share with others
- Say why I think the new activity will be useful to us all
- Offer people the choice of participating in the new activity with me or doing something more 'normal' by themselves (preferably something very boring and normal)
- Set aside a time for it, and carry through, even if only a few students participate
- Model the enjoyment of the activity by participating–make my own collage, or keep my own scrapbook, or whatever I am asking students to do; I'm willing to share my creations with them
- Make sure everyone gets another chance to do the activity soon after the first time, so we can build on the positive experiences of the first time, or make adjustments to things that did not go well."

Finally it is important to recognize that some activities will encounter resistance or be uncomfortable because of cultural differences. Again from a technique that involves a checklist of behaviours:

"Some behaviours will not be comfortable for some students because they come from a different cultural background. For instance, it would be useful to talk with a learner about eye contact. If it is not acceptable in their culture in certain circumstances, they may or may not want to learn to change that behaviour. Another example might be the desire, in some cultures, to agree in public situations. They may not accept the idea of disagreeing, especially with an instructor. The learners may be interested in learning some phrases that allow them to respectfully disagree. At

any rate, the instructor or tutor or tutor coordinator must be careful about assumptions that come from one cultural base."

"Furthermore, the items suggested in the attached checklists are mostly value-laden. It is almost impossible to suggest a list that doesn't express the 'good' behaviours that we value. It is important to recognize that, for any number of reasons, learners may not be aware of these 'good' behaviours. For example, they may not realize that many of those in authority value an upright posture. If they come to realize it through developing this checklist, that is a valuable learning. If they choose to reject it as a goal of theirs, that is also valuable. At least after the discussion they know that others, such as their instructor or tutor, value upright posture."

"On the other hand, their posture may improve even though they are not thinking of it or particularly valuing it, simply as an expression of feeling prouder and more confident. Then that behaviour is a success we can share with them, another positive aspect of their development that will make them even prouder."

"All of this is to say that we need to be analytical at all times regarding the values we are reading into behaviour and, whenever possible, we need to check with the learner to see if the value is shared."

"Finally we want to record changes, not judge things that don't change. The reason for a behaviour may be safety at some very deep level, a level more essential to the learners than pleasing their current instructors or tutors."

I hope that this introduction gives you a sense of the process we are trying to represent with these techniques, a positive process that will be both encouraging and freeing for learners and their communities.

Appendix B: Instructions to Field-Tester

You are part of a multi-phase project. The part of the work that you are about to do is crucial. This is our last field-test, our last chance to find out how these techniques work. Thank you for taking it on.

Step 1	**Read these instructions and A, An Introduction to Evaluation** so you know what we are trying to do.
Step 2	**Read B - Questions on Field-test** so you know what questions you have to answer.
Step 3	**Read the Technique** you have in your package. It is important to figure out how to use the technique and to prepare before you begin.
Step 4	**Do the field-test**: put the technique into practice
Step 5	**Get the learners involved to fill out Form C** - one per learner.
Step 6	When the test is completed, **fill out Form D and Form E and answer the questions in B.**
Step 7	**I will phone you** to see how you are doing and if there is anything that you need help with. We will also talk about your answers to the forms to make sure we are getting all the information we need.
Step 8	**Mail everything in.**

If you are a tutor coordinator and tutors are doing the actual testing–please send **everything** on to them. It is important that the field-tester be able to see their results in a context.

We all know that many aspects of life are affected by taking on the role of learner, that learning is a process that changes the learner. As literacy instructors we have always commented to each other and the learners about these changes.

At the conference at which this process began (May 1999), we struggled with the words ‘outcome’, ‘progress’, ‘developments’, ‘changes’, ‘evaluate’. Generally we were unable to agree that any one of them captured what we saw happening in the learners, and every one of them implied things we weren’t sure we intended. But we do know that often we or the learners have to justify the time needed for learners to ‘advance’ through the fundamental level. Hopefully these techniques will give us some data to help explain what ‘progress’ is taking place when the academic changes seem slow to untutored eyes.

These techniques are an attempt to document or describe those changes. Specifically we are interested in capturing the **non-academic outcomes** of being a literacy learner, although we know academic and non-academic may get talked about together. **The goal of the field-testing process is to discover which technique is most useful for gathering and documenting which kind of outcome and in which setting**.

We want to be able to supplement the troublesome words with actual descriptions or examples. You will be able to tell us after field-testing this technique in what situation you feel your 'data' will be useful. It will vary from technique to technique.

Please be as specific as possible in answering these questions. (In most cases there are several prompts to help you describe your answer fully–do not be limited by them.)

Please use additional paper where needed or request an on-line version.

Form B
Questions on Field-Test

1. Why did you select this particular technique?
   (Had you tried something like it in the past? Did it capture the kind of changes you had wondered about? Did it fit your setting? Did you think the learners would like it? Had you always wanted to try something like it? Did the tutor coordinator suggest it? Etc.)

2. Are the instructions in the technique clear?
   (For you? For the learners?)

3. Would you suggest any changes and/or additions to these instructions?

4. Please describe your experience with the technique. Include but **do not be limited by** these prompts:
   - Over what range of time did you use it?
   - How long did each part take?
   - Did you work one-on-one or with groups? What size? Both one-on-one and groups? Why?
   - What part did you play? (give oral or written instructions, facilitate, work interactively, work alongside, observe. How often did you intervene? What did you find hard? Easy? Etc.)

- What did the learners do? (Where did they hesitate? What did they find hard, easy? Did they help each other? How? Did they drop it and start up again later? Why? Were some more successful or satisfied than others? Why?)
- Did you make changes from the suggested methods described in the technique's instructions? Please explain.

5. What kind of information did the technique give you (about processes, skills, life changes, etc.)? What do you know now that you did not know before about this/these learner/s? Please describe in detail. **This question is central to our project**.

6A. Please rank each of the following on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being not useful and 5 being very useful).

How useful was the data the technique captured?

	1	2	3	4	5
For yourself?					
For the learner?					
For the learners as a group?					
For someone outside the class? (funder, sponsor, administrator, colleague of yours)					

6B. How would you make use of this data?

7. What advice would you give to others about using this technique?

Demographics
An Introduction to Forms C, D and E

We are asking these questions to learn a little more about the people who are field-testing our techniques. **Form C is to be answered by each learner** who participates in field-testing. They can be answered by the learner or by the learner working with the instructor or tutor. Please make the necessary copies for the learners.

Form D is for the **instructor or tutor to fill in from the data on the learner sheets**. This sheet will synthesize the data on your group members into a group profile. **Please send to me this sheet with <u>all</u> the original learner sheets. Please remove any names before the sheets come to me.** Even if you are working one-on-one with a number of learners who are not a group–please treat them as a group for purposes of filling in the learner synthesis.

Form E is for the instructor or tutor to fill in on themselves.

Form C
For The Learner

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire. We want to know a little more about you. Please don't put your name on this sheet.

1. Age
   15-24 ____
   25-40 ____
   41-55 ____
   over 55 ____

2. Female ____
   Male ____

3. Are there children at home you are responsible for? Yes____ No ____
   If yes, how old are they? _____

4. What country were you born in? _____ If other than Canada, how long have you been living in Canada? _____

5. First Language (or language spoken at home) _____

6. Do you work for pay outside the home? Yes ____ No ____
7. If so, doing what?

8. How long have you been coming to this centre/class?

9. Do you have special needs that make school or learning difficult?

10. Are you sponsored? Yes ____ No ____ If so, by whom?

Form D
Learner Synthesis

1. How many learners fit in each age group?
   - 15-24 ____
   - 25-40 ____
   - 41-55 ____
   - over 55 ____

2. How many learners are:
   - Female ____
   - Male ____

3. How many learners are responsible for children whose ages are:
   (Include all that apply in each category)
   - 0 - 5 years ____
   - 6-12 years ____
   - older ____

4. How many learners were born outside Canada? _____

   How many of these learners have been living in Canada:
   - less than a year _____
   - 2-3 years _____
   - 4-10 years _____
   - more than 10 years? _____

5. How many have a first language other than English?

First Language	Number speaking

6. How many work outside the home? _____
   Is there any job that a number of them do? Yes ____ No ____

   If yes, what type of job? _____
   If yes, how many in this type of job? _____

7. What is the range of time they have been attending or being tutored through this centre? (e.g. 3 days to 1 semester) _____

   Do most of them fall at one spot in the range? Yes ____ No ____

   If yes, what spot? _____
   How many? _____

8. What special needs are learners experiencing in this group? (include numbers) We are looking for information about mental and physical handicaps.

Form E
For the Instructor or Tutor

1. Female ____
   Male ____

2. Place of Birth _____
   If other than Canada, how long have you been living in Canada? _____

3. How long have you been teaching in the literacy field? _____

4. What level(s) are these learners? Please use whatever terms you are familiar with to explain this. (One set of terms used in much of BC is **beginning**, **intermediate** or **advanced fundamentals**.)

5. Tell us a little about the structure of your program including:
   - Number of hours per week? _____
   - How many weeks of the year does the program run? _____
   - Numbers of learners? _____
   - Ratio of instructors to learners? _____
   - What is the shape of your program? (classes, one-on-one tutoring, drop in with instructors or tutors, etc.)

   - Does your program have any special characteristics that might help others learn from your experience using this technique?

Appendix C: Results of Question 6: How Useful were the Data Gathered?

The combined totals are in the first chart below and, below that, is a breakdown of the totals for each technique. No tool was aberrant to the general arrangement of the others except the Checklist technique, which had all 1s and 2s. The explanation given was that the instructor did not get far enough with the field-test to know its usefulness. Please note that not all respondents answered all questions.

How useful were the data the technique captured? (1 being not very useful and 5 being very useful.) (Includes 18 reports)

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
For yourself?	1	1	2	2	10	16/18
For the learner?	1	1	3	6	6	17/18
For the learners as a group?		3	2	3	2	10/18
For someone outside the class? (funder, sponsor, administrator, colleague of yours)	1	1	3	4	6	15/18

A Multi-Media Approach: (four reports)
How useful were the data the technique captured?

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
For yourself?				/	///	4/4
For the learner?				//	/	3/4
For the learner as a group?		/		/	/	3/4
For someone outside the class? (funder, sponsor, administrator, colleague)	/		/		/	3/4

Using Journals (three reports)

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
For yourself?					///	3/3
For the learner?				/	//	3/3
For the learner as a group?				//	/	3/3
For someone outside the class? (funder, sponsor, administrator, colleague)			/	//		3/3

Goal Setting by Learners: (one report: this respondent gave answers to two questions as 3 or 4; these are shown as 3 in the count)

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
For yourself?			/			1/1
For the learner?			/			1/1
For the learner as a group?						
For someone outside the class? (funder, sponsor, administrator, colleague)				/		1/1

Anecdotal Reporting and End-of-Term Reports: A Combination of Techniques: (three reports)

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
For yourself?				/	/	2/3
For the learner?			/	//		3/3
For the learner as a group?			/			1/3
For someone outside the class? (funder, sponsor, administrator, colleague)				/	//	3/3

Checklist and End-of-Term Report: (one report)

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
For yourself?	/					1/1
For the learner?	/					1/1
For the learner as a group?		/				1/1
For someone outside the class? (funder, sponsor, administrator, colleague)		/				1/1

Questions for Developing Awareness of Literacy Outcomes: (six reports: three are from tutors–shown in brackets)

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
For yourself?		(/)	/		//(/)	5/6
For the learner?		(/)	/	(/)	//(/)	6/6
For the learner as a group?		/	/			2/6
For someone outside the class? (funder, sponsor, administrator, colleague)			/		//(/)	4/6