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We encourage participation from members and others in the field of Adult Basic Education.

Board Member contact information: abeabc.ca/contacts.htm

Send manuscripts and accompanying photographs to the Editor by email: michelle.vandepol@ufv.ca

General enquiries about ABEABC can be sent to abeabcnews@gmail.com

Many thanks to our contributors to this issue.

The ABEABC homepage can be found at  www.abeabc.ca/
Letter from the President

Happy Spring, dear ABEABC Members and Groundwork Readership!

With spring in the air, the end of the school year will be fast upon us. How has your school year gone? Has it unfolded as expected thus far?

The status of adult education centres varies widely throughout B.C.. Some centres are experiencing rapid change as they permanently close their doors. Others have had little growth in their student population yet are a steadfast pillar in their community. Still others are growing steadily. Whatever your community’s situation, the ABEABC seeks to support Adult Basic Educators throughout the province.

As I write this letter, the ABEABC Conference is just two weeks away! It’s an exciting time! Once again, adult educators will gather together at Harrison Hot Springs to recharge their batteries by listening to riveting keynote speakers, gain relevant professional development at the workshops, and relax in the hot pools. I’ve enjoyed this professional retreat 5 years and counting. I love spending time with and learning from my peers.

While I know the ABEABC Conference has its dedicated fans, the attendance has been shrinking over the last several years. What should we do for the ABEABC Conference in 2018? We want your opinion!

Thanks to our friends at Thompson Rivers University we have a survey at: http://tru.fluidsurveys.com/surveys/evilleneuve/abeabc-2017/

Please complete the survey by May 30th.

There are several ways to be involved in the ABEABC. I invite you to talk to members who have written for this very magazine, led a workshop at our conference, or held a position on our board. These wonderful opportunities are open to all ABEABC members.

Finally, a big thank you to all board members who served on the board this year and to those who helped organize this year’s conference, namely Leonne Beebe who was Conference Co-ordinator. Hats off to Michelle Vandepol who orchestrates the composition of each issue of Groundwork. A joyful congratulations to Yvonne Chard on her retirement and thank you for your continuing service to the ABEABC!

Wishing all of you an excellent close to your school year!

May you open a door. May you open a mind.

Teach on,

Angie Lof, ABEABC president

Editor’s Letter

Welcome to the Spring 2017 issue of Groundwork.

We strive to make Groundwork your go-to resource for your ongoing professional development in the field of adult basic education.

Articles topics in this issue include everything from what it’s like to be a conference presenter to getting the most out of hosting a practicum student for both your workload and the student’s experience and learning.

More topics to benefit your work in the classroom include the importance of student portfolios for academic and life applications as well as increasing student engagement.

We also have in this issue information on what to focus on when embedding life skills into classroom activities as well as celebrating the great impact you already have on students’ lives.

In our shared resources, there are lots of literacy supports from book grant connections to online libraries and ebook networks to book review opportunities straight from the publisher.

If any of these topics are ones you’d like to see covered further or if another topic’s absence makes you want more information on it, please feel free to drop me at line at michelle.vandepol@ufv.ca.

Michelle Vandepol, Editor
What is it like to be a conference presenter?

If you have considered presenting at a conference, whether you have experience or not, let others’ experiences affirm your decision.

It is a great investment in experience, CV listing, and networking. One of last year’s ABEABC conference presenters Sylvia Currie said she had no hesitations in presenting at the conference in Harrison Hot Springs. She had previously presented for the ABEABC conference when it was hosted at NVIT so she was already sold on the organization.

She describes the experience positively,

“We felt well cared for and supported. We had some questions and needs around room set up and logistics, and all were addressed very quickly.” Even better than the comfort level and the ease of set-up was interacting with the great people who attend the ABEABC conference. Currie says the best part was that

“Participants were willing to roll up their sleeves and try new things, and share experiences and ideas.” Beyond the good experience at the conference, Currie says the experience makes presenters even more comfortable with the idea of presenting for another group or conference in the future. She says,

“The constructive feedback from participants was especially useful.” Conference presenting is a skill like any other you’ve acquired. And as a bonus, participants come to the conference in a great state of mind, bolstered by sharing great stories from their work, sharing ideas and getting charged up about the work they do. Currie says she’d share with newbie presenters,

“You’re in great company at the ABEABC conference! Participants are warm, welcoming, and keen. Arrive knowing that you have something to offer and will learn a lot in return.”

Presenting at the conference you are attending at is a great experience. After you’ve tried it, you may find yourself thinking of new topics year after year. Feel free to submit them to the call for proposals and at any time for articles in Groundwork magazine. Contact information found on page 2.

Remember the purpose of presenting. It is to connect others in your field with something you are familiar with. Whether it is a new software, website, teaching strategy, research approach, or what have you; we cannot all be up to date on every latest thing. By dividing and sharing what we know, we are prepared as a group.

You are both saving others time as well as taking away the intimidation factor. There is nothing better than recharging with people of like mind and going back to work armed with short cuts to a bunch of new things to work into your daily grind, making it much less grind like.

If the idea makes you nervous, think about how grateful you are that others have stepped up to put together great presentations for you to attend. You are not attending their presentation with a critical spirit. Others will not be either. Pick a subject matter you are familiar with and prepare your workshop like you would a class with timed sections on information sharing, activities, and time for questions and answers.

If you’d like to get a behind the scenes look at putting on a workshop for the ABEABC conference at Sylvia’s blog post listed in the resources on page 7.
Regional Representative How–To: Tips and Best Practices

You may have been interested by the listings of regional representatives in the masthead of Groundwork. While an important role in the ABEABC membership, you do not have to worry that the role is time consuming or requires a lot of industry background. Being a member of the ABEABC and working in the field gives you all the know-how you need. Mentorship through the board is available. Acting as a regional representative is not an arduous role. Here are some tips to make the job easier. (you may want to consider one of the vacancies on page 2 or offer to share the position with the rep in your area when you meet them at the upcoming conference)

1. email the department you work in & post opportunities available through ABEABC (publication in Groundwork, subscription to Groundwork, presenting at the annual conference, attending the conference) at your institution through blog or newsletter contribution

2. Send a short report on current trends in ABE in your region 1-3 times a year to be included in Groundwork

3. Attend the meetings set (typically only a couple per year, with more via teleconference if necessary)

4. Think like an ABEABC member when you are at community or articulation meetings or are receiving email. Who can you connect with ABEABC that would benefit from opportunities? Have you heard a great keynote speaker that would be great for the conference? Is someone in your department working on research they’d like to disseminate in Groundwork?

5. Having a signature in your email account that includes your role with ABEABC and a link to past Groundwork issues, the website, and the next conference dates means you can send off correspondence efficiently and answer most questions with a line or two instead of having to look up common questions about ABEABC.

6. Being a welcoming face for the ABEABC means that wherever people are working in Adult Basic Education in British Columbia, they will be only an email away from connecting with the resources and network that will improve their work life.

Don’t underestimate the importance of feeling understood. Who else know the pressures, cares, joys, and important moments of adult basic education like our members do?

7. You do not need to have all of the answers, only be willing to connect your colleagues with one another and with the information and opportunities they will thank you for.

You are already doing many of these things as a matter of course. Giving yourself the benefit of a title will mean even easier connections and more opportunities.

8. Don’t hesitate to ask for what would make it easier to take on the role. Mileage is available for travel to meetings and much of the administrative and planning work is completed at the conference each year. If you have a special interest you’d like to bolster your skill set in: conference planning, writing, etc, you have only to ask for a spot at the table.
First Things First: 
What I Consider When Teaching Life Skills

Veronica Ryder

In teaching life skills, my priority is to listen first. I need to listen and identify their basic needs, such as food or a roof over their head, instead of focusing on superficial issues. If a person’s basic needs aren’t met, they will be less able to learn and think about future goals.

It isn’t easy for others to ask for help, or to accept an outsiders’ opinion. So I must respectively listen. Each person has individual needs so I cannot make assumptions. Instead, I listen to learn about their self-knowledge. Who are they? Who can they become? How can they excel in life?

Being successful in life is a priority for everyone so we must learn to be ourselves, and have goals and dreams. This is how we will measure our own success, instead of by societal pressures.

Ultimately, I remember each person has control over their life and is responsible for their decisions. But I can empower them by listening and teaching life skills.

Below are the top six life skills I notice great need for:

Reflection skills -  
Stay focused on what is important. Life has many distractions and technology exacerbates them, highlighting how others represent themselves in media instead reflecting on ourselves. We must learn to self-reflect instead of others-reflect.

Relationship skills –
Both children and adults must learn to get along with others, respect individuality and strengths, and understand their weaknesses and needs in supportive ways.

Communication skills -
Expressing our feelings, thoughts and ideas in a healthy environment, with people we love and love us back is the best communication practice. This is how we become better communicators.

Problem-solving skills –
Problem solving goes hand with hand with communication because we can have healthy discussions, arguments and disagreements, and find solutions, when surrounded by people who care about us.

Parenting skills -
Parents and guardians are critically important in children’s lives. Early years are when children build foundational life skills, learning them from adults in their lives. Parents/guardians must model responsibility, work ethic, respect, financial skills and more. Even as children grow and become adults, they still need approval and support from parent/guardian figures in their lives.

Veronica Ryder is a life skills facilitator at a small literacy non-profit in British Columbia.
EDUCATORS SHARE RESOURCES & OPPORTUNITIES


Like Netflix for books
Check out scribd.com & read for 30 days free

Connect students with the resources they need for success (and submit your own resources)
www.itsajuggle.ca

BOPPS Model for Planning Lessons
http://wiki.ubc.ca/Mini-Lessons_Basics/

Borrow resources from the Decoda Literacy Library
http://www.decod.ca/resources/library/


Get a behind-the-scenes look at putting on a workshop for the ABEABC conference at
http://mywebbedfeat.blogspot.ca/2016/05/flo-abeabc-conference.html#!/2016/05/flo-abeabc-conference.html

Get free books to distribute to the families in need you serve at
www.firstbookcanada.org

Send us your favorite online resource by emailing the editor (information on page 3)
Do you think educators underestimate the impact they have on their students’ lives?

Yes, we do. I often bump into past students in our community and they are so grateful that I was there to assist them with their educational goals. Some of these students just needed someone to listen to. Basically, they needed a confidence booster, and we provide that for them.

How have you been encouraged when a student has really “got it” or what they learned made a difference in their life?

It makes me feel like I am doing my job well and making a difference in a student’s life. When a student shares his/her story, makes a referral to others, or simply drops in to say “thank you,” I feel encouraged. After all, we are here for the students. Their success is our success.

What’s the best feedback you’ve received from a student?

A student thanked me for encouraging her to overcome her past experience (her high school counsellor told her she was a failure and would not accomplish anything in life). This student came in to do an assessment and once she sat down at the computer, she started hearing the voice of her counsellor in her head. She got up to leave and when I asked her what happened, she said there was no point in her doing the assessment since she will fail anyway. I didn’t want her to leave feeling that way, so I took her down the hall for a walk. That is when she told me about her high school experience. My response to her was: “You are not a failure. In fact, you can be anything you want to be. Don’t let your past define you and don’t let that inside voice win. You need to do this for yourself, not for that counsellor.” She came back and did the assessment. I bumped into her 2 years ago and she came up to me and gave me a hug. She was now in the BA program, majoring in psychology, as well as making the dean’s list each term. She said, “It’s all thanks to you for listening to me and encouraging me to follow my dreams.” Best compliment and feedback ever!

How did it make you feel?

I felt so happy for her, and told her it is my job to encourage, motivate and inspire students.

How would you encourage others in the field not sure if they are making a difference?

By sharing our stories, and asking for feedback from students [you will know]. As educators, we can and do make a difference in the lives of our students. We have no idea what a student has gone through, or is going through. It is through compassion, understanding and sharing that we learn to open up and trust other people. As educators, our role should be to support our students in their learning experience, and when needed, direct them to the appropriate resources. For many ABE students, they are the first members of their family to graduate. This to me shows that we are making a difference in the lives of our students that goes beyond the classroom.

Kulwant Gill provides upgrading advising to students in her day to day role at a BC university. Read her article on portfolio for students on page 12.
Many times the opportunities to do great things in your community or at your institution come to early adopters before the funding necessarily does. What if you want to launch new programming or initiatives, but a small or unofficial budget is the main determent?

Fortunately, you can do great things without the funding initially. You may be able to apply for funding on the strength of your pilot project or waiting list. Finding out if your hunch about the need for the programming is correct is a great, low-risk approach to test the waters.

Think about what you already have at your disposal.

What space, staff members, and curriculum do you have that can be leveraged?

If you are a small community agency or non-profit you will have more leeway with rebranding and overhauling existing programming. But if you are part of a larger organization or institution where change is slow and there are many layers of approval to go through, it won’t be time efficient or welcome to try and rebrand. Instead, focus on all the different applications there are for what you currently offer? Who can you be helping who you are not already? How can you help students leverage what they have already at hand? That may mean choosing a new theme for student discussions or lunch time workshops. It may mean introducing a monthly event where there was normally something much less structured.

When you have a captive audience, you can survey them formally or informally to find out what they need. Is there something of particular interest or a computer skill they want to acquire? Student portfolios are a growing trend. (for more information and ideas see page 12) Portfolios can be a stand alone course or a final project in a course you are currently offering.

Can you re-launch currently dormant programming?

There may be a course you or one of your staff members are particularly suited to teach that is not a current offering. Check archived files of approved courses and see if any are of interest to you and your students.

How about creating the next step programming for your current students or clients?

You can ladder from one course to another internally and you can also partner with another agency in your community to refer students back and forth. For instance, a community agency may act as an introduction computer class level for students not yet at the post-secondary level. Referrals can move back and forth between community agencies, education centres, and employment agencies.

If you have funding available for students in areas of programming that are helpful skills to have for work and life; consider how you are marketing them to other agencies in town. Everyone is looking for something new to offer their clients and students. Be that connection. Ask what people are looking for.

New programming does not have to be as ambitious as a new course. It could be a series of guest speakers, a contest, or a community partnership event.

Coming together with others to brainstorm about what is available is a great way to find in-kind donations for space, prizes, promotions, and yes, even programming. Your limits are your imagination.
Dear Practicum hosts,

As a student who is in the first week into her practicum I would like to give you some pointers on what we as students coming to you think you should have prepared before we come and what it is we expect. Entering into a university/college program the program heads advise you that you will be going to a practicum at the end of the program and honestly, that is the most exciting thing about the program. We students look forward to that part of the course and that is what pushes us to do the best we can even when it’s hard and we are tempted to give up. During our program, our instructors always advise us what you as practicum hosts are looking for and expect from us and they have prepared us to come to you but has anyone every told you what we expect from you and what you can do to be fully prepared for us? Probably not.

What do we expect from you?

We are ready to work hard from the second we step into your place of work. Here are some points on what a practicum student might expect from you:

- Be nice. New places can be scary.
- Have faith. We usually know what we’re doing and have been taught up-to-date procedures.
- You’re our teacher for the next number of weeks. Teach us things we might not know.
- We expect you to be prepared for our arrival and the weeks to come.
- Be fun/funny. It’ll take the nerves away.
- We expect you to work closely with us.
- Be patient. We might not go as fast as you’d like us to.
- Remember we are trying our best.

What can you do to prepare for a practicum student?

Make a list of things for us to do before we get there.
Continue to make lists while we are there.
Make a list of little things to do.
Think about what you want us to leave your workplace with.
Think about what you want to teach us.
If we finish a task list we will ask for more tasks. Prepare for that.
Most practicum students are told to email the host ahead of time with questions. Make sure you have the answers.
The whole point of a practicum to us students is to gain the experience on the knowledge we have been studying and to be able to test our abilities to great lengths. We want to be able to walk out of our last day at practicum and be more than confident that on the next job opportunity that comes our way we will be able to experience the great techniques that you and our professors have taught us.

You and your workplace is the small step to the greatest possibilities which makes it so very important to us that we learn as many aspects of your workplace as we can so we can take that with us wherever we might end up.

Finally, please understand how important it is to us that you take us under your wing and teach us the wonders of a small part of your world. No one appreciates you taking time out of the number of weeks that you have us more than we do.

Sincerely,
A Practicum Student

Jaimie Harmsen is a recent practicum student who learned the workings of post-secondary and non-profit offices during her applied business technology program.
WAYS TO MAKE AN IMPACT BEYOND THE CLASSROOM BY EMBEDDING LIFE LITERACY SKILLS INTO ASSIGNMENTS:

Learning about credible sources and online resources is a good time to talk about the differences between message forums, Wikipedia, and government websites.

Research or Persuasive Essays are an opportunity for students to research why they believe what they believe, backing up their opinions with facts.

Trying something new on the computer is a good time to explore sharing what you’ve learned or know with others in a presentation format (Powerpoint or Prezi).

Making an Educational/Career Plan as part of a Portfolio has good benefits both for classwork and life applications.

Interviewing one another and Introducing One Another is good for building both community and communication skills.
There was a time when portfolios were created mainly by artists, or those in the fashion or film industry. However, these are not the only professionals that can benefit from creating a portfolio. A few years ago, I was fortunate enough to take two portfolio development courses. Prior to that, I had limited knowledge or understanding of the need for a portfolio. As an adult learner, I soon discovered that I needed a way to showcase my abilities, knowledge and skills I had acquired, both in my personal and professional life.

A portfolio is a great way for students to highlight their achievements, as well as their goals. You may need to provide a context for students if they might be wondering why they need a portfolio and what purpose it will serve. Letting students know, a portfolio is a work in progress that includes a collection of records of one’s skills, knowledge, experiences, and accomplishments, along with some goals and aspirations for the future.

As Adult Basic Education or Adult Special Education students, the benefits of developing a portfolio will give students the advantage when it come to planning their academic and career goals as they will have tangible proof of their abilities. A portfolio will allow students to showcase their prior learning or work experiences for credit or for a job interview.

The first step for students in developing a portfolio is deciding what type of portfolio they need. For example, it may be a portfolio of your academic achievements; or, it could be a project portfolio that highlights all the steps they took to create the project, report on the success of the project and reflect on what they’ve learned from doing the project. When applying for jobs, students may want to develop a professional portfolio that contains an updated resume, demonstration statements, evidence of accomplishments, letters of reference, along with a highlight of the special skills and abilities relevant to the job posting. They can always update the portfolio as needed to adapt to the different goals they set for themselves through their academic careers and job hunts.

You can help them to review to Make sure their portfolios look professional and the material is easily accessible. I like to include a table of contents in my portfolio as it allows me to find the relevant information quickly. Additionally, let them know to include documents and artifacts to support their resumes. For example, when highlighting skills or attributes, including a letter of reference from a previous employer or from an instructor strengthens the application. It is wise to use a loose-leaf binder to store documents, along with sheet protectors.

Students can get started on developing portfolios today by collecting the necessary artifacts and documents. There are many online resources to help with the process.

Here are some helpful links:

http://www.ufv.ca/plar/portfolio-plar/portfolio-tutorial/resumes-several-tips/

http://www.digital-web.com/articles/the_perfect_portfolio

http://www.manitobacareerdevelopment.ca/cdi/docs/bldg_portfolio.pdf

http://www.ufv.ca/plar/portfolio-plar/portfolio-tutorial/

Also encourage students to check out the local library for additional resources, or go see their program advisor for referrals.

Kulwant Gill is an Instructional Assistant in an Upgrading and University Preparation Department at a BC post-secondary institution.
Presenting at your first conference

The Introvert’s Guide

Viviana Chiorean

We caught up with past ABEABC presenter Viviana Chiorean, self proclaimed introvert (who also presented on introverts in the classroom) to make sure we reached all the different kinds of experiences our members had in presenting. Here is hers:

Q: Did you have any hesitations about presenting for the ABEABC conference?

A: I was initially hesitant to present to a group of already very knowledgeable and experienced educators. Moreover, as an introvert, I was quite nervous at the idea of presenting at all.

Q: If you had concerns, what were they?

A: I was concerned that the technology might fail me or that I would be asked a question to which I have no answer, leaving me as a “deer in headlights”.

Q: What was the experience like?

A: The experience was wonderful! It was a complete opposite of what I had “imagined” it to be! The audience was pleasant, engaging, and very supportive. I did not feel as a “presenter” but rather as a facilitator to a discussion which drew upon the life experience and varied knowledge that was present in the room. It was an atmosphere of collaborative learning and I myself most likely learned the most!

Q: What was the best part?

A: The best part was going from table to table during the discussion period. There were so many practical applications from the workshop and each educator could tailor them to fit the needs of their particular subject and adult learners.

Q: Did it make you more comfortable with the idea of presenting for another group or conference in the future?

A: Absolutely! I ended up presenting again the following year!

Q: What advice would you give newbie presenters?

A: Just do it and go with the flow!! This does not mean to merely “wing it”, I am all for being prepared and organized! However, let the audience and their interests guide your focus and discussion. Draw on the expertise in the room - if there is an educational technologist - let them do the typing. If there is a renowned speaker - let them share the group ideas. If there is a shy introvert - let them write down all the collective responses. If there is an extrovert - let them partly facilitate a small exercise. With this type of delegating you hardly feel like a presenter at all, and everyone is actively participating and enjoying the workshop!

Q: Anything else you’d like readers to know?

A: There is always something to be grateful for in any experience! Learn, laugh and then learn some more!

Viviana works for a BC non-profit where she puts her skills in office administration & conference planning to their benefit.
Adult Basic Education students face many challenges. From tight finances to tight deadlines and overcoming under-confidence in their abilities due to past failures; they could use a little something extra to keep up motivation when they want nothing more than to give up.

Thankfully, in a time when programs are also tight on time and money, these rewards do not have to be extravagant or hard to put together. Small tokens during the school day go a long way.

For example, one computer instructor brings in a $5 gift card to give away once a semester to the winner of an in-class quiz show style review session. Needless to say, this fun activity builds morale and increases student information retention with new unfamiliar content.

At a small regional centre, faculty and staff contribute a few things to a weekly soup and bun lunch. It is not costly, it provides healthy lunch for students and staff, and it brings them together in a community experience.

Putting coffee on, setting out treats occasionally, and greeting students as they come into your building or classroom is a bigger deal than you might think. Having a safe and welcoming place is the number #1 student retention tool we have at our disposal.

If you have a small budget (or can use bottle returns from your lunch room to do so), consider putting on a study skills challenge—the premise of which is to inspire students to attend class, contribute to class discussions, and complete homework and write tests. By making a bulletin board highlighting these study skills expectations and then rewarding the students who are engaging with period prize draws and photographing and posting the winners’ pictures, you are affirming the study skills behavior you want to see.

The more barriers students have in their lives, the more they appreciate being applauded for following through. Having part of their day made easier by attending school in a place that encourages, rewards, and occasionally feeds them is a good addictive feeling. For students who are likely juggling work, budget shortfalls, and family; a few perks go a very long way. It is worth it to see students succeed and have a great school experience they may not have had in their past.

Val Sprott, gives us a behind the scenes look at what it is like to be a regional representative for ABEABC. She is the current Fraser Valley Representative.

Q: Did you have any hesitations about becoming a regional rep when you first joined?

A: I had some minor hesitation, but I trusted the board members who said it wasn’t too demanding a job. I decided I wasn’t going to worry about it, and that was the right choice.

Q: Was the experience different than you pictured?

A: Interestingly, the experience was not too different than I pictured. I thought I might attend one meeting throughout the year, which I did, and I envisioned myself interacting with other people involved in ABE in my area, which I also did. I didn’t expect that I would be submitting a write-up to Groundwork magazine summarizing what is happening in my area, but I am glad for that little “push” to get me going on making contact.

Q: What is the best part of being a regional representative for ABEABC?
A: The best part of being a regional representative for ABEABC is having that special ‘in’ with those running ABE programs in my area and being given the privilege to hear about their successes and trials.

Q: Why is it so important for there to be regional reps in each area?

A: What I noticed is that every person I contacted seemed appreciative that there was someone from an association like ABEABC interested in their work. They were also curious about what is happening elsewhere in ABE. I imagine there must be others around who may feel that they are working alone in their part of the province and would benefit from having someone to exchange ideas with now and again. That is why I believe it is important to have reps in each area.

Q: What is the most frequent feedback in your area?

A: The most frequent feedback in my area is surprise that someone cared enough to call and that there is an organization out there that really cares about them!

Q: How would you encourage other members to get involved in this way?

A: As a regional representative, you will be welcomed when you introduce yourself, explain what information you are looking for, and genuinely ask them how things are going. It has been fun, actually, and I feel I’ve made some long-distance friends. I may even try a real visit here and there. If you are thinking about becoming a regional rep, I would highly recommend you give it a try.

Q: What are the benefits to taking on a role like this with the ABEABC? There are a few benefits of taking on a role like this with the ABEABC that I can think of. It can open doors to new contacts, relationships, and ideas. What a great excuse to call and talk to people I never would have been able to before becoming a rep. It can also help to enhance your sphere of influence as a professional, as your knowledge of what’s happening in your field increases.

READ MORE TIPS TO MAKE YOUR JOB AS AN ABEABC REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE EASIER on Page 5 & another rep interview on page 18

Don’t Want to Commit to Being a Rep Just Yet? HERE ARE SOME OTHER WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE to ABEABC:

1. Review a book you found helpful as an ABE educator and submit it to Groundwork
2. Recruit a presenter or two for our annual conference from your department or community
3. Forward the digital links to Groundwork issues to others or share your Groundwork issue with a new reader
4. Contact the editor to write an article on the subject of your choice.

IDEAS for STUDENT ENGAGEMENT in a SMALL CENTRE

Study groups outside of class time by giving access to classroom space or computer lab. Provide guidelines as to whether the time is drop in or sign up and what rules are in place.

A bulletin board where students can post used textbooks for sale, carpool to join, or job opportunities at their place of work. Community grows through doing life together.

Lunchtime workshops on a variety of fun topics. You can have guest speakers in or host something of your interest yourself.

Potluck celebrations. End of the semester is a more pleasant experience when there is a get together to mark the end of finals and papers. Posting a sign up sheet generates interest and builds community. Connect with students to talk about next semester plans.

Set out coffee and tea or add a treat to the student lounge.
MORE INFORMATION ON THE PROCESS FROM PAST PRESENTERS—continued from page 4

When considering whether to put in a conference proposal, don’t hold back worrying about 100% alignment. If the proposal approach needs to be revised as to approach or content, the Conference chair will let you know. Sylvia Riessner is glad she didn’t let her initial hesitations hold her back from the experience of presenting.

“I wondered whether what I had to share would have meaning for the participants as I taught ABE English in Yukon not in BC at all so I wasn't all that familiar with how it works down here.”

Her presentation was well received and she shares, “The experience was awesome. Met such dedicated and inspiring educators - lots of interesting stories and ideas.” Presenting at such an established conference has its perks as well. Riessner especially appreciated the practiced skills that goes into running the conference.

She says, “The atmosphere the conference organizers seem so skilled at generating. It felt very relaxed yet the events seemed to flow. When a few glitches occurred, no one got fussed, they just dealt with it and we all moved on.” The great experience didn’t end inside. Riessner was also a fan (as the repeated votes of our membership year after year to keep the conference in beautiful Harrison Hot Springs tell us) “you can't beat the setting - beautiful facility and we had amazing weather.”

If you are worried about technical items like getting your presentation on the big screen or connecting your cables, the ABEABC conference has great technical support. Riessner says her experience was no exception.

“Yes. We certainly had great support with the technology in the rooms; everyone was very friendly and we didn't wait long for assistance when we had questions.” She has some helpful advice for newbie presenters to make sure they get the most out of their experience: “ Relax and enjoy - but get into your room ahead of time so you can figure out how to use the space and where the plugs are!

Test your equipment, your props, and be prepared to take charge of the space. We found our room was a little full - difficult for participants to be as active as we had planned. So, because we had some volunteers, we just rearranged things. It seemed to work.” Having a plan B is a good idea. Going with the flow and asking for help is also smart.

If you are wondering if now is the best time to try your hand at presenting or if you should try again if you have found the experience stressful in the past, Riessner has a few words for you: “ABEABC was one of the most relaxed and informative conferences I’ve attended .”

There you have it! Your presenting opportunity awaits. Get in touch if you want help or more information any step of the way.

TIPS FOR ENSURING YOUR SUCCESS AS A PRESENTER:

1. Go with subject matter you are familiar with and tailor it to the Adult Basic Education community.

2. Save your proposal in an easy to locate Word document so you can easily change details and send it off to another call for proposals when the opportunity arises.

3. Use the familiar. Comfortable clothes you’ve worn before and a laptop or other technology you’ve used before ups your comfort level and allows you to focus on your audience, not distractions.

4. View the presentation as you would a class. B.O.P.P.S. lesson plan structure works just as well here as it does in the classroom. Add time guidelines for yourself to keep things running smoothly.

5. Have alternate activities to include if things wrap up more quickly than you anticipated or have an idea of what you can cut if time starts running short.

6. Include an activity for people to exchange ideas. Members come to conferences to recharge, get new ideas, and network. Inserting an activity means they will get to do all three and will feel like their time was meaningfully spent. It also takes the pressure off you as presenter.
The easiest way to get overwhelmed is to think of all the things you have to do, should do, and might want to do. Simply making a list is not enough. Differing time schedules and varying priorities means everything does not need to be attended to or focused on today. The key to maximum productivity while enjoying your work is to focus on three things: your day, week, and year ahead.

**Your Day**

When you get to work, open your daily calendar & email. If you do not have a meeting or a must-do task first thing, methodically work through your email, deleting unnecessary ones first and responding to email as you open it. If you have to get back to the sender after checking with someone else, let them know the timeframe and plug that commitment to respond into your daytimer or digital calendar.

Start your day by establishing *must do* priorities. Highlight those and work on as many as you can while you’re fresh. Later in the day you can alternate finishing them up with a coffee break, walk to the mailroom, and making a list of weekly must do’s.

While in your meetings, whether virtual or face-to-face, put something in your calendar to do on the project right away. Launching into scratching off the first few action items on the event or plan or program means momentum is not disrupted. Doing what you can quickly and making a note to follow up with the people you need responses from in a week’s time, means you do not have to spend time worrying about remembering to chase them down – last week you has already reminded next week you.

If there are less time sensitive items leftover at day’s end, evaluate whether they should be done that week or if there is a completely open day further in your calendar they would give structure to. Part of consistently producing, even without external structure, is to have automatically created a plan for your work execution.

**Your Week**

Your week itself will have priorities. Giving yourself enough time to execute what you said you would by week’s end is more than a matter of sanity preservation. It is also key to maintaining your credibility.

Planning your work, including allow enough time to travel to meetings & pack your laptop and materials needed means you will be on-time and prepared.

Prioritizing work cannot be overemphasized. No one else knows what you have to get done like you do, and they are also “busy” so don’t want to hear that you are too. It’s expected. Instead, tell them when you will be working on their request. And execute as promised.

Doing this as a matter of course means your calendar is realistic, your workload is evenly distributed across it, and your colleagues and clients will have reason to have confidence in you.

**Your Year**

Planning your year is key both for scheduling and time saving preparation. Things like laying out key dates and goals can fit into a spot in your day when you need a change of pace. While you’re doing so, starting on the coming year’s report by revamping your introduction to reflect the new emerging themes and making spaces for trends and issues you anticipate and things you don’t want to leave out means that you are chipping away at a year-end

Continued on page 18
PLANNING AHEAD & WORKING IN THE MOMENT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

task that would otherwise be a time consuming demand at a busy time of year.

Even in storage handling, what you do now makes a big difference down the road. For instance, when you receive new printed materials or other giveaways; don’t just pack them away as one unit – divide them into the events/presentations you anticipate and label with dates. So when the day comes, you can grab it and go. This keeps days with two or three back to back events manageable.

Thinking in these three planning zones provides a framework for your best in-the-moment productivity. It is easier to focus on the job at hand when your brain is not juggling the things it is worried about remembering. Which will free you up to do what you do best.

MORE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT

Here Kim Tamblyn, ABEABC’s Cariboo Okanagan regional representative share some insights into what it is like to be a regional representative for our ABEABC membership.

Q: Did you have any hesitations about becoming a regional rep when you first joined?
A: About 15 years ago, I went to my first ABEABC Conference and I found it really rewarding to have a chance to network with other ABE teachers, so I was excited about being involved with the association.

Q: Was the experience different than you pictured?
A: I didn’t really know what to expect, so I would say that overall it was even better than I pictured. That’s one of the reasons why I’m doing it for a second time.

Q: What is the best part of being a regional representative for ABEABC?
A: I know that I’m helping the association to continue moving forward.

Q: Why is it so important for there to be regional reps in each area?
A: BC is very diverse geographically and demographically, so greater representation from the different regions equals a clearer picture of the needs of ABE educators and students province wide. The more we are aware of what’s happening in the province, the better we are able to function as an association.

Q: What is the most frequent feedback in your area?
A: I consistently hear 2 main things – people want the association to continue because they enjoy an opportunity to connect and learn at the annual conference and people wish there was a greater variety of workshops. For example, people would like to see science workshops as well as the math and English workshops that are offered.

Q: How would you encourage other members to get involved in this way?
A: It’s challenging because people are busy with so many other commitments, but if we don’t have involvement then we don’t have an association. At last year’s AGM the majority of attendees indicated that they wanted the association to continue, but we can’t do that without volunteers.

Q: What are the benefits to taking on a role like this with the ABEABC?
A: Since the first conference that I attended, I have been a believer in the value of the ABEABC, so in my small way I feel good about being involved with the executive. I enjoy networking with others and finding out what’s being done across the province.

We want to hear your voice! Contribute to Groundwork on a topic of your interest or study. Save others time and share what you know!
**Employment Growth in BC**

**Improvements in 2017**
The unemployment rate in BC showed improvement from January when it was 5.6% to February when it was 5.1%. Even more striking is looking at improvements to the unemployment rate over the past year. It has dropped from the 6.5% it was at in Feb 2016.

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<th>AB</th>
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<td>unemploy. rate in Feb 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1%</td>
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<th>SK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unemploy. rate in Feb 2017</td>
<td>unemploy. rate in Feb 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
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**Source:** www.bcsats.gov.bc.ca

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**FINANCIAL LITERACY NEEDS FOR ENTREPRENEURS**

44% of small business owners have below average financial literacy skills

The key to success is learning the language of: BANKS, VENTURE CAPITALISTS & GOVERNMENT

- 58% of start-ups are funded with less than $5000 from personal savings & credit.
- 51% of start-ups are still in business 5 years later down from 85% that survive the first year.
- 18% of entrepreneurs have above average financial literacy skills

**Source:** business.financialpost.com
LOOKING AROUND - LOOKING FORWARD: EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES AND BRIGHT IDEAS

MAKE 2017-2018 THE YEAR OF NEW PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS
WE ARE ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS for magazine articles & conference proposals for next year
Don't Miss Out!