Table 3: Creative applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative applications</th>
<th>Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iMovie</td>
<td>A film making and editing application. Can be used for recording a role play, assessing a student's oral communication skills or facilitating a drama project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strip Designer</td>
<td>Strip Designer lets you create personal comic strips. Add pictures, balloons with fun words, visual effects. Can be used for retelling a story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VoiceThread</td>
<td>Search for a number of images and voice descriptions. Create your own description of a picture and share it online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Creator</td>
<td>Create a story book using pictures from your album. Add voice recordings, text and videos and music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What technological tool do I use?

Firstly, you need to identify a learning objective. Let’s say that your objective is to review vocabulary that you have taught in the last lesson, and you want to do a fifteen minute vocabulary exercise. Then, you need to choose how you want to deliver this session, such as task-based, drilling, pair work, group work, and so on. You also need to consider technological requirements such as whether your students have access to their own iPads or if you are the only person with access. Once you decide what to teach and how to deliver your lesson, choose an application that is most suited to meet your teaching objective. For instance, you can create a number of flashcards using Flashcardlet, and do a whole class activity to revise vocabulary. Alternatively, you can create a matching activity using Notes Plus, asking students to come to the front and match words and pictures by moving objects on the iPad.

When you start looking for applications on the iPad, try not to focus on quantity over quality. One application can be used in many ways if you consider a wide range of teaching techniques and strategies. We need to bear in mind that the iPad is just another technological tool that we may choose to use in the classroom. It is not a magic tablet that takes control over your lesson. Ultimately, it is a teacher’s experience and well-developed pedagogical and content knowledge that will decide how effectively this latest technology can be incorporated into a lesson.

Hiroshi Tanaka has been working as a LLN practitioner Continued on page 40 ...

Open Forum

While some will tweet and blog, Fine Print would like to thank Lynne Matheson for resurrecting the concept of the column in our 2012 editions. This year we invited Jan Hagston to regularly tap out some words, and here she encourages you to be critical readers and teachers and send us your comments.

Practice makes perfect sense

By Jan Hagston

Writing from experience, Jan Hagston argues that literacy skills are pretty useless without the confidence to use them. If confidence is best gained through practice, which isn’t a focus in a skills development model, who is responsible for developing confidence in adult learners? Should we go back to a model of basic education teaching that prioritises building confidence and self esteem?

When asked to write a column about teaching and learning, I was initially reluctant. The depth of thinking and sheer breadth of knowledge in this area is overwhelming. Where would I start? What could I say that others hadn’t said before?

I’ve decided that the best approach is to use the column as the start of a conversation around the areas of teaching and learning that I have been involved in and I hope that others will join this conversation. Address your letter to the Fine Print editor at fineprint@valbec.org.au.

Over the last few years I have been involved in writing teaching and learning materials and developing education programmes for schools, for preschool—early childhood and young adults about road safety and workplace health and safety. Some of these have had a literacy focus, some have aimed to develop generic skills and, a few, numeracy skills. But, in the main they have aimed to change risky behaviours.

This work has required me to collaborate with content experts and behavioural psychologists and led me to read research papers beyond literacy and adult and adolescent education, mainly about what works in education programmes designed to change risky behaviours.

I’ve worked in a number of different areas of education over the years. When moving to a new area, I have found it crucial to reflect on what is similar and what is different about this area compared to others I have worked in. This provides a great opportunity to apply knowledge in new ways in both the new and old areas.
These are key components in all effective education programmes, whether they be related to changing risk behaviours or developing adult literacy skills.

Some of the programmes I’ve recently been involved in developing are very short—as short as three or four hours. Every minute needs to be used wisely and thoughtfully. There is no room for padding. For me, as a writer of education curriculum and resources, this, combined with the awareness of the key components of effective programmes, has made me more conscious of the programme purpose and desired outcomes and the need to base programmes and activities on a good theory. It has also highlighted the importance of interactive activities and the importance of allowing time for practice, rehearsal and role play.

These types of activities build self-efficacy (a person’s belief in their ability to achieve a goal or outcomes, or to succeed in specific situations). Initially I saw this as a foreign concept, one relating to the work of psychologists. However, self-efficacy is increasingly seen as related to students achieving their goals. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to put in greater effort, to challenge themselves, and to recover from setbacks.

So what relevance is this to adult literacy and numeracy education? For some people, becoming a literate and numerate member of the community isn’t just about developing the broad range of skills that we call literacy and numeracy; it’s also about believing in their ability to use the skills, and then using them. If students are to act as literate and numerate members of the community they are more likely to take part in activities that require the use of literacy and numeracy skills, which, in turn, is likely to build their skills.

Funding models have forced literacy/numeracy educators to report on skills development and this has, to some extent, seen teaching and learning focus on skills development. While many teachers are aware of the importance of developing more than just skills, time may prevent them from providing practice, rehearsal and role-play activities that help to develop both literacy/numeracy skills and self-efficacy.

Perhaps it’s time to examine the role of literacy/numeracy teachers in also developing students’ self-efficacy and the effect of this on skills development.

Jan Hagonow is a consultant with extensive experience in adult and adolescent literacy. Prior to becoming a consultant she was the executive officer for the Victorian Applied Learning Association.

References

Transforming libraries
By Kerrin Prior

A library in Dalkeith, Scotland, is offering free pole-dancing classes to get people through the doors. ‘The pole fitness session is a fun way to encourage more people into our libraries, trying out all the services on offer and borrowing more books,’ a spokesman said. (Odd Spot, The Age 28/01/13)

The National Year of Reading (NYR) 2012 was a collaborative project connecting public libraries, government, community groups, media and commercial partners and the public. The organisers created specific campaigns as well as showcasing projects and organisations across Australia to promote reading and literacy. Many people and organisations participated in the event, exchanging information about literacy, reading and libraries.

More than 2,000 libraries across Australia participated, running more than 4,000 events across the year, including more than 200,000 active participants. The organisers were well aware of the statistics on reading levels of adults and targeted this group in their campaign:

Nearly half the population struggles without the literacy skills to meet the most basic demands of everyday life and work. There are 46% of Australians who can’t read newspapers; follow a recipe; make sense of timetables, or understand the instructions on a medicine bottle. (Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 2006.)

The year saw the manifestation of a reading hour campaign; an Indigenous Festival of Reading, Writing and Storytelling, in Alice Springs, in September; a short story writing competition on the theme ‘It’s never too late … to learn to read’, for Adult Learners’ Week, also in September 2012; workplace literacy where workers could develop their creative skills, and those who struggled with reading and writing but welcomed the opportunity to tell their story gained the help of an author or illustrator. For the public library membership drive, for example, the NYR targeted:

- those who can’t afford to buy all the books they want to read
- migrants looking for a point of connection with their new surroundings
- parents who might not have thought of reading as a family activity
- elderly residents (promoting a healthy mind as well as a healthy body)
- young adults who may be out of the habit of reading for pleasure
- non-readers seeking help to improve their literacy skills
- people who don’t have their own computer at home.

The web site www.love2read.org.au is still active and events continue to occur in 2013. Workshops, seminars and conferences were held as part of these campaigns to raise awareness and create thinking tanks for those involved with reading.

As a long-time advocate of adult literacy learning, I was privileged to be invited to talk at three seminars during the NYR. The first event was held in a room hidden behind the majestic State Library that attracted over sixty librarians and celebrities who read poetry aloud and sprinkled the joy of reading. My role was to explain what VALBEC does and why it exists and talk a little about what it means to be an adult with low levels of literacy. Several librarians approached me afterwards, concerned about low literacy in adults and sought my ideas on how they could attract these adults into libraries. Their sincerity and enthusiasm for inclusion was impressive.

Later I was asked to speak at a seminar called ‘Libraries and literacy: engaging adult learners in the National Year of Reading’. This time I was asked to talk specifically about how libraries can be useful and welcoming to adults with low levels of literacy, how librarians could spot and engage them, and what were their experiences concerning public libraries. Having had much anecdotal evidence of the perceptions of literacy students throughout the years, I relished the opportunity.

One of my favourite quotes from one of my favourite theorists, James Gee, was pasted quickly into my PowerPoint presentation ready to greet the librarians:

We never simply just read and write, but read and write in a situated place, with a social identity and history, making meaning of what we read and write through our own particular world paradigm. In other words literacy only makes sense when it reflects our own sociocultural worlds. (Gee, 2000, p180).

Therefore libraries had to be places that were relevant to their-clients, made sense to them and could reflect their real life. Later at the seminar, I informed the next rows of librarians that their places of work can be scary and they can be perceived as creatures designed to intimidate, invalidate and generally make a person feel stupid. For many people, libraries were foreign and unnecessary. I recalled comments I had heard from students throughout the years and the negative reactions I observed during library visits, especially from middle-aged men.

I decided to conduct a survey of several literacy classes to find out how they felt about going to libraries and get a mixed reaction, mostly on the negative side. I have described some of the comments and observations here. Alan’s body language said it all as he leaned back and scowled: ‘They are like they know it all. They watch every move you make and if you get up the guts to ask them...