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Annotated Bibliography on Workplace Education

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Throughout the 20th century, businesses, unions, and the military sometimes offered English language classes to new immigrants, or helped workers gain reading and writing skills (Sticht, 1975). The modern version of *workplace education*—basic skills instruction offered to employees at the workplace or union hall—emerged in the 1980s as higher skill requirements and an increase in the number of immigrant workers converged to make upgrading workers' basic skills⁹⁰ appear attractive—or necessary—to business, labor, government, and workers themselves. This increase in awareness was accompanied by a surge in state, employer, and union worker education initiatives throughout the 1980s. In 1988, the federal government introduced the National Workplace Literacy Program, which continued for 10 years and funded more than 300 projects around the

⁹⁰*Basic skills* as used in this article refers to adult basic education (ABE), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and adult secondary education (ASE), which includes preparation for the tests of general educational development (GED) and in some states, the adult or external diploma.

country. Since that time, several states have continued or developed state-level programs to encourage workplace education (Foucar-Szocki, 2004).

Workplace education is interconnected with, yet distinct from, related services. Workplace education is a subset or specialty of adult basic education (ABE), which focuses on the basic skills needed by a broad population, for a wider range of roles (work, family, and community) and services are delivered in a range of venues and to a range of populations. Workplace education offers access to education; a context for creating relevant curriculum for basic skills such as literacy, numeracy, and ESOL; a community of learners sharing common experience; and opportunities and incentives for further education and training related to that context (in this case, a workplace or industry). Workplace education projects are always partnerships, involving, at least, an employer, an educational provider, and learners. Additional partners can be representatives of labor, government, foundations, customers, and various groups of workers, such as those on a particular shift; in a particular job classification or department; or from a particular language, cultural, or ethnic group.

Workforce development is yet a broader endeavor, encompassing a number of services, such as job counseling, job placement, and special services geared toward helping unemployed and underemployed workers overcome obstacles to employment. ABE and job-skills training are sometimes offered in workforce development programs. In a workforce development context, ABE focuses on a broad range of skills required by adults in their role as workers. Those skills include reading, writing, math, and language skills, as well as job-specific basic skills and the skills needed to get a job. Workforce development services are offered to those who have not yet entered the workforce, as well as to employed and dislocated workers, through a diverse group of providers from the workplace and the community.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 pushed workforce development and ABE agencies to develop new collaborative relationships. WIA provides public funding for workforce development and ABE, and links both to economic development. Through this funding, the federal government addresses both employers' needs for qualified workers, and workers' needs for increased wages and job security. The loss of skilled and semiskilled manufacturing and service jobs to computerization, downsizing, and offshoring has been massive and is likely to continue. The need for basic skills as a foundation for higher level skills training is also likely to grow as the skill requirements of jobs increase.

Models of workplace education programs range from programs offering general reading, writing, math, or language instruction that is

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physically located at the workplace, to programs in which instruction teaches specific language and math skills needed to do jobs at the particular workplace. Other programs use the community of coworker-learners and the content of workplace knowledge as a foundation for instruction that teaches literacy, numeracy, and English-language skills. These programs use authentic workplace materials, such as forms, routing sheets, safety information, or benefit packages, and they construct scenarios from workplace experiences to build a contextualized curriculum, customized for the workplace.

The full gamut of teaching styles and educational philosophies are found in workplace education. One approach makes a clear philosophical distinction between broad education and narrow job training, whereas another blurs that distinction in theory and practice: Job skills are changing and workers need a broad educational base to adapt to those changes (Levenson, 2004). Various skill standards, such as those developed by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and Equipped for the Future (EFF), take this latter approach. Still other programs focus on workers' rights and help workers gain skills to move ahead in their careers (Rosenbloom, 1996). For example, in the hospitality industry, fluency in English can help workers move "from the back of the house to the front of the house" (i.e., from washing dishes in the kitchen to positions such as wait staff that include customer contact and additional income from tips). Many programs, and some employers, seek to balance the interests and needs of employers, unions, and workers (Jurmo & Folinsbee, 1994).

In this chapter I discuss the changes in the workplace and workforce that precipitated the increased need for workplace education, the interests of workplace education stakeholders, the incidence of workplace education, and lessons learned about implementing workplace education.

Changes in the Workplace and Workforce

Three changes in the U.S. economy and workplace in the last three decades have increased the need for a more skilled and literate workforce: (a) higher skill requirements for many jobs (especially jobs likely to remain in the United States) resulting from computerization of repetitive tasks and combination of higher level tasks (which require additional or cross-training), (b) reorganization that shifts decision-making responsibility to the front-line worker, and (c) technological change that makes

computer literacy necessary while shifting traditional craft knowledge to computer data (Zuboff, 1988). As computers are able to do more routine work, human jobs are likely to be those that can analyze computer data and make personal judgments using that data, as well as those involving interpersonal contact and relationships (Murnane & Levy, 2004; Thomas, 1996). More is being asked of the front-line worker in many industries. For example, in the insurance industry, customer-service representatives are expected to give more personalized service, rather than simply referring a customer to another department (Murnane & Levy, 1996).

Government, corporate, and labor awareness of demographic changes in the population have increased attention paid to the need for workplace education. One such demographic change is the increase in the percentage of the workforce whose first language is not English (Hunt, 1996). Immigrant workers need instruction in speaking, reading, and writing in English to communicate with supervisors, coworkers, union representatives, and customers. A second demographic change is the aging of the workforce: In the near future, a larger proportion of workers will not be entering the workforce directly from school. Older workers are likely to remain in the workforce longer as the general population ages and retirement age goes up. Education reform efforts geared to improving the preparation of today's school population for tomorrow's jobs must be augmented by raising the skill level of the present workforce (Munnell, Cahill, Eschtruth, & Sass, 2004).

STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS

Effective workplace education must serve its constituent interests. Partners, known as stakeholders, each have a stake in the success of the program. The program must address each stakeholder's needs. The more completely this happens, the greater the buy-in and support from all parties.

Employers may be interested in workplace education to further business goals such as improved communication, higher productivity, increased safety, and fewer job errors, or they may see it as primarily an employee benefit, thereby resulting in improved recruitment, retention, and morale. Typically, in business, spending decisions must be justified in terms of cost-benefit analysis or return on investment (ROI). However, workplace education programs do not always fit into traditional ROI formulas. It can be very difficult and prohibitively expensive to isolate the effects of education programs on productivity or quality, because so many other factors are involved, such as work organization, equipment, availability of materials, or

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staffing. Some employers see workplace education as a way to help their businesses become “learning organizations” or to extend that culture from the managerial corps to the front-line workers (Bloom, 2003; Geissler, Knell, McVey, Powell, & Brenner, 1995; Levenson, 2004).

Organized labor (Rosenbloom, 1996) represents the interests of workers in such matters as wages and working conditions. Organized labor has always had a political commitment to the education of working-class children (e.g., public schools) and this commitment extends to education and training for adults. Education programs can help workers get access to promotions, use and understand their negotiated benefits, deal with technological changes at the workplace, and become more active in union leadership (Levine, 2000).

Groups of workers (e.g., from different ethnic or language groups, or different departments, job classifications, or shifts) may have a wide variety of motivations for and concerns about an education program. Some may want to learn basic or more advanced levels of English; get help with reading, math, or computer literacy; or get tutoring to pass a GED test. Workers may want to improve very specific skills required for their current jobs, or they might want to learn skills they can transfer to a new job, get technical training required for a new career, or obtain assistance with tasks they face outside the workplace (e.g., helping their children succeed in school, managing their personal finances). On the other hand, workers may be reluctant to come forward and reveal what may be considered (by themselves or, in their perception, by employer and coworkers) a deficit. This fear of embarrassment or of being pigeonholed as “less able” is one reason why confidentiality is critical in workplace education.

Local, state, and federal governments are interested in a skilled, literate workforce that will retain or attract employers and thus increase employment. An estimated 64 million workers in the United States need additional basic skills or credentials to meet the demands of the 21st-century economy (Comings, Reder, & Sum, 2001). Additionally, immigrant labor plays an increasingly important role in the U.S. economy (Sum, Palma, & Khatiwada, 2001). Government also views workplace education as a promising venue in which to offer its adult education services to working adults because low-skilled and low-wage workers often need to work multiple jobs, which limits their ability to participate in ABE programs outside of work. Because government is also interested in an educated populace that demonstrates responsible parenthood and citizenship, workplace education is an opportunity for government to leverage private investment through employer-match grants.

Education providers constitute another stakeholder in workplace education partnerships. The changes in workforce development present opportunities and challenges for adult educators. One opportunity is for increased funding of education services by employers who see foundation skills as necessary to increase the skills of the workforce. Education providers can also broaden their offerings to learners by tapping into workforce development areas. Local, state, and federal programs and funding streams include workplace education, such as *career ladder programs* (in which education and training are customized to career paths in a workplace or industry) and *sector initiatives* (in which incumbent and newly entering workers are trained as a qualified pool for several employers in a particular industry).

Although workplace education programs have demonstrated their potential for serving the interests of the multiple stakeholders already discussed, workplace education providers find it challenging to maintain high-quality instruction and provide sufficient instructional time for learners to make real progress, whatever the context or funding stream. In many cases, it is up to adult educators to inform employers, funders, and other stakeholders about what is required to create and sustain high-quality workplace education programs. Educators can also help workers make connections to learning opportunities in the community to continue their education.

In short, while needing to balance the interests of all stakeholders, workplace education is a convenient venue for serving adult learners where they spend much of their time, and it offers opportunities to make the instructional curriculum relevant to workers' current job skills, to take advantage of the community atmosphere among coworkers at a work site, and to generate investment by employers in the development of their own workforce.

INCIDENCE OF WORKPLACE EDUCATION

Although employers have an interest in the basic skills of their workforce, only a few consistently provide training of any kind for their lower wage workers (Frazis, Gittleman, Harrigan, & Joyce, 1998). Training does represent a substantial cost for the employer, and it can be difficult to justify the expense in traditional ROI formulas, particularly in the short term (Levenson, 2004) either initially or after the government funding

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concludes, raising an important question of whether taxpayer funds should go to businesses that would otherwise offer workplace education to their employees at their own expense.

According to human capital theory (Becker, 1964), employers see the benefit of firm-specific training, but not the benefit of building general skills, which is what basic education generally does. Employers fear that employees will leave once they have learned these skills, representing a lost investment.

In reviewing literature regarding employer-provided workplace education (Ahlstrand, Bassi, & McMurrer, 2003; Bassi, 1992; Geissler et al., 1995; Hollenbeck, 1993; Levenson, 2004), employers' use of state grants (Abelmann, 1996) and continuation of programs after state grants (Nelson, 2002), firm size stands out as the most frequent and significant factor: Large firms are more likely to provide it on their own. They are also more likely to use state grants and to continue programs after those grants end.

Other factors may play a role in the decision to offer workplace education, although this evidence is not as strong as the evidence concerning firm size. Workplace education may be more likely to continue in companies that:

- Are closely held (i.e., not publicly traded) corporations or make decisions locally.
- Experience external pressures for increased skill requirements, such as needing certification from the International Standards Organization (ISO) to trade internationally.
- Have a corporate philosophy supporting training or identify themselves as a "learning organization."⁹¹
- Have a specific reason to invest in the skills of their current workforce (e.g., companies with a cohort of experienced older workers or those that lack a skilled hiring pool).

Although any or all of these factors may be present in particular workplaces, it is still necessary to evaluate potential workplaces on a case-by-case basis to determine whether they are good candidates for workplace education programs.

⁹¹A *learning organization* is one that implements continuous improvement and learning throughout the organization on an ongoing basis.

LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT IMPLEMENTING QUALITY WORKPLACE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Given the range of stakeholder needs and the complexity of workplace cultures, creating quality programs can be a daunting challenge. Some programs and states have developed guidelines for creating quality workplace education programs drawn from formal evaluations of programs, or based on field experience gained in individual companies, unions, or statewide workplace education initiatives, such as the lessons learned from Northeastern Illinois University's program in the textile industry, or the state guidelines produced by Ohio and Massachusetts. Some states, such as Pennsylvania and Virginia, have developed Web sites that share practitioner wisdom as well as research, resources, and professional development opportunities; the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) sponsors a workplace education listserv and special collection Web site.⁹²

Gowen's (1992) extensive ethnographic study of a workplace education program in a Southern hospital highlights the importance of investigating the needs of all stakeholder groups, including learners, and taking them into account in program design. In the program Gowen studied, the interests of workers and employers conflicted: Housekeeping employees were not only uninterested in contextualized curriculum—their motives for learning to read related more to family and Bible reading—they were also offended at the suggestion that being able to read housekeeping bulletins would make them better cleaners.

A five-site qualitative study of workplace education programs in manufacturing, hospitality, health care, and service industries (Belfiore, Defoe, Folinsbee, Hunter, & Jackson, 2004) demonstrated that all stakeholders need ongoing training and support about how the program and the workplace affect each other; both workplace educators and their colleagues at the workplace, such as supervisors, trainers, union representatives, and human resource professionals, need professional development. This study also showed that, in addition to assessment of literacy skill levels, it is important to evaluate how and to what extent the workplace culture encourages workers' use of these skills.

Bloom (2003) interviewed practitioners, employers, union representatives, and learners in several joint labor-management programs around

⁹²Please see the Annotated Bibliography for more information and URLs.

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the country and identified common elements of successful practice. Those elements shared by a majority of the programs included the following:

- Balanced collaborative consultation between labor and management at each stage of development of the program.
- Analysis of learning needs.
- Career-planning services.
- Voluntary participation of workers.
- Access to continuing education opportunities and financial assistance.
- Employee involvement in program design and evaluation.
- Specific criteria for selecting education providers.
- Multiple learning strategies for worker-students.

In-depth evaluations of two statewide and three local workplace education initiatives (Moore, Myers, & Silva, 1998) emphasized the importance of adequate instructional time, acknowledging the constraints and difficulties of providing it. The study also made suggestions for local and state support to workplace education programs, such as technical assistance with how to start programs, gain employer support, and maintain quality.

Jurmo and Folinsbee (1994) also pointed out the need for an oversight committee and a workplace needs analysis. An *oversight committee* makes decisions about what kinds of classes are offered, which workers will attend, and the logistics of where and when classes will be held. The committee must reflect and represent the major stakeholders that will benefit from and be affected by an education program at their workplace and may be comprised of a human resource manager, union representative, line supervisor, quality-control person, worker-learner representative, and the teacher. The committee plays a useful role in identifying program goals that are meaningful in the workplace, and in making sure evidence of the program's achievements reaches the right decision makers when seeking financial support for the program.

The *workplace needs analysis* (WNA) systematically investigates the needs at a particular workplace, so that the provider, working with the oversight committee, can clarify the role that basic skills can play in the development of both the organization and the workforce and can thereby ensure the relevance and efficiency of the education program. The WNA can provide a detailed understanding of stakeholder needs and interests, which will enable the committee to identify a common ground for program activities. The WNA also uncovers potential pitfalls—especially

logistical issues and turf sensitivities—that must be worked out to maximize participation while minimizing disruption. While conducting the WNA, the provider will also uncover a wealth of authentic materials and resource persons that can be incorporated into the program. The WNA also identifies workplace goals that can be used in program evaluation design. Forming and maintaining an oversight committee with effective stakeholder participation and using a WNA to determine needs can keep an education program focused while avoiding preventable problems.

As workforce skill requirements change and place new responsibilities on the front-line worker, and as the reliance on immigrant labor increases, the need for well-designed workplace basic skills programs grows. Program planners and funders should learn from the valuable research and experience already available in this field.

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RESOURCES

Ahlstrand, A. L., Bassi, L. J., & McMurrer, D. J. (2003). *Workplace education for low-wage workers*. Kalamazoo, MI: W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Focus: Reasons employers offer workplace education

Audience: Researchers

Level of background required: Medium

This book reports on a three-phase study that included analysis of data on training incidence from the American Society for Training and Development, telephone surveys of 40 employers, and several case studies of workplace education programs. The authors found the following main reasons for offering workplace education to low-wage workers: philosophical commitment, improved retention and recruitment, and improved customer service. This adds to the body of research on why employers offer workplace education, and practitioners can use it to understand employer needs. Firms reported using Levels 1 through 3 on the Kirkpatrick Scale. This instrument is widely used by businesses to evaluate training. Level 1 measures employee reactions. Level 2 measures

employee learning (e.g., pre- and posttests). Level 3 measures changes in job performance (using employee and supervisor surveys). Level 4 measures results for the firm based on improved performance and Level 5 refers to return on investment (ROI).

Bloom, M., & LaFleur, B. (1999). *Turning skills into profit: Economic benefits of workplace education programs*. New York: The Conference Board.

Focus: Benefits of workplace education

Audience: Researchers, practitioners, business and labor partners

Level of background required: Basic

In this research report, the authors interviewed 40 employers, 39 employees, and 12 union representatives involved with workplace education and found several economic benefits to the programs. This book is interesting for researchers and practitioners alike, particularly in exploring where the various stakeholder groups agreed and disagreed on benefits of programs.

Geissler, B., Knell, S., McVey, J. W., Powell, S., & Brenner, B. (1995). *Learning that works: Basic skills programs in Illinois corporations*. Champaign: Illinois Literacy Resource Center.

Focus: Reasons employers offer workplace education

Audience: Policymakers, practitioners, researchers, business partners

Level of background required: Medium

This researchers in this study interviewed managers representing 22 Illinois firms. Half (11 firms) provided workplace education. Slightly over half of those who sponsored workplace education did so to achieve quality improvements, and another third were motivated by a commitment to worker education in their corporate culture. The authors also found that companies found technical assistance and seed grants to be the most useful forms of government assistance.

Hollenbeck, K. (1993). *Classrooms in the workplace*. Kalamazoo, MI: W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Focus: Characteristics of firms that offer workplace education

Audience: Researchers

Level of background required: High

This study is useful in its contribution to differentiating firms offering workplace education from those that do not. The study researchers surveyed

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1, 123 Michigan firms by mail and telephone, and also conducted 28 case studies of firms that offered workplace education programs. Hollenbeck found that the size of the firm was the greatest difference between firms that offered workplace education and those that did not; this held in both manufacturing and service industries. Another difference was that higher paying nonmanufacturing firms offered it; in manufacturing firms, those that were introducing new forms of work organization such as quality circles or increased responsibility for front-line workers were more likely to offer it.

Levenson, A. (2001). *Investing in workers' basic skills: Lessons from company funded workplace based programs*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.

Focus: Reasons employers offer workplace education

Audience: Researchers, business partners

Level of background required: Medium

Levenson interviewed and visited eight organizations for this in-depth study: four manufacturing companies, two health care organizations, one insurance company, and a consortium of hotels. The study identified factors that affected companies' decisions to fund their programs, such as a protraining company philosophy; having a cohort of older workers with low skills; lacking a skilled pool of workers from which to make new hires; experiencing high worker turnover; and needing to increase worker skills to run new equipment, improve customer service, and improve internal communication.

Levenson, A. (2004). Why do companies provide workplace education programs? In J. Comings, B. Garner, & C. Smith (Eds.), *Annual review of adult learning and literacy* (Vol. 4). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Focus: Reasons employers offer workplace education

Audience: Researchers, practitioners

Level of background required: Medium

This article reviews theory and literature regarding employer motivation to provide workplace education. It provides an in-depth discussion of such issues as employee retention, program implementation, and impact measurement, and draws lessons for practitioners about program design and marketing.

Murnane, R., & Levy, F. (1996). *The new basic skills*. New York: The Free Press; Murnane, R., & Levy, F. (2004). *The new division of labor: How*

computers are creating the next job market. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Focus: Skills required for changing job market

Audience: Researchers, policymakers, practitioners

Level of background required: Basic

Both books make an argument for an expansion of the definition of basic skills to include literacy and numeracy, but also problem solving and teamwork based on research into employer demands. The second book makes a case that the new division of labor is between humans and computers, and analyzes which jobs can best be done by computers (e.g., those with regular rules) and which will likely continue to require human judgment. Both books can help program planners, as well as business and labor partners, think about skills workers need to retain jobs or skills they will need to get new jobs should theirs be eliminated or outsourced.

Guides to Practice and Design of Workplace Education

AFL-CIO Working for America Institute. (1999). *Worker-centered learning: A union guide to basic skills.* Washington, DC: AFL-CIO.

Focus: Guide to practice

Audience: Practitioners, labor partners

Level of background required: Basic

This guide provides information for union representatives about why and how they should be involved in basic skills programs for their members. It offers practitioners insight into the union's stakeholder interests, as well as practical guides for program development.

Belfiore, M. E., & Burnaby, B. (Eds.). (1995). *Teaching English in the workplace.* Toronto: Pippin.

Focus: Guide to practice

Audience: Practitioners

Level of background required: Basic

This book is useful to program planners and also offers rich stories from experience that can be used in teacher training. It is particularly insightful regarding the necessity of fitting the program into the culture of the workplace, and gives useful advice for how to do so.

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Belfiore, M. E., Defoe, T., Folinsbee, S., Hunter, J., & Jackson, N. (2004). *Reading work: Literacies in the new workplace*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Focus: Ethnographic study of literacy use in workplaces

Audience: Researchers, practitioners

Level of background required: Medium

The authors did extensive participant-observation studies in five Canadian workplaces, in manufacturing, hospitality, and health care. The authors show the ways literacy skills are used—or not—in actual job performance, and that literacy and numeracy skill level is only one factor in the overall fabric of workplace culture. They show the need for professional development not only among workplace educators but their colleagues based at the workplace: supervisors, union representatives, and human resource and training professionals. This work is of interest to researchers and to practitioners trying to integrate programs into the workplace culture.

Bloom, M. (2002). *What works in workforce development*. Arlington, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

Focus: Common features of successful programs

Audience: Researchers, policymakers, practitioners, business and labor partners

Level of background required: Medium

In this study, the American Society for Training and Development surveyed 21 programs in several industries and Bloom conducted in-depth interviews with administrators, participants, and business and labor partners in three large programs in the information technology, health care, and hospitality industries. They found a series of practices the education providers and other stakeholders considered necessary to quality programming.

Folinsbee, S., & Jurmo, P. (1994). *Collaborative workforce development, collaborative needs assessment, collaborative program evaluation*. Don Mills, ON, Canada: ABC Canada.

Focus: Guide to practice

Audience: Practitioners

Level of background required: Basic

This series of guides gives detailed, step-by-step advice for practitioners interested in planning and evaluating programs meeting a range of stakeholder needs. It includes sample questionnaires and forms for interviewing various stakeholder groups and a wealth of how-to—and what-not-to-do—guidelines.

Gillespie, M. K. (1996). *Learning to work in a new land*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Focus: Guide to practice

Audience: Practitioners

Level of background required: Basic

This sourcebook begins with a section on the growth of immigrant workers and the need for instruction in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and a historical view of policy and funding issues. It also describes and compares several useful models both for providing ESOL in preemployment vocational training programs and for workplace education, as well as reviewing several tools and resources.

Gowen, S. G. (1992). *The politics of workplace literacy*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Focus: Book-length case study of one program

Audience: Researchers

Level of background required: Medium

This in-depth case study follows a workplace education program for housekeepers in a Southern hospital. It is particularly insightful into the stakeholder interests of the learners, showing that the learners' motivations to improve their reading skills were more often tied to personal and family, rather than career, goals.

Hull, G. (Ed.). (1997). *Changing work, changing worker: Critical perspectives on language, literacy and skills*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Focus: Lessons from practice and critical essays

Audience: Researchers, policymakers, practitioners

Level of background required: Medium

The 14 articles in this book discuss curriculum innovation, philosophical orientation, and policy implications of various approaches to workplace education. Most lessons are drawn from particular workplace education or

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job training programs and raise issues of balancing worker and employer goals, as well as balancing general education and specific skills.

Levine, T. (2000). *Learning for our lives: A union guide to worker-centered literacy*. Ottawa, ON, Canada: Canadian Labour Congress.

Focus: Guide to practice

Audience: Practitioners, labor partners

Level of background required: Basic

This handbook from the Canadian Labour Congress Literacy Project, written for trade unionists, gives an overview of the interests of the union stakeholders, models of programs with union involvement, and steps to establishing effective programs.

Massachusetts Workplace Literacy Consortium. (1999). *Workplace education guide*. Malden: Massachusetts Department of Education.

Focus: Guide to practice

Audience: Practitioners

Level of background required: Basic

Several program coordinators in the National Workplace Literacy Program wrote this guidebook, which covers WNA, planning teams, labor-management partnerships, curriculum development, assessment, evaluation, institutionalization, and consortia of several businesses working together.

Moore, M. T., Myers, D., & Silva, T. (1998). *Addressing literacy needs at work: Implementation and impact of workplace literacy programs*. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research.

Focus: Evaluation of National Workplace Literacy Program

Audience: Researchers, policymakers

Level of background required: High

This study evaluated the National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP), which was established by Congress in 1988 and ended in 1996. The authors conducted in-depth studies of three local and two state-level programs, including an experimental design with random assignment in the local sites. Because of the scope of the NWLP, this study is important for policymakers. The study found an association between program effectiveness and instructional time, and stressed the importance of staff experience and state or local infrastructure that can help programs.

Utech, J. L. (2004). *Workplace educators' training*. Boston: Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable.

Focus: Training for ABE and ESOL teachers going into workplace classrooms

Audience: Practitioners

Level of background required: Basic

This guide contains 60 activities that can be used to train ABE and ESOL teachers to teach in the workplace (especially unionized workplaces). The author developed the activities based on interviews with teachers in the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable's statewide network of union and labor-management programs. The guide contains information on WNA, conducting programs that are labor-management partnerships, curriculum development, and assessment and evaluation. There is also an accompanying collection of readings.

World Education. (2004). *Focus on Basics: Connecting Research and Practice* (Workplace Education Issue), 7(B).

Focus: Research, policy, and practice

Audience: Practitioners, researchers

Level of background required: Varies, mostly medium

This issue contains 10 articles and lists additional useful resources on a wide range of workplace education issues: policy, practice, research, philosophy, and historical development of workplace education.

Worker Writing

Baca, J. S. (Ed.) (2003). *The heat*. San Diego, CA: Cedar Hill.

Focus: Anthology of student writing

Audience: Practitioners, participants

Level of background required: Basic

This is a collection from classes at the Institute for Career Development, a joint program of 13 steel mills and the United Steel Workers of America. It contains several moving stories and poems by steelworkers. They can be used as powerful starting points in programs that teach writing.

SEIU Worker Education Program. (1996–2002). *Working writers*. Boston: SEIU Local 2020.

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Focus: Anthology of student writing

Audience: Practitioners, participants

Level of background required: Basic

There are seven volumes of these collections of worker writing, mostly by health care workers, including many ESOL learners. These collections can be used as texts for intermediate ESOL and reading levels.

Web Sites

Focus: Resources, reports, and tools

Audience: Practitioners

Level of background required: Basic

- **AFL-CIO Working for America Institute:** www.workingforamerica.org
This site features union programs and labor-management partnerships, and is also a reference for broader policy discussions in workforce development and its relationship to economic development. The site has several reports written by Institute staff.
- **National Institute for Literacy (NIFL):** www.nifl.gov
Click Workforce to find a wide range of resources and research reports. Resources are organized by stakeholder, as well as by topic. The site includes a Learning Activities Bank (LAB) where practitioners can contribute and find lesson plans on work-related topics. NIFL also sponsors a workplace education listserv that can be accessed through this site.
- **National Adult Literacy Database of Canada:** www.nald.ca
This site is a national clearinghouse of valuable resources from workplace education in Canada. Like the NIFL Web site, it contains many research reports and lessons from Canadian programs.
- **Pennsylvania Workforce Improvement Network (PAWIN):** www.pawin.org
This site features a monthly newsletter, a reference sheet identifying components of successful programs, and many facts and arguments providers can use to convince employers about the usefulness of education programs. It also provides links to research and to discussions of issues.
- **Virginia Workforce Improvement Network (VAWIN):** www.jmu.edu
In addition to access to a range of research reports and discussions of workforce development topics, this site features an online course for workplace education practitioners through James Madison University. It also offers an electronic peer-reviewed journal.

