



# T U T O R S ' T I P S

*This project has been funded by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations' Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative*



**Queensland  
Government**  
Department of  
Employment and  
Industrial Relations

## Setting students on the path to lifelong learning.

**By Shirley Beall**

Students that end up in our adult literacy and numeracy classes have extremely negative feelings about their learning and it is our duty to encourage to give it another go. All they need to learn is to believe that they can do it and all the rest will fall into place.

In this tutor tip, I will share ideas on how to create lessons relevant to the life experiences of your students. In this way encouraging them to participate actively in their own learning process which improves self esteem and gives them the confidence to access further literacies once they leave our learning environment.

### ► **Where do you start?**

**My answer... "Start with your students."**

Our students come to us with a wealth of experience. I found that a great number of the printed resource materials were good but just not relevant to my student body. The lessons taught skills but did not really interest them. I realized that it was my job to create lessons that encouraged my them to participate willingly because this was the only way they were going to learn.

**Where  
did I  
start?**

- > I made a point of chatting to the students on an informal basis to find out their interests and incorporated them into lesson plans where possible.
- > I encouraged students to suggest lesson topics - suggestion box / suggestion posters
- > I allowed students to run monthly meetings to take ownership of their learning responsibilities while at the same time learning how to run or be part of a general meeting.
- > I became flexible - used student ideas at a drop of a hat even if it meant that I had to shelve a lesson I'd planned.
- > I used the media as a resource - News Papers / TV News / 60 Minutes / magazine articles / films etc / music / phone messages / interviews / advertising brochures / billboards / electricity accounts / forms etc

# TASK 1 - Time to communicate

Make time to communicate with your students on an informal basis. I believe that food is the best ice breaker. Use food to create a non-threatening atmosphere where students relax and share their experiences. It our responsibility as literacy teachers to improve the oral communication skills of your students. Those who shy away from participating in whole class situations will happily chat to the person next to them over a piece of cake and a drink. Once these barriers have crumbled the students find it less of a challenge when they need to complete oral assessment tasks.

There are so many reasons for bringing food into the classroom. Here are a few ideas that I have used successfully.

## CELEBRATE STUDENT BIRTHDAYS

- > Give students the responsibility of keeping a check on the birthday list.
- > Plan the function
- > Supply the food
- > Clean up . . . . etc

## INTERNATIONAL FOOD DAY

- > Share recipes
- > Plan menu
- > Create a menu on the computer
- > Create invitations on the computer
- > Decide on costing
- > Create a recipe book
- > Use the recipes as a numeracy resource
- > Oral exercise - ask students to tell the class about their dishes . . . . etc

## END OF TERM BRING AND SHARE LUNCHES

These become very popular. They give the students a chance to share their culture with members of the class

## FUND RAISING

- > Class meeting
- > Choose a charity e.g. Breast Cancer / Children's Hospital Fund
- > Decide a theme
- > Tea / lunch / picnic / BBQ
- > Sharing chores
- > Costs - food preparation
- > Costs of tickets
- > Designing invitations / tickets
- > Reconciling and banking the money raised
- > Thank you letters
- > Phone calls . . . . etc

## MELBOURNE CUP DAY

- > Class meeting
- > Plan theme
- > Plan a menu
- > Costing
- > Delegate chores
- > Invite guests /
- > Invite paying guests to raise money for an end of year party for the class.
- > Create invitations
- > Reconciliation of money raised
- > Banking . . . . etc



Allowing students to choose lesson themes and giving them responsibility in the classroom creates positive participation. They realize that the teacher is giving them ownership of their learning and it's up to them use this to improve their personal growth.

## TASK 2 - Using student suggestions and ideas

Whenever possible use student suggestions and ideas. If a student brings in a text, photograph, joke, hobby or food grab the opportunity to use these instantly even if it means shelving your lesson for the day. Below are two examples.

### > WHERE DO YOU THINK THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN?

One morning a shy student picked up a photo from the recycle box and told me proudly that even though there was no information on the sheet he still knew exactly where it was. His powers of deduction so impressed me I asked him if I could use the photo and his ideas for a lesson. What transpired was more than I could have hoped for. This is what we did :-

- Group students into pairs
- Hand out photos and decide where the photo was taken and give reasons for your answers

Not one pair could work out where the photo had been taken. I then asked Brian to come and tell the class the answer. This shy man stood in front of the class and asked them to, "Look more closely", "Look for clues" and "Think out of the box!"

I could not believe my ears. Brian was transforming before my eyes. I believe that was the turning point for Brian. I thought his ideas worthy of using in a lesson situation and then inviting him up to take my place of 'teacher' meant I believed he could do it. Brian walked out of the classroom ten feet tall that day!

### > CAN YOU READ THIS ?

I cdnuolt blveiee  
that I cloud aulacty  
uesdnatnrd what I  
was rdanieg The  
phaonmneal pweor  
of the hmuan mnid  
Aoccdrnig  
to.....  
.....  
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A hearing impaired student brought in a copy of an email that his Mom had received. It read, " I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulacty uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg . . . . . " I'm sure you might have seen this text. It explains that as long as the first and last letters of a word are correct we can read the word. With George's permission we used the text for the class lesson that day. George read the text to the class. The class were so impressed at how fluently he'd read because they were all aware of his difficulties. Then he handed out the worksheets to each of his classmates and challenged them to read the text.

The lesson grew into a class discussion, after which we corrected the spelling, added punctuation and then typed up the corrected text in Word on the computer. I then took the opportunity to get the students to choose the week's spelling/vocabulary list from this text.

### > SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES

One morning I overheard my students discussing lay-buying Christmas gifts. A suggestion that we plan a lesson around the topic was enthusiastically accepted. This is what we did:-

- Paired the students (one with experience and one without)  
Discussion topic - what to do / list of advantages and disadvantages
- Class discussion - advantages and disadvantages / shared experiences
- Pairs - created an information brochure "What you need to know about lay-buying."
- Groups / pairs presented their brochure to the class

## TASK 3 - Using the media as a resource

It is important to keep lessons relevant and interesting. I find that my successful lessons, are often the ones that I create around a current news article, a 60 Minute story, an advertisement, popular music or movie. During the introduction to these lessons students identify with the theme and become involved because it's relevant.

What do you think happened to this poor fellow?



E.g. Newspaper Article

- 1) Hand out a photo from an article and ask the students discuss the posed question with the person next to them.
- 2) On the white board write :-
  - > the title of the article
  - or
  - > a few phrases from the text
  - or
  - > word clues and then pose the question, "Does this make any difference ?"
- 3) Hand out the text - read as a class, in pairs or in small groups
- 4) Class discussion - reasons for the accident; how to prevent similar accidents; sharing personal experiences
- 5) Writing tasks - comprehension questions; reports; information posters; letters to the editor; personal experiences
- 6) Create vocabulary list - syllables; definitions; word families; crosswords; new sentences; share the meaning of one unknown word with the class / partner / groups
- 7) If possible use information from the text to create numeracy tasks/questions

I very seldom begin a lesson without a little intrigue. It has become such a part of my routine that the students are disappointed if there is no light hearted introduction to the day. Learning is a serious business but it does not have to be boring.

***A teacher's enthusiasm and obvious enjoyment will spill over into his/her learning environment. Students will realize that learning can be fun ..... the first step along their lifelong learning path.***

If you have any questions regarding this tutor tip, please email [info@qcal.org.au](mailto:info@qcal.org.au)

