

RAPAL

Research and Practice in Adult Literacy



The Research and Practice in Adult Literacy Network

Who we are

RaPAL is an independent national network of learners, practitioners, teachers, managers and researchers engaged in adult literacies and numeracy. Our support is generated by membership subscription only, and we are therefore completely independent in our views. RaPAL is the only national organisation focusing on the role of literacies in adult life.

What we do

- **campaign** for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives
- **critique** current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
- **emphasise** the importance of social context in literacy
- **encourage** collaborative and reflective research
- **believe** in democratic practices in adult literacy
- **create** networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
- **publish** a journal three times a year

RaPAL Management Group 2005-2006

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Editorial Information

The Editorial Group for 2005-2006 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner researchers: Yvon Appleby, Amy Burgess, Maxine Burton, Jim Crowther, Azumah Dennis, Linda Eastwood, Ellayne Fowler, Alison Gorf, Barbara Hatley-Broad, Mary Hamilton, Gaye Houghton, Alex Kendall, Hugo Kerr, Fiona Macdonald, Jane Mace, Deirdre Parkinson, Sarah Rennie, Irene Schwab, Ralf St. Clair, Alison Tomlin, Karin Tusting, Carol Woods
Overseas members of the Editorial Group include: Jean Searle, Rosie Wickert, Stephen Black, Australia; Mary Norton, Bonnie Soroake, Sheila Stewart, Canada; Janet Isserlis, Elsa Auerbach, Steve Reder, USA; and Cathy Kell, New Zealand

Members are involved in the compilation of the journal as reviewers/referees and editors.

We are a friendly group - open to new members and new ideas. Please contact us with any contributions (views, comments, reports and articles) and do not be put off if you are new to the field or if you have not written for a publication before. This Journal is written by and for all learners, tutors and researchers who want to ask questions about this field of work. It does not matter if the questions have been asked before. We want to reflect the many voices within adult literacy and numeracy work and to encourage debate. Why not join in?

Further information can be found at our website: www.rapal.org.uk

The RaPAL Journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group.

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Welcome to the Spring 2006 issue of the RaPAL Journal, with its focus on Numeracy. Once again I am delighted that we have contributions from across the UK and that we have maintained our Canadian links. Our annual conference with its theme of 'Transforming Literacies' is fast approaching: you will find a registration form towards the end of the Journal. You will also notice that there are currently 3 positions available on the Management Group. This is an exciting time to get involved with RaPAL, as we aim to double our membership. We would like people from a wide range of locations and covering a range of interests to become involved in the Management Group so that we can widen our representation. Please think about joining us.

Alison Gorf has edited this issue. Alison has been a teacher trainer since 2002, working at the University of Huddersfield where she is engaged in both Pre and In-Service teacher training. Prior to this she taught for 10 years in Adult and Community Education in the Huddersfield area after (like many people) 'accidentally' becoming a Skills for Life tutor. Alison's research interests are in developing awareness of kinaesthetic learning in her trainees and in looking at why people become numeracy teachers. She also has a special interest in integrating the use of chocolate into her numeracy teaching and her personal mantra is '*maths games are for life, not just for Christmas.*'

Deirdre Parkinson
Journal Co-ordinator

In this edition we have a number of contributions from Scotland resulting from the second national Adult Numeracy Seminar, *Focus on Numeracy* held in December 2005 which is outlined in Cath Smith's article '*Focus on Numeracy*'.

The publication '*Adult Numeracy: shifting the focus: A Report and Recommendations on Adult Numeracy in Scotland*' by Diana Coben, who is one of our contributors this month with her article on ongoing projects including Maths for Life, makes the following two points in its section on '*Learning and teaching Approaches*'

'Connectionist' teaching should be promoted (that is, teaching that makes connections between different aspects and representations of mathematics, as well as with learners' own methods; this entails an emphasis on listening to learners and observing what they do).

Critical numeracy and realistic mathematics offer ways forward geared to adults' lives, interests and purposes.

The views in these quotes very much sum up the flavour of our contributions in this edition with emphasis on listening to what learners say. This is very much emphasized in Kate Nonesuch's piece on '*Reducing Student Resistance to Using Math*

Manipulatives'. Kate tackles issues of how to respond when learners don't see how what you are doing with teaching tools links in with their learning. Alison Kelly's research into what motivates or demotivates numeracy learners looks at issues relating to reluctant learners who don't yet see how the subject fits into their lives. Alison Tomlin's article '*If you can make it, you can own it*' explores links between numeracy and literacy and gives examples of many aspects of numeracy used in her teaching, including the link between fractions and tap dancing.

There are also examples of practical ideas for teaching numeracy in this edition. Games and activities, including the current craze for Sudoku, are explored in Helen Johnston Morris's '*Fun with Numbers*' article. Denise Hepplewhite's article '*Can Playdough be fun and educational?*' looks at how to encourage participation in family learning. Alison McLachlan outlines a different approach to integrating numeracy through her article '*Local to global - starting with the weather*', which also explores work with other community groups to encourage numeracy provision which really does fit with the ideas of '*adult's lives, interests and purpose*' from the above quote. The themes in this article also link with Ann Russell's piece entitled '*Map Reading*'.

Angela Valente reports on professional development undertaken through the Scottish Numeracy Energiser held in November 2005 with some examples of real life objects such as 6 packs of lager used at this event to explore ways to teach.

John Swain, Graham Griffiths and Rachel Stone report on the changes in practice that arose as tutors took part in a research project focusing on the use of observation and questioning in their article '*Integrating formative/diagnostic assessment techniques into teachers' routine practice in adult numeracy*'. The ideas expressed in this piece link very well with the connectionist ideas in the above quote.

In the Reviews and Reports section we have feedback from Kara Jackson and Dave Baker about the most recent Uppingham Seminar held in October 2005 on the topic of '*Numeracy and Development*'. We also hear again from Kate Nonesuch with a review of ongoing research in Canada and from Julie Simmons with her piece on '*Mobiematics*' which gives us not only an insight into current developments in using new technology for teaching but also a new piece of 'techspeak' to master. There is also a comprehensive review by Azumah Dennis of '*Outside the Classroom researching literacy with adult learners*' edited by Ellayne Fowler and Jane Mace.

We hope that you will enjoy this edition and that you too will be 'energised' by the ideas put forward by our contributors.

Alison Gorf
Editor