

# RiP Happening

by RiPAL-BC



Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Last night, Irene came into my class with a bandaged arm. She had been using heroin on the weekend and something went wrong when she injected. She described what had happened when we did a round of check-ins at the start of the class. In other programs, Irene would hide this information, or she would not even be allowed to attend – she would not be ready to learn unless she was “clean”. Our approach is to accept people who want to learn, no matter what state they are in, and the research we have done on the links between Harm Reduction and learning tells us we are on the right track. Irene may not complete the course this term, and she may drop out from time to time due to drug use or other life circumstances such as homelessness or violence. But tonight she is here and keen to participate the best she can – and not using. And I hope her experience tonight will encourage her to come back, and get more involved in learning. This is a harm reduction strategy many women use.

It doesn't make our job easy, but it sure makes it interesting. What do you think?

Betsy

P.S. If you want to read more, see *Improvements. No less than Heroic - Harm Reduction and Learning in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside* by Betsy Alkenbrack (2007)  
<http://www.nald.ca/library/research/heroic/cover.htm>

<http://ripal.literacy.bc.ca/>

Research in Practice in Adult Literacy British Columbia

To: \_\_\_\_\_

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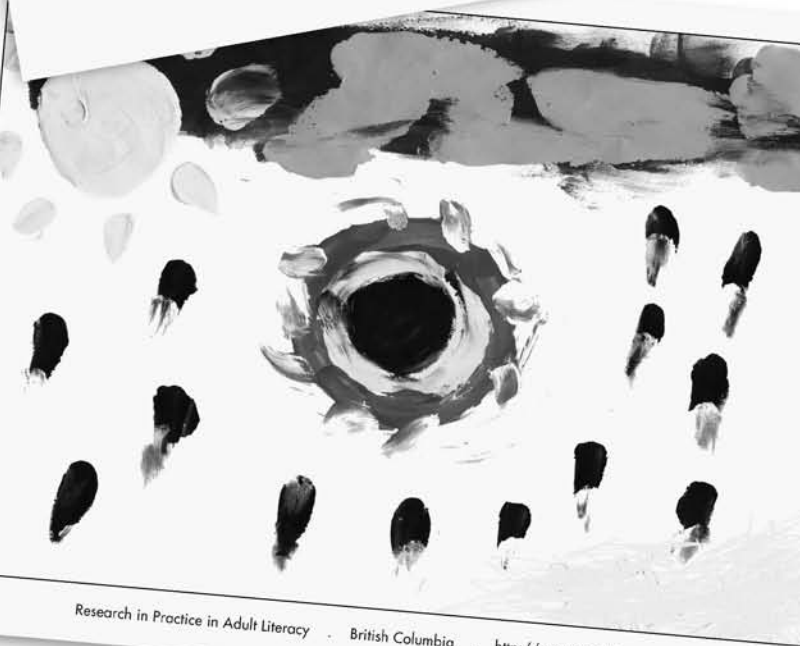
Dear literacy worker,

In April of 2008, when some literacy practitioners were together to talk about the research in practice we've done, we got talking about having conversations with other practitioners, tutors, administrators and maybe even funders about our work. We tried to think of ways to introduce some of our interesting conclusions, some happenings that have left us pondering, and some possible ways we could use the research. We came up with a few tools.

These postcards are meant as starters. We hope they will help you to have conversations with folks around you about some of the gems, themes or “Aha!” moments that have come out of our research. We hope your conversations are fruitful. We hope they help you improve your practice, or cause you to celebrate the work you are already doing! We also hope you find our tools fun and easy to use. They will cause conversations that could take 15 minutes or last for a few days...

Best,  
 Marina, Dee, Betsy, Kate,  
 Paula, Leonne

Warning: If you play with our kit, you may find you want to do a research project yourself.



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My student came only once to class. I taught her to play Yahtzee. She reports that playing Yahtzee changed her life, saved her marriage and helped her kid get higher marks in math.

I'm wondering what activities have changed the life of one of your students.

Kate



To:

Practice in Adult Literacy British Columbia



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Dear ABE teachers:  
A quick update from Wonderland. Have you ever wondered why certain students in your class just don't seem to get what you are teaching? How do you deal with them? Do you think it has something to do with the way you teach or the way they learn? I'm looking for insights and answers to these questions, so I look forward to your reply.

Leonne



To:

Practice in Adult Literacy British Columbia

<http://ripal.literacy.bc.ca/>

Dear Paula,

Here I am again, working on another literacy research project. Once again, my wee brain is on overload with all the ideas. Whenever I get into this headspace, at home or away, I seek someone out to debrief with, preferably while walking the streets. It doesn't work with just anyone though; they have to "get it". I wish I had tapes of our walking conversations. As I recall, some of the time we ended up clarifying the work, other times just goofing off; either way, these moments were and still are critical for my sanity. Am I just needy or is this normal?

Dee



To:

Practice in Adult Literacy British Columbia

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Dear Sandi,

WOW! You were right that it was a good idea to attend this conference in Nottingham. A woman from Ireland recognized our names from *Dancing in the Dark*. She has been using *Dancing in the Dark* to teach practicum teachers. (She knows the report better than I do!) She got hooked on Paula's description of agency, but it was her students noticing our "Literature Review We Didn't Do" that helped them challenge their assumptions about education. What do you think? Who creates knowledge? Who then validates that knowledge?

Dee



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Reflection on action



Mary Ann:

They're filing out of the room for the last time. It's kind of sad. They have been one of those magic classes. They have become so close to one another. They helped each other out in class all the time. They listened so respectfully to each others' comments. They laughed together.

How did this atmosphere come about? What did I do? What did they do?

Paula



To: .....

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Dear Mom,

You are always wondering what my job is and what I do for work. While back I worked with a group of adults in a research project who listed all their needs before they could return to regular school. It was a huge list. What I do is try to support the programs that offer learning to these adults.

Today I am in a swank hotel in Vancouver surrounded by glitz, food and chocolate. talking about literacy. What is wrong with this picture?

Dee



To: .....

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