

**WorkKeys Conference Fourth Annual  
Good to GOLD  
Wednesday, November 19 and 20, 2008  
Macomb Community College**

**Using Key-Train with Non-Native Speakers of English**

**Presented by:**

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Literacy Center of West Michigan  
Customized Workplace English Program  
Session 1-D: 9:15 to 10:15 a.m.

Introduction: Through the Literacy Center of West Michigan, a workplace English as a Second Language (ESL) class at Lacks Enterprises, Inc., a local automotive manufacturing company, was scheduled. The Key Train curriculum was chosen by the Literacy Center to develop employees' reading and math skills. Funding for the pilot course was provided by the company and WIRED grant through Grand Rapids Community College. The class met 1.5 hours twice a week for a total of 24 sessions over a 12 week period. It was held on site during first shift work hours. Six non-native speakers comprised the class, coming from 5 different countries: Bosnia (2), Iran, Iraq, Morocco and Vietnam. There were 2 women and 4 men. Students were "on the clock" to attend this class. Their positions varied from assembly line, truck driver to inspection. Their ages were between 29 and 62 years old.

Each student received a copy of the paper format of Reading for Information (RFI), Applied Mathematics (AM) and Locating Information (LI). They were encouraged to work ahead in their books and to also use the company computers in order to work on their own. They were pretested in KeyTrain before the class started in order to know what level on which to begin. They were given user id's and passwords so they could use the program online on their own as part of homework assignments. They were not paid for the time on KeyTrain they spent outside of classroom

KeyTrain materials were taught using paper and online format. It was obvious that only two of the students had had previous experience using a computer. The other four struggled with the computer technology and manipulation of the mouse. They were not comfortable with the log-in process. It took almost an entire class time to get everyone logged in and up and running. Once they were "in the system" they were very engaged and found it interesting and motivating. The next week, the students were taken back again to the computer room where it only took a few minutes to get working. They were focused on their own level and found it difficult to break away when the time was up.

Some of the more challenging concepts within Level 3 for this class were:

Reading for Information:      Making connections

Applied Mathematics:	Fractions, decimals, word problems, time and money related problems
Locating Information:	Reading and interpreting maps, tables, and line graphs

Assessment results will be analyzed and brought to the WorkKeys Conference. They are not available yet, as the testing was just administered at the time of the deadline for early submission of handouts.

In reflecting over the program, the trainer is confident that all students made gains in their ability to read for information, in applied math and in locating information. How much they gained, as in most educational endeavors, is relative to how much input they received. In retrospect, it seems highly desirable to encourage individual on-line student interaction right from the beginning of the course. The trainer is then able to monitor the students' work and teach concepts that are challenging to the class. It is unlikely that the average student would take the materials and work without a teacher in the initial stages of learning the program, however once introduced to the computer and KeyTrain he or she would be off and running and achieve maximum success from the program.

In conclusion, KeyTrain offers a great learning opportunity for the students. Support for the trainer on some of the more difficult concepts would be beneficial. KeyTrain certainly provides a solid foundation for the basic skills in the workplace.

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