

Eliciting and Using Learner Input in the ABE Classroom

A First Literacy

Professional Development Workshop

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Agenda

- 10:00 – 10:05 *Brief* Introductions
- 10:05—10:25 Opening Discussion:
“How do you currently get input from learners?”
“How do you use it?”
“Why do you think it’s important for teachers to get learner input?”
- 10:25—11:10 Presentation on Eliciting and Using Learner Input
(With Examples of Input Tools)
- 11:10—11:35 Group Activity
- 11:35—11:45 Group Activity Report Back/Sharing
- 11:45—12:00 Feedback on Workshop

How can you go about getting input from your ABE Learners?

Input can be formal or informal

- From individuals
- From groups of students
- From your class as a whole

***Let's consider some ways
to get formal student input.***

Input from individuals and groups of learners can come from

- Written surveys (of various formats)
- Student interviews with teachers, counselor, or other staff
- Groups of students' meeting and reporting
- Student peer interviews

Whole-class input can come from

- Tabulating individual student surveys
- Students' voting or prioritizing
- Whole-class discussion

Note:

- *Some means will be more or less effective with different learners.*
- *Using multiple means can lead to richer input.*

How to get input from low-level English Language Learners

- By using students' first language in
 - a) Surveys (including goal identification)
 - b) Focus groups
 - c) Whole-class discussions
- By using pictures, with or without basic language
- By having students draw pictures illustrating their needs or preferences

What kinds of formats can be used in student surveys?

- Those that list choices:
 - a) True/False, Yes/No questions
 - b) Lists from which students identify needs or preferences
- More open-ended formats
 - a) Sentence completion
 - b) Information questions

What might teachers ask their students about?

Information about:

- Class topics of need/interest
- Class materials
- Class activities
- Field trips (interest in potential field trips ,
feedback on trips taken)

It can also be useful for teachers to elicit

- Students' "pre-lesson" knowledge of a topic
- Students' "post-lesson" comprehension
- Lesson feedback or evaluation
- What makes a good class, teacher, or student
- Class priorities or rules

Remember that informal, accidental input from students can be equally valuable.

It can come:

- Conversations before or after class
- During warm-up conversation or class discussion
- As a response to straight-forward questions, asked spontaneously
- Through student writing, especially journal writing

*Now let's look at some ways
teachers can use the input
they get from their students.*

Teachers can use their students' input to

- **Select class material**
(For whole-class or individual learning)
- **Plan class activities**
(For shorter, repeated activities or longer learning projects.)
- **Plan field trips**
- **Assign homework**
(What kind, how much, whole-class or individual)

Learner input can also be used by teachers to

- Plan testing (What kind, how often)
- Set class policy or rules
or better yet ...
- Allow students to negotiate class policy or rules (A great way to promote student leadership and their taking responsibility for their learning)

Learner Input toward a Student-Centered Classroom

- The more student input that is *elicited*, in a variety of ways,
- The more often it is *used*, in a variety of ways,
- The more teachers focus on the needs, goals, and preferences of individual students and a class as a whole,

The more likely it is that their classes will
be student centered!

Resources

For More Information on Learner Input

- ***Collaborations***, by Jann Huizenga. A textbook series published by Heinle and Heinle. This series includes lower-level books which contain a good deal of learner input activities throughout the texts. They include personal surveys, graphs for collecting data on other students, learning logs at the end of chapters and many opportunities that enable teachers to learn about students' interests and lives. (Google the publisher.)
- **“Collaborating with Students to Build a Curriculum that Incorporates Real-Life Materials”** by Charissa Ahlstrom. Published in *Focus on Basics*, September 2003. A fine article which leads to student-centered, participatory activities. (Google NCSALL: Focus on Basics. You will find other articles that include aspect of learner input.)
- **“Creating a Learning Community”** by Kiram Malvede and Krista Shaffer. This can be found on the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC) website. “In a library-based class designed to build a learning community through teamwork, peer support and participation in class decisions, student show an 85% completion rate.” (Google New England Literacy Resource Center.)
- **“Learner Goal Setting”** by Ronna Magy. This too can be found on the NELRC website. “A clear and succinct set of suggestions for helping ESOL students set and monitor goals.” (Google New England Literacy Resource Center.)