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The Achiever

News & notes from the
Edward Stevens Center for the Study and Development of Literacy and Language

Volume I Issue 4

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Looking Back... to Look Ahead

This past year marked the ten-year anniversary of the Edward Stevens Center for the Study and Development of Literacy and Language.

Although there have been many changes in the past ten years, our commitment to the original purpose and mission of the Center remains strong. Over the past several months, I have had an opportunity to focus and reflect on the original mission of Dr. Edward Stevens. In this issue of *The Achiever*, I hope to show how our current work connects to and supports the mission outlined by Dr. Ed Stevens, over 10 years ago.

In his original proposal to the Board of Trustees in 1998, he wrote, *“the purpose of the Center is to initiate, support, and coordinate studies of literacy and language and to provide services which will improve the quality of educational opportunities for children, families and adults.”*

He continues to describe how the Center will accomplish that goal: *“the Center is strongly*

committed to field-based, cooperative, partnership outreach strategies, including off-campus, research-based professional development activities.

The Center will also act as a resource center (clearinghouse) for grant-related information, publish reports of its studies ... and organize conferences in the area of literacy and language development.”

The literacy issues that were important when Dr. Stevens proposed the Center in 1998, are still relevant today for parents, teachers, students and administrators who want to help improve the literacy of the children and adults in their lives.

Through high-quality professional development, such as *Better Math through Literacy* (page 3), quarterly tutor training workshops (page 7), ABLE teacher workshops, and our annual Symposium (page 10), the Literacy Center continues to contribute to improving

literacy levels of individuals in southeastern Ohio and across the state.

We have put an increased focus on research with recent projects such as *Better Math through Literacy* and the proposal to investigate the impact of literacy classes on the mental health of individuals with mental illness.

The Helen M. Robinson Center for Reading (page 6) is having a direct impact on the reading skills of children and adults in the community. Several parents have requested information on learning disabilities in children, so we are excited to be hosting a parent information session in March.

Read on to learn more about the initiatives and services at the Edward Stevens Center for the Study and Development of



Sharon Reynolds
Interim Director



Don't miss this!
Featured articles by Dr. Rick Lavoie
Better Math Through Literacy
2009 Symposium

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National Assessment of Adult Literacy: Indirect County and State Estimates

The first national assessment of adult literacy (NALS) was conducted in 1992. In 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics conducted a follow-up assessment (NAAL), sampling over 18,000 adults over the age of 16 in the areas of document, quantitative and prose literacy. The results of the 2003 NAAL assessment indicated a significant change in the quantitative literacy levels since 1992, but no significant change in the prose or document literacy of adult since the 1992 study (Figure A.). The report also indicated that 43% or 93 million adults function at the *Basic* or *Below Basic* level in prose literacy (Figure B). These adults are challenged by, for example, finding information in a short, simple passage (*Below Basic*) or explaining the meaning of metaphor used in a narrative (*Basic*).

A recent report released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provides estimates on the percentage of adults – for all states and counties in the U.S. – who lack basic prose literacy skills. The study provides data for 2003 and 1992. This new data is currently the only available snapshot of adult literacy rates for individual states and counties.

Nationally, 14% of adults are Below Basic in prose literacy. The estimates from the NCES report indicate Ohio is slightly better than the national average, with 9% of adults at the Below Basic level. NCES maintains an interactive website where users can plug in states and counties to compare prose literacy rates.

<http://nces.ed.gov/naal/estimates/index.aspx>

Average prose, document and quantitative literacy scores of adults: 1992 and 2003

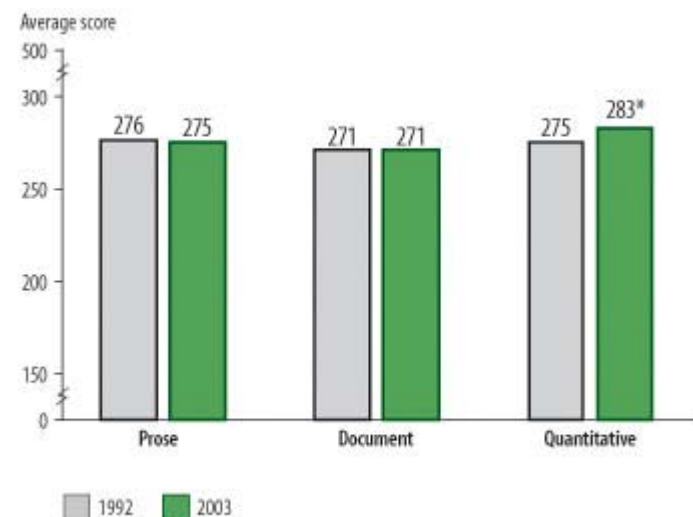


Figure A.
* Significantly different from 1992.
NOTE: Adults are defined as people 16 years of age and older living in households or prisons. Adults who could not be interviewed due to language spoken or cognitive or mental disabilities (3 percent in 2003 and 4 percent in 1992) are excluded from this figure.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey and 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy.

Number of Adults in Each Prose Literacy Level

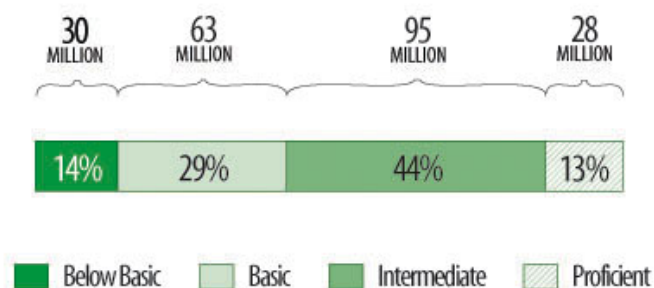


Figure B.
Prose Literacy

- *Below Basic*: no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills
- *Basic*: can perform simple and everyday literacy activities
- *Intermediate*: can perform moderately challenging literacy activities

20 Tips to Promote Positive Self-esteem

by Richard D. Lavoie, M.A., M.Ed.



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A dynamic relationship exists between self-esteem and skill development. As a child improves in self-esteem, his academic competence increases. And as that competence increases, his self-esteem improves. The caring and concerned caregiver must come to realize that positive self-esteem is both a prerequisite and a consequence of academic success. Here are 20 tips to help foster a child's self-esteem:

1. Value each child as an individual with unique strengths, needs, interests and skills.
2. Focus on the child's strengths. Emphasize and celebrate his "islands of competence."
3. Reject the child's behavior, but never reject the child. Use affectionate terms and nicknames when scolding ("Your room is a mess, honey. Now turn off the TV and make your bed.>").
4. Remember that sincere interest can be more effective and meaningful than praise. Demonstrate a genuine interest in her activities, hobbies, etc.
5. Establish realistic, achievable goals for your child. Anticipate success.
6. Avoid using sarcasm with kids - children with language problems often misinterpret it.
7. When discussing an issue or a problem, avoid bringing up past difficulties.
8. Never compare one child to another.
9. Help the child develop decision-

making and problem-solving skills.

10. Understand that mistakes are an inevitable (and valuable!) part of any learning experience. Use these as an opportunity to teach and assist.
11. Divide large tasks into smaller, manageable ones. This will ensure success, mastery, and retention.
12. Maintain a file of his academic work. Use this to demonstrate his progress and development when he is feeling down.
13. Encourage him to maintain "collections" (e.g., baseball cards, stamps, rocks, etc.). This allows him to be the resident expert on a topic.
14. If she does not participate in team sports, promote individual sports (e.g., skiing, golf, swimming). This will provide opportunities for success, exercise, and peer interaction.
15. Communicate your confidence in the child **and** in her future.
16. Permit and encourage the child to follow the normal fads of his peer group (e.g., clothing, music). This will enhance his acceptance at school and in the community.
17. Emphasize the positive aspects of her behavior or performance, even if the task was not completely successful. Reward direction, not perfection.
18. Anticipate that the child will have plateaus, failures, backslides, setbacks, and regressions. Sup-

port and encourage him at these times. Kids need love most when they deserve it least!

19. Look for opportunities to offer him choices to allow him to practice decision-making skills.
20. Never, ever, communicate disappointment to your child. The disappointment of an adult may be too great a burden for a child to carry.

Remember:

- Your child's self-esteem will be determined by the conditional acceptance that he receives from others - and the unconditional acceptance that he receives from you
- Your child's self-esteem will be determined by success and progress in four areas:
 - Social (acceptance, friendships)
 - Competence (in a skill area)
 - Physical (clothing, attractiveness)
 - Character (effort, generosity, etc.)
- Emphasize, recognize and reinforce all four areas!

Self-esteem: The Cause and Effect of Success for the Child with Learning Differences

by Richard D. Lavoie, M.A., M.Ed.



Reprinted with permission

The concept of self-esteem has become the topic of much debate in educational and psychological circles in recent years. A virtual movement and several "cottage industries" have sprung up in response to this debate. As a result, the critically important concept of self-esteem has become the object of both ridicule and adoration. Confusion reigns!

The seminal question in this "tastes great/less filling" debate is simply this: "Does competence build self-esteem or does self-esteem build competence?"

I feel that the debate is a fallacious one because **both** sides of the argument are correct. A dynamic relationship exists between self-esteem and skill development. It is a relationship wherein one side of the equation increases at a parallel rate to the other side. As a child improves in self-esteem, his academic competence increases. And as that competence increases, his self-esteem improves. The caring and concerned caregiver must come to realize that positive self-esteem is both a **prerequisite** and a **consequence** of academic success.

Self-esteem is commonly defined as the belief that a person is accepted, connected, unique, powerful, and capable. Self-esteem issues take on a particular significance for students with learning or attention problems because self-assessment of this concept requires the ability to evaluate and compare. These are two skills that are extraordinarily challenging for students with special needs. Therefore, these children are often unable to accurately measure or assess their own self-esteem.

Because self-esteem is a feeling - not a skill - it can only be measured by

observing the way in which a person acts or behaves. Teachers and parents must become keen and insightful observers of children in order to assess their self-esteem.

Students with **high self-esteem** will:

- Feel capable of influencing another's opinions or behaviors in a positive way.
- Be able to communicate feelings and emotions in a variety of situations.
- Approach new situations in a positive and confident manner.
- Exhibit a high level of frustration tolerance.
- Accept responsibility.
- Keep situations (positive and negative) in proper perspective.
- Communicate positive feelings about themselves.
- Possess an internal locus of control (belief that whatever happens to them is the result of their own behavior and actions).

Conversely, students with **low self-esteem** will:

- Consistently communicate self-derogatory statements.
- Exhibit learned helplessness.
- Not volunteer.
- Practice perfectionism.
- Be overly dependent.
- Demonstrate an excessive need for acceptance: a great desire to

please authority figures.

- Have difficulty making decisions.
- Exhibit low frustration tolerance.
- Become easily defensive
- Have little faith in their own judgment and be highly vulnerable to peer pressure.

We would all do well to be mindful of the sage words of Great Britain's classic Plowden Report: "The best preparation for being a happy and useful adult is to live fully as a child."



The Motivation Breakthrough 6 Secrets to Turning On the Tuned-Out Child

Rick Lavoie's new book on motivation now available!

Order yours now through AMAZON

Kids Can Do Math

by Tim McKeny

Since my arrival at Ohio University nearly three years ago, I have met many kind and friendly folks both within the university and the surrounding community. When making initial introductions, the conversation inevitably turns to the question, "So, what do you teach at the university?"

Knowing that my on-going research agenda and service work are primarily hidden from the general working knowledge of what goes on in university settings, I brace myself for the typical reaction when I respond, "I am a Mathematics Educator in the College of Education."

I am now at a point within my professional career that the eye rolls, disparaging sighs, and looks of frustration that I receive upon saying these words no longer cause me to lose sleep at night. I feel that the common retorts of, "You

know, I was one of those kids in school who was just never good at math," or, "I always did fine in math in schools until the teachers started throwing letters into the mix," or the ever popular, "I never saw a point to why I had to take so much math in school, when all I need to know is how to balance my checkbook," are not personal attacks, but rather a collective commentary about the state of mathematics education that permeates the landscape of school mathematics in the United States.

I, too, was one of those students who was not a stellar performer in school mathematics. In fact, my most vivid memory of sixth-grade is getting back my chapter three subtraction test one cold and rainy October morning. All of us were seated in neat and orderly rows as Mr. W. distributed the recently scored tests

to the members of the class. As he would duck his head to avoid the colorful pumpkin mobiles that we had made the week before to celebrate the upcoming Autumn Holiday, Mr. W. would openly announce our scores on the test to the entire class. We all sat at our desks with sweaty palms and eyes transfixed on our teacher distributing papers with glowing praise for papers with correct answers and neat subtraction columns that demonstrated that we knew how 'to borrow.' When at last my turn came to receive my test paper, Mr. W. had no words of praise for me. In fact, my heart sank to the floor as I looked upon a sheet of paper with more red ink than our current federal budget. "I have no idea what happened to you, Timmy," Mr. W. snapped. "I guess you can just cancel your plans to take pre-algebra next year in junior high. *It's obvi-*

Kids Can Do Math (...continued)

ous you can't do math."

The rest of that school day was spent in a mire of self-pity and self-loathing. I knew I must soon walk the dried leaf-strewn streets of my suburban neighborhood and explain to my parents at home why I was not succeeding at school. My blue plaid shirt was wet with tears by the time I shut my hallway locker for the final time that day. A young boy who just days and weeks before had been so excited with the idea of learning now slumped slowly down the three flights of school steps with a safety patrol belt hazily draped over one shoulder; the bright beams of sunshine that radiated from my face had been replaced by the dark cloud stigma of "I can't."

Over thirty years later, I have no idea why this memory stands so predominantly in my mind, but in retrospect, I suppose I do owe Mr. W. a "word

of thanks" for unwittingly placing me on my current career trajectory. Sadly, mathematics teaching in the United States has not changed greatly during the past century and continues to emphasize extensive teacher-directed explanations and questioning that focuses on low-level thinking and skills followed by students' independent seatwork on paper-and-pencil assignments. Students still daily commit new information to their short-term memory for the sole purpose of mimicking an understanding or scoring well on an end-of-the-chapter test.

Envisioning a restructuring of the shallow, repetitive, multi-track mathematics curriculum at the local, state, national level requires a curriculum reflective of current research in how students learn and how knowledge is personally and socially negotiated within a community of active learners.

We, as the *Better Mathematics*

through Literacy team, feel that we have developed a comprehensive and integrated curriculum package that meets the needs of young learners as developing readers, developing mathematicians, and developing sense-makers of the world around them. Allowing students, even as young as kindergarten, to engage in genuine problem solving supports the development of central mathematics concepts, and when we define teaching mathematics in this way (and subsequently teach accordingly), students grapple with mathematical ideas, develop and refine invented operations that emerge from their own thinking, create models as they attempt to understand, develop thinking and reasoning skills as they openly communicate and collaborate, and grow as problem solvers (Erikson, 1999; McClain, Cobb, & Gravemeijer, 2000; Reinhart, 2000).

Achieving higher standards for

2009 Annual Literacy Center Symposium

The Literacy Center team has been busy planning the upcoming symposium, scheduled for **August 7, 2009** at **Hocking College**. We are lucky to have Dr. Richard Lavoie as our main presenter this year. Dr. Rick Lavoie has served as an administrator of residential programs for children with special needs since



1972. He holds three degrees in Special Education and has served as an adjunct professor or visiting lecturer at numerous universities including Syracuse, Harvard, Gallaudet, Manhattanville College, University of Alabama and Georgetown. His numerous national television appearances include CBS Morning Show, Good Morning America, ABC Evening News and Disney Channel Presents.

Rick serves as a consultant on Learning Disabilities to several agencies and organizations including Public Broadcasting Service, New York Times, National Center for Learning Disabilities, Girl Scouts of America, Child Magazine and WETA. He is a member of the Professional Advisor Board of the Learning Disabilities Association.

Rick has delivered his message to over 500,000 parents and professionals throughout North America. He has the distinction of having delivered Keynote Addresses for all three of the major special needs advocacy organizations in the United States (Learning Disabilities Association, Council for Exceptional Children, Children with Attention Deficit Disorder).

Rick has held administrative positions at residential programs for thirty years. These experiences at residential school have provided Rick with a "living laboratory" in which he developed and refined his methods and philosophies related to the education of adolescents with special needs.

Rick is probably best known for his videos "[How Difficult Can This Be?: The F.A.T. City Workshop](#)" and "[Last One Picked, First One Picked On: The Social Implications of Learning Disabilities](#)". These award-winning films have brought Rick's sensitive and compelling message to countless thousands throughout the world. After viewing the videos, former First Lady Barbara Bush stated, "You really wowed us! I only wish that every parent and teacher in the United States today could also see your program." His new

video on behavior management is entitled "[When the Chips are Down ...](#)" is now available through LD OnLine. You can check out Rick's podcasts and articles on his website www.ricklavoie.com. We have reprinted two of his articles on the following pages.

Coming Soon... Requests for Presenters!

We need YOU to facilitate a one-hour session on a related topic.

Registration will be available soon through our website at www.ouliteracy.org. Lunch will be included for a registration fee of **\$25.00**





What You Need Now (WYNN) Tutorial Now Available

By Kate Fergus

As part of a new series of Alternative Delivery professional development options, the Resource Center library is happy to debut the WYNN Literacy Support Software Tutorial. This multimedia package will walk participants through a demonstration of WYNN Literacy Support software and provide an opportunity to install and experience the software on an individual basis.

The WYNN Tutorial is entirely interactive! Participants will view the tutorial online from their own computer and will complete tasks on their worksheet when prompted.

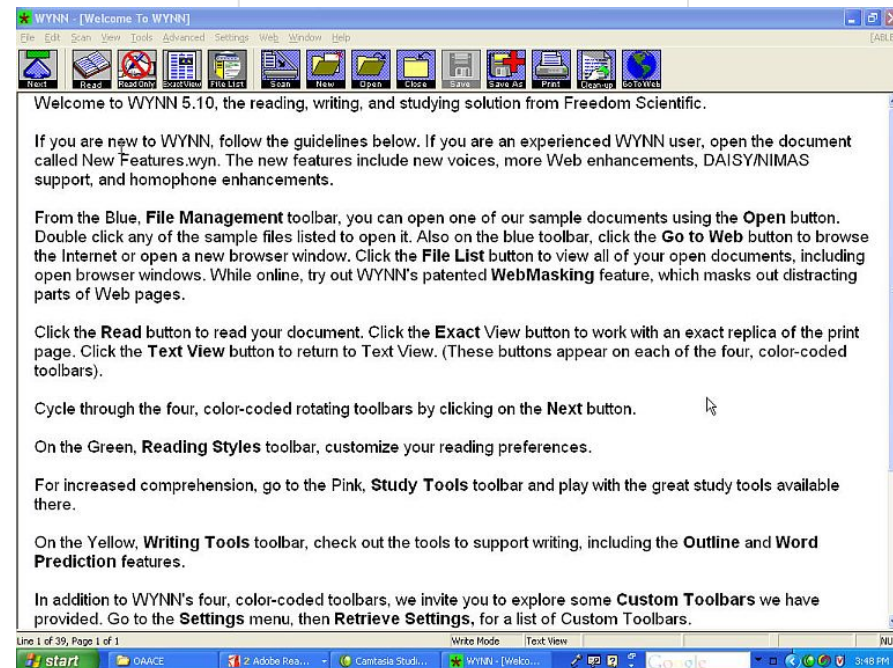
Participants will gain an increased awareness of available assistive technology software for use in the adult learner classroom as well as find the confidence within themselves to try additional AT software.

WYNN has long been heralded as one of the most accessible AT software packages on the market today. With its color coded, themed toolbars and easy-to-use features, WYNN provides a bi-modal approach to reading and writing (i.e., simultaneous highlighting of the text as it is spoken by the software) while also offering users outstanding reading, writing

and reference (dictionary, thesaurus) support. Additionally, users will find the Web to be an easier place to browse when using WYNN's unique Web toolbar.

Get ready for an adventure! Stun your students with interactive activities using your own lesson plans, or those you find on the web.

With WYNN, even the most challenged learners can excel --- and enjoy themselves as well.



students' mathematics learning and understanding and creating improved, interactive frameworks that build not only qualitative literacy but also mathematical literacy are achievable goals and worthy of our collective attention as educators. As evidenced through the changing and evolving classroom practice of our most recent two cohorts of early childhood *Better Mathematics through Literacy* participants, "Developing a better form of teaching requires more than the acquisition of some new instructional techniques or strategies. It requires a reconceptualization of the entire teaching and learning process," (Schorr, 2004, p. 206). Schools and classrooms throughout America have been filled with students who have been acculturated to devalue thinking, to feel unsure and unable to do mathematics on their own, and to view anything other than rapid coverage of a superficial curriculum as wasting time (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).

Yet, everyday, "millions of students enter schools waiting to learn, hoping to be stimulated, engaged, treated well, and hoping to find meaning in what they do" (Brooks & Brooks, 1999, p. 120). As I shared earlier, the collective images of traditional mathematics instruction – of raising your hand before answering, of searching for one correct answer through one solution path, of sitting in straight rows, of taking paper-and-pencil tests, of taking notes, and of working solely from worksheets – are images of control, not learning. In reclaiming the classroom and the curriculum in which teachers and students are thinkers, creators, and constructors, students explore their mathematical ideas and explicate their thinking. Connections among the content areas

(such as the seemingly unrelated realms of mathematics and language) can be highlighted and used to further mathematical understanding; school mathematics becomes a subject that students do rather than imitate, and reflective habits of mind are established.

As we look to our nation's schools with joyful hope for the future, and to funded and supported projects such as *Better Mathematics through Literacy*, schools can and will become active learning spaces for reform and renewal in mathematics education, and together students and adults work together in the pursuit of meaning and understanding.



Teachers from Central Elementary at BMTL Workshop.

Free Tutoring Impacting Community



Sponsored by a grant from the Verizon Foundation

Local impact since September 2008...

- Over 60 tutors trained
- Over 30 hours of tutor training provided (workshops)
- Over 310 hours of tutoring conducted
- Over 70 assessments conducted

trained over 60 tutors and have approximately 40 tutors currently working with learners.

Our volunteer tutors provide approximately 62 hours of tutoring per week, 248 hours of tutoring per month.

ments since September 30, 2008.

This takes coordination and resources! With the generous support from the **Verizon Foundation**, we are able to support a part-time coordinator and materials for tutors and learners.

If you would like to learn more about how you can get involved, please call 1-800-593-4419

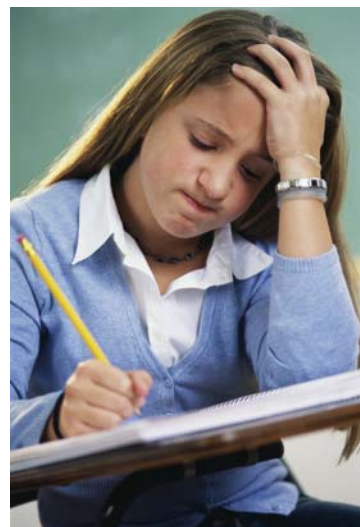
We are proud to announce that our Center for Reading is growing by leaps and bounds! Since September, we have

From September 2008 to Feb (2009) we conducted between 4 and 5 assessments per week, for a total of more than 70 assess-

Free Parent Information Session on Learning Disabilities in Children



Sponsored by a grant from the Verizon Foundation



Date: March 5
Time 6:00—7:30pm
Location: 301 McCracken Hall

The Literacy Center will be hosting a parent information session on understanding learning disabilities in school-age children on March 5 from 6:00—7:30pm. Sue Johanson and Lorie Pierce, Schools Psychologists with Athens

City Schools will be speaking about the process for working with children with learning difficulties and disabilities in the Athens City school district. Time will be available for questions and answers after the informal presentation.

Refreshments will be served and childcare is available upon request.

Call 740-593-9767 to reserve your space.

Literacy Tutor Training

Sponsored by a grant from the Verizon Foundation



Over 50 potential volunteer tutors attended the Tutor Information session held at Ohio University Baker Center in January. On January 24, over 25 volunteers spent the day with Sharon and Mary Barbara learning about the components of reading, learning styles, learning disabilities and practicing tutoring techniques.

In order to receive certification through ProLiteracy, the tutors must complete the workshop and an additional five online modules from the ThinkFinity website <http://www.thinkfinity.org/> on topics including reading, adult learning, volunteering, and graphic organizers.

This tutor training is made possible with funding from the Verizon Foundation.



College of Education Reading Clinics— Young Learners Needed!

Parents! We are enrolling students now. Reserve a space for your child. Limited space available.

- **Reading Clinic I (421)**
Tuesday 7:15pm
Thursdays 7:15pm
March 31—June 14
Dr. Susan Nolan

- **Reading Clinic II (522)**
Tuesday 5:00—7:00pm
April 6—June 14
Dr. JoAnn Dugan

All clinics take place in McCracken Hall

Call to register:
1-800-753-1519

There is no charge for these programs.

