JOIN THE CONVERSATION

USING BOOK CLUBS WITH AT-RISK COLLEGE READERS

By Maria Valeri-Gold and Nanette Evans Commander, Georgia State University

As college developmental educators, we are concerned about the cognitive, intellectual, and emotional developmental of our at-risk readers. In order to address these concerns, we formed book clubs in our college developmental reading classes as an instructional method for promoting critical thinking and problem-solving, reinforcing higher level reading comprehension skills, and supporting emotional needs. Media attention, enhanced use of the Internet, television, and radio shows also contributed to our decision to have students participate in book clubs and book discussion groups (Bonner & Tarner, 1999).

Rationale for Implementing the Book Club

Before we implemented the book club concept into our developmental reading classes, we searched for its meaning. According to Chandler (1997) and Halsted (1990), a book club is a small, social, and literate pursuit with its roots firmly grounded in a real world context. It is composed of a discussion group that requires three main ingredients: readers, a book, and a leader. In addition to these three basic requirements, readers read the same book and interact with their leader and group for a discussion (Goldblatt & Smith,1995). The role of the leader changes from facilitator to group observer. As a group observer, the leader provides background information or asks questions about the book.

Our reasons for implementing book clubs and discussion groups in our college developmental reading classes were based on research that was firmly grounded in solid theory and pedagogy. We wanted to promote a learning community of active, engaged, and lifelong readers. We also wanted to expose our readers to novel and challenging information and ideas on varied subjects and concerns to help them develop an understanding and awareness of others' traditions, customs, and cultures representing different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, we felt that our students would talk about what they were reading and share personal responses. They would agree, disagree, argue, and debate drawing their own conclusions about the book rather than simply conforming to our expectations (Taylor, 2002). We also believed that our

students would pursue and integrate new information and ideas into their learning and future life experiences (Clark, 1983). Moreover, we wanted to provide them with reading opportunities for discussing, sharing, interacting, and building relationships and trust with their peers and with us. We also hoped to develop our students' intellectual ability by providing them with opportunities for collaborating with each other in small groups where they could react and express their opinions (Almasi, 1995).

These peer-led book club discussion groups would also help motivate our students, enhance independence, provide a supporting environment for difficult problem-solving, build critical thinking skills, increase vocabulary knowledge, improve study strategies, promote social interaction, encourage organized intellectual discussion, explore the process of constructing meaning from text, and develop an appreciation and understanding of characters with different ethnic and racial backgrounds (Chandler, 1997; Kucan & Beck, 1997; Paterson, 2000; Slezak, 2000). We also wanted our students to identify with the main character's feelings and experiences and gain insight into their own lives (Halsted, 1990).

Preplanning Stage

We chose literary selections for our book clubs from *Oprah Winfrey's Book Club Website* (www.oprah.com), popular television show book clubs such as *Good Morning America* and *The Today Show*, and newspapers such as *USA Today* (bookclub.usatoday.com) and the *New York Times*.

Implementation

Starting the Process

Starting book club discussion groups takes time, perseverance, patience, and constant reflection. We read professional books on the topic of book clubs and diversity before integrating discussion groups into our classes. Here is a suggested bibliography of references we found particularly helpful .

Carroll, R. (1997). *Sugar in the raw: Voices of young black girls in America*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflicts in the classroom*. New York: New Press.

Gruwell, E. (1999). *The freedom writer's diary*. New York: Broadway.

Kuykendall, C. (1992). *From rage to hope: Strategies for retaining*

Black and Hispanic students. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Landsman, J. (2001). *A white teacher talks about race*. Lanham, ND: Scarecrow Press.

Light, R. L. (2001). *Making the most out of college: Students speak their minds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pipher, M. (2002). *The middle of elsewhere: The world's refugees come to our town*. New York: Harcourt.

We looked for a book that contained strong characterization, a well-developed plot, different interpretations, potential controversy, and diversity (Chandler, 1997). We selected *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993) by Ernest Gaines because it has a strong protagonist, Jefferson, and contains themes that elicit multiple interpretations and opportunities for group discussion on controversial issues such as race, prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, segregation, the death penalty, and education.

After choosing *A Lesson Before Dying*, we ordered the book from the campus bookstore; however, we gave our students options for purchasing the book. Students could order the book directly online from an online book company, purchase it in a bookstore, check it out from the campus or local library, or borrow it from a family member or friend. We also placed two books on reserve in the campus library for those students who had financial issues or who were unable to purchase the book during the first two weeks of classes because they registered during late registration.

This novel exposes readers to a unique time and culture, allows for classroom discussion, and solicits a commitment from students to read the book (Jacobsohn, 1998). These three priorities require class time and instructor perseverance. We encouraged active participation by creating a classroom atmosphere that promoted a desire and a love for reading. Specifically, we read aloud excerpts from *A Lesson Before Dying* to create motivation and to have students share their thoughts and reactions in order to make connections between the text and their feelings.

Student Participation

Our classes met once a week for 2 ½ hours, and we scheduled the book club discussion groups during the first hour of class. We required our students to: a) read four chapters ranging in length from 40-50 pages from *A Lesson Before Dying* before class; b) research five or more facts about the author; c) research five or more facts about the setting of the novel; d) research the culture,

traditions, and customs of the people indigenous to the region; e) annotate, highlight, and underline key words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs for discussion purposes and for group questions; f) develop questions about the novel to ask their group members or the instructor; g) stay focused and share opinions and reactions; h) listen to others in the group; i) be aware of the time and keep comments brief; j) agree to disagree with other member's comments and opinions; and k) respect other group member's cultures.

Classroom Application

We created discussion groups with our readers as follows. First, we assigned students to read four chapters from *A Lesson Before Dying* before class. The novel contains 31 chapters ranging from 30-40 pages in length.

Second, we spent 10 minutes at the beginning of class having students ask us questions and share their reactions and reflections aloud to ensure that they comprehended the assigned pages before dividing them into groups. We also gave students a study guide to accompany the novel that contained literal, analytical, and interpretive questions. Students answered these questions before class in their journals and then brought their responses to their discussion groups for feedback. We used the discussion questions as a motivational tool to allow students opportunities to talk about the book. Here are some sample questions:

1. Who is Jefferson? Why is Jefferson in jail?
2. In what ways are Miss Emma and Tante Lou alike? In what ways are they different?
3. How did Jefferson first react to Wiggins? Why?
4. What role did Vivian play in *A Lesson Before Dying*?

Students also responded to the following questions based upon the research conducted by Wood, Roser, & Martinez (2001):

1. What is *A Lesson Before Dying* about? Is there a problem with the main character? What is it? Does it get solved? How?
2. Who are the characters? What are they like? Do they change? Can I identify with the major character? Explain. In what ways is the character the same or different from you? Explain.
3. Did *A Lesson Before Dying* affect you? Explain.
4. What is the author's main point? What is the author's point of

view? Is the author biased? Why or why not? What is the author's tone? What is the mood?

5. Was *A Lesson Before Dying* easy? Challenging? Hard? Explain.
6. What three things did you learn?
7. Would you change the ending of this book? Why or why not?
8. What role did culture and tradition play *A Lesson Before Dying*? Explain.

These questions allowed our students to think critically about the novel, interact with the text, and identify with the culture and tradition of the people who lived in Louisiana during the 1940s.

Third, we defined the term *collaboration* as working with another person or a small group of peers. Then we discussed collaboration tips that were placed on overhead transparencies (Valeri-Gold and Commander, 2000a).

1. Form a group with three other peers.
2. Make sure that your group members have the necessary materials for discussion, specifically, book, paper, pens, and transparencies.
3. Elect members of your group for the following roles:
    a. Discussion leader and predictor - leads the discussion, writes questions for the discussion group and makes predictions;
    b. Recorder and connector - summarizes the discussion in writing for presentation to the instructor and the group and makes meaningful connections from the book;
    c. Arbitrator - helps to resolve disagreements within the group; and
    d. Timekeeper - keeps track of time.
4. Share responsibilities equally with other members in your group.
5. Express thoughts and feelings without interruption from group members.
6. Disagree respectfully.
7. Negotiate and compromise, if necessary, to achieve consensus.

Students were also assigned additional roles such as wordmaster, where they defined and discussed unknown words from the novel. In the role of travelmaster, students identified the setting—small Cajun community in the late 1940s—and discussed how the main characters, Wiggins and Jefferson, progressed and changed. As illustrator, students discussed the major sequence of events occurring in Jefferson's life. In the role of literary illuminator, students selected a favorite or meaningful quote or paragraph and explained its significance (Daniels, 1994; Taylor, 2002; Yopp & Yopp, 2000). For instance, one student chose the following quote from *A Lesson Before Dying* (Gaines, 1993):

> Gentlemen of the jury, look at him—look at him—look at this. Do you see a man sitting here? Do you see a man sitting here? I ask you, I implore, look carefully—do you see a man sitting here? Look at the shape of this skull, this face as flat as the palm of my hand—look deeply into those eyes. Do you see a modicum of intelligence? Do you see anyone here could plan a murder, a robbery, can plan—can plan—can plan anything? A cornered animal to strike quickly out of fear, a trait inherited by his ancestors in the deepest jungle of blackest Africa—yes, yes, that he can do—but to plan? To plan, gentlemen of the jury? No gentlemen, this skull here holds no plans.

When the student was asked to reflect in his journal about this quote, he remarked,

> I cannot believe that a judge could speak to anyone in that manner. Jefferson was a human being, not a "hog" as the judge later referred to him. No one seemed to care about Jefferson except for his grandmother and Aunt. Racism and prejudice were at work in this novel. Justice was not served.

Fourth, after defining the term collaboration and discussing the collaboration tips, we entertained questions from the students to ensure that they understood the purposes and requirements of the book club discussion groups. Then we divided the students alphabetically into groups. We also grouped students numerically (odd and even numbers), or had students choose the peers they wished to work with in groups.

Fifth, students selected a leader, recorder, arbitrator, and timekeeper. Roles rotated each time the group met in order to provide them all with leadership opportunities.

Sixth, students discussed the book with their peers. The recorder wrote the highlights of the group's discussion on overhead transparencies.

Seventh, we observed students in each discussion group by moving from one group to the next (Chandler, 1997). We found Chandler's recommendation to be very valuable because students were focused, task-oriented, and engaged as a community of learners.

Eighth, the recorder from each group presented the major points to their peers. Students noted similarities and differences regarding the comments mentioned in each group and then discussed the book in more detail based upon these points.

Ninth, students self-assessed their book discussion groups through questioning and recorded their responses in their journals. Examples of questions were: "How did the group do?" "What worked well in the group?" "Why?" "What did not work?" "Why?" "What does the group need to do to improve?" (Raphael, Pardo, & Highfield, 2001). Students also volunteered to share their responses with their peers.

Tenth, each group created a book project such as a poem or poster for *A Lesson Before Dying* and presented it to their peers as a culminating activity.

Discussion Group Literacy Activities

Students were involved in individual and communal reading and writing assignments, activities, and projects while they read *A Lesson Before Dying*. We encouraged students to e-mail each other or another group to discuss the novel (Chandler, 1997).

We also used literacy activities with our students that allowed them to reflect upon the book and make the connections between the text and their feelings. Students worked on these assignments individually or with their book club discussion group as a communal writing activity (see Appendix A). Additional book club reading and writing activities were implemented with our college at-risk readers as an individual assignment or as a communal activity (see Appendix B).

As an informal classroom assessment, we asked students to respond to the following questions in their journals: "Did you enjoy participating in the book club discussion groups?" "Why or why not?" The majority of students overwhelmingly stated that they liked participating in the discussion groups to discuss Gaines' novel. Sample students' comments were as follows:

> I felt comfortable expressing my feelings aloud with my peers who shared similar thoughts. Writing is not one of my strong points, so when I had the opportunity to say what I was thinking and feeling, the discussion group proved to be beneficial.

> I can express my true feelings about the novel without being censored by the instructor in the discussion group. I told my group that I think the book stinks. It will go into a major point or part and then spend 3 chapters talking about something else that has nothing to do with anything. I find it hard to relate to the plantation and the mentioning of servants and having no respect for African Americans.

> Being in the discussion group helped me to listen to other students' thoughts about Jefferson and Wiggins. Things that I never would have thought about unless someone in the group mentioned it. I wanted to learn about other people's cultures and their backgrounds. Listening to other students in my group talk about their race and how they could identify with Jefferson in the novel made me realize that racism is very much with us and that assumptions made by people can prove to be dangerous and harmful to innocent people.

For a more detailed description of the types of reading activities, assignments, classroom projects, comprehension questions, and vocabulary logs along with additional students' comments developed by the authors using *A Lesson Before Dying*, refer to a previously published article written by Valeri-Gold and Commander (2000b).

Other Literacy Selections

In addition to *A Lesson Before Dying*, we used several other books in our classrooms with our at-risk readers that represent various cultures, strong characters, and multiple themes. These books also allowed students to engage in active discussion, participation, and the exploration of the Latino and African American cultures. Here is a suggested bibliography that we highly recommend.

1. Cisneros, Sandra (1983). *The House on Mango Street.* NY: Vintage.
   Summary: *The House on Mango Street* contains a series of 46 short stories called vignettes. The stories are narrated by the main character, Esperanza, whose name means hope. In this series of vignettes, Esperanza discusses a variety of topics that affect her life such as hair, a disabled aunt, hips, and an abusive father.
   Themes: Estrangement, loss, abuse, inequality, oppression, sexual abuse, physical abuse, love, friendship, and self-identity.

2. Morrison, Toni (1982). *Sula.* NY: Plume.
   Summary: *Sula* is a novel that explores the lives of two black women, Sula Peace and Nel Wright, whose relationship spans

over 40 years. Sula leaves her community and graduates from college while Nel remains in her hometown. When Sula returns to her roots, the bond between both women is tested.
Themes: Love, family, betrayal, poverty, conflict, rebellion, complacency, trust, death, loss, segregation, separation, mental illness, isolation, infidelity, and adultery.

3. Santiago, Esmeralda (1993). *When I Was Puerto Rican.* NY: Vintage.
Summary: *When I Was Puerto Rican* is an autobiographical look into the life of the author from her early childhood years spent in Puerto Rico, her family's move to New York, her acceptance into the High School for the Performing Arts in Manhattan, and the scholarship she received to attend Harvard University.
Themes: Love, friendship, betrayal, divorce, loss, infidelity, family, conflict, separations, and reconciliations.

Conclusion

Establishing book clubs and book discussion groups in college developmental reading classes offer both the instructor and students opportunities to interact with the text and to make connections with their peers. Book club discussion groups also provide students with communal activities to integrate reading, writing, diversity, and technology. In addition, students develop an understanding and awareness of different cultures by exploring characters representing diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Slezak, 2000). Moreover, book clubs can help students develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills that are necessary for metacognitive growth.

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Chandler, K. (1997). The beach book club: Literacy in the 'lazy days of summer'. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 41*, 104-116.

Clark, B. (1983). *Growing up gifted: Developing the potential of children at home and at school* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Daniels, H. (1994). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in the student-centered classroom.* New York: Steinhouse.

Gaines, E. J. (1993). *A lesson before dying.* New York: Vintage.

Goldblatt, E., & Smith, M. W. (1995). Alone with each other: Conceptions of discussion in one college classroom community. *Linguistics and Education, 7*, 327-348.

Halsted, J. W. (1990). *Guiding the gifted reader.* Report No. EDD-EC-90-1. Reston, VA: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED321486)

Jacobsohn, R. W. (1998). *The reading group handbook: Everything you need to know from choosing members to leading discussions* (2nd ed.). New York: Hyperion.

Kucan, L., & Beck, I. L. (1997). Thinking aloud and reading comprehension research: Inquiry, instruction, and social interaction. *Review of Educational Research, 67*, 271-299.

Paterson, P. O. (2000). Negotiation of text in peer-led literature discussion groups. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61, 2221. (Doctoral Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2000).

Raphael, T. E., Pardo, L. S., & Highfield, K. (2001). *Book club: A literature based curriculum* (2nd ed.). Lawrence, MA: Small Planet Communications.

Slezak, E. (Ed.). (2000). *The book group club: A thoughtful guide to forming and enjoying a stimulating book discussion group* (3rd ed.). Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press.

Taylor, S. (2002, November). *Getting started with literature circles.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the College Reading Association, Philadelphia, PA.

Valeri-Gold, M. & Commander, N.E., (2000a). *Taking charge of your reading: Reading study strategies for college success.* New York: Longman.

Valeri-Gold M., & Commander, N.E., (2000b). A "novel" approach to integrate reading, writing, and literature. *Innovative Learning Strategies Fourteenth Yearbook.* Cincinnati, OH: College Literacy and Learning Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association.

Wood, K. D., Roser, N., & Martinez, M. (2001). Collaborative literacy: Lessons learned from literature. *Reading Teacher, 55*, 102-112.

Yopp, R. H., & Yopp, H. K. (2000). *Literature-based reading activities*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Appendix A

Individual and Communal Writing Activities

Reflect in a journal, notebook, or on a computer your reactions to the pages that you were assigned to read.

Write a summary.

Retell the story to your group via e-mail, attachment, or chat room.

Write a paragraph about the growth of the main character or protagonist in the book.

Research the author and write five or more facts about the author.

Research the setting and write five or more facts about the place where the story occurred.

Research the culture and traditions of the characters discussed in the book.
Identify the author's tone, bias, point of view, and mood.

Map out the major points discussed in the assigned pages.
State the author's main point and supporting details.
State the plot.

Identify 10 vocabulary words that were challenging to you and write them down in your notebook, in your journal, or on your computer. Look for the meanings of these words in the dictionary. Then write a sentence illustrating your understanding of these words.

Appendix B

Individual and Communal Reading and Writing Activities

Conduct writing and reading workshops

Share samples of students' work

Facilitate various modes of discussion

Assign reading response essays

Construct literature and character logs

Write letters and poems

Incorporate sustained silent reading

Schedule multicultural celebrations led by students

Teach the structure of the novel

Facilitate understanding of patterns of organization and modes of discourse

Incorporate student portfolios as a means of assessment

Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies

BOOK REVIEW

THE MYTH OF LAZINESS

Reviewed by Colin Irvine, Augsburg College

Levine, M. (2003). *The myth of laziness*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

In his book, *The Myth of Laziness*, Dr. Mel Levine takes issue with the common and long-standing contention that many students who perform poorly in school are inept, indifferent, or lazy. Using case studies taken from his clinical experience to illustrate his point, he demonstrates how undetected neurological dysfunctions commonly lead to what he refers to as "output failure." In the process of narrating these examples and demonstrating how he identifies the problems that commonly undercut student self esteem, hinder success, and interfere with production, Levine introduces the reader to a systemic approach to dealing with often misunderstood issues. The result is a book that not only inspires but instructs educators to recognize problems and potential problems, to deal with these in constructive, practical ways, and to remind all people of their innate desire and ability to be productive. It is a book that I will read again and again, and one I'll push upon as many people as possible.

The fundamental purpose of *The Myth of Laziness* involves debunking the idea that some people are inherently indolent and that there is little anyone can do to address this problem. To counter this idea and the attitude that often accompanies it, Levine, a professor of pediatrics and a prominent and prolific expert in the field of neurodevelopmental dysfunctions, repeatedly underscores the importance of helping students come to terms with both their assets *and* their limitations. After introducing and explaining his metaphor of the mind as a kind of machine hardwired for production, and after outlining reasons why "output failure" often occurs, Levine walks the reader through seven case studies taken from his work with various children and adults, each study dealing with different "internal and external factors influencing output." In all cases, he returns to the overriding metaphor of the mind as machine. He offers a thorough synopsis of the clients' backgrounds and includes input from the clients as well as their parents, counselors, teachers, and doctor(s). Then, when explaining how he attempts to help his clients address the specific problems with which they are dealing (or not dealing), he presents his diagnosis and his plan for assisting the individuals to overcome that which interferes with their

output. Finally, he offers a synopsis of how effective the plans were once implemented.

Because Levine describes his clients and their challenges in exacting and insightful ways, and because he draws upon a wide variety of examples in order to illustrate the various ways problems such as "insufficient memory," "low mental energy," "ineffective motor output," and "impoverished ideation" undercut peoples' efforts to be industrious and successful, he presents the reader with a clear, cogent understanding of what is at stake in this issue. If we can begin to identify in students those traits and tendencies that cause the assembly lines to slow up or shut down, Levine asserts, then we can begin to help them help themselves.

Noting that the sources for breakdowns are elusive and numerous, Levine employs his narration of each of his clients to introduce ways that the reader can detect relatively common problems and address them constructively. In the process, Levine models for the reader how to proceed, and he does so in a style that is both perceptive and endearing. Therefore, with its thesis constant and its ideas illustrated in charts, graphs, and bulleted lists, *The Myth of Laziness* exemplifies a beneficial marriage of theory and practice.

As far as its intended audience is concerned, *The Myth of Laziness* has broad appeal and is geared toward everyone from educators to parents to pediatricians interested in neurological development. However, directly and indirectly, the book delivers a message that is particularly relevant for those who specialize in writing instruction. An incredibly complex undertaking involving, among other things, fine motor function, graphomotor function, ideomotor praxis, and motor-procedural memory, writing is a process acutely susceptible to malfunction. In this regard, Levine notes, "a child's writing can serve as a revealing window on overall neurodevelopmental functioning" (p. 191)—which suggests, by extension, that those who teach writing are in a powerful position to identify neurodevelopment problems that become apparent in almost palpable ways.

In the body of the book, when addressing difficulties certain clients had with writing, Levine delineates what he calls a "motor chain" to describe what *exactly* happens physiologically and neurologically when we write; when a link in the chain proves to be faulty, he explains, the writer fails to produce clear, coherent work. This problem typically leads to others, and the end result is that the student struggles not only in English courses but also in others that require the same kind of process-oriented thinking. In the long run, Levine makes clear, the student will typically fail to produce, fall behind, and, ultimately, fall prey to injurious labeling. To prevent this all-too-common scenario from re-occurring ad infinitum, Levine advocates that people familiarize themselves with what occurs when people read and write. Noting

that writing is an intelligible act that offers a glimpse into the machinery of the mind, he declares that "very often a reasonably astute parent or teacher can perform some revealing detective work simply by observing a child during the act of writing and closely examining examples of his or her work" (p. 178).

Although Levine's explanation of the writing process relies on idiomatic terms common to his profession, he defines and explains the terms in ways that make his point plain and persuasive. Also, the terminology he employs provides readers with a way of talking about and dealing with a process that is otherwise difficult to break down and discuss in detail. In the book's tenth chapter, entitled "The Righting of Writing," Levine expands upon ideas he introduced earlier in the context of talking about individual clients. Here, when discussing such elements of writing as error patterns and problems with penmanship, he presents writing rubrics, sample writing webs, charts identifying the stages of development, and checklists for parents and teachers.

In the process of putting forward the thesis that all people yearn to be productive, and while dismissing the idea that some of us are simply lazy or incapable, Levine not only bids students, teachers, and parents to reconsider existing ideas about learning, but he also calls on schools, school systems, and society in general to undergo extensive retooling with regard to education and instruction. Specifically, when delineating the clients' cases and when explaining the plans put in place to enable these people to overcome their obstacles to output, Levine laments that schools are, in part, to blame for the fact many students become apathetic or overwhelmed. Common practices like holding struggling students back a grade and privileging memorization over ideation reinforce the idea that some students simply are not suited to succeed in school; even more disturbing, notes Levine, is that these practices often prevent students from preparing to be contributing, fulfilled adults participating the workplace.

In closing, after reading *The Myth of Laziness* I am reminded of how I felt midway through my first college-level survey course in psychology. As almost anyone who has shared in this academic right of passage will attest, the temptation to employ the new-fangled knowledge and the intriguing terminology to diagnose the *innumerable* problems exhibited (and denied) by friends and family is often too great to repress (or sublimate). Similarly, after finding myself captivated by Levine's ethos and repeatedly impressed by his ideas and examples, I must admit that I—a person trained in composition and American literature who knows very little about such things as "neurodevelopmental dysfunction" and "ideomotor praxis" —have applied what I have read in this book to almost everyone I know. Nobody, including myself, has been spared. What's more, in the margins, I've made cryptic comments—in case I lose the book and it ends up in the hands of one of my unsuspecting "patients"—regarding friends, colleagues, and family members,

noting how well I might use the information to help them begin to heal themselves. I've also mentally bought and distributed the book to countless people, all of whom I'm convinced will benefit from its uplifting message and working methodology—I'm also convinced that most will not bother to read it as they are the kind of people who seldom finish what they start, especially books tossed in their direction by overzealous teachers and friends. But regardless of how dangerous I have become, and regardless of how uninformed my diagnoses have no doubt been, I believe it to be significant that *The Myth of Laziness* inspires novices such as myself to deal with complicated issues that underlie and contribute to problems often incorrectly attributed to apathy, ignorance, inability, and laziness. Because of Levine's contagious compassion and optimism about what can be done for students struggling to find success in school, I suspect other readers will close the book believing it's both important and possible to learn to employ his methodology for the purposes of helping students become more productive.

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PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

As an official publication of the National College Learning Center Association, The Learning Assistance Review seeks to expand and disseminate knowledge about learning centers and to foster communication among learning center professionals. Its audience includes learning center administrators, teaching staff and tutors, as well as other faculty and administrators across the curriculum who are interested in improving the learning skills of post-secondary students.

The journal publishes scholarly articles and reviews that address issues of interest to a broad range of learning center professionals. Primary consideration will be given to articles about program design and evaluation, classroom-based research, the application of theory and research to practice, innovative teaching strategies, student assessment, and other topics that bridge gaps within our diverse discipline.

1. Prepare a manuscript that is approximately 12 to 15 pages in length and includes an introduction, bibliography, and subheadings throughout the text.
2. Include an abstract of 100 words or less that clearly describes the focus of your paper and summarizes its contents.
3. Type the text with double spacing and number the pages. Follow APA style (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th edition, 2001).
4. Include your name, title, address, institutional affiliation and telephone number along with the title of the article on a separate cover sheet; the manuscript pages should include a running title at the top of each page with no additional identifying information.
5. Submit all tables or charts camera ready on separate pages.
6. Do not send manuscripts that are under consideration or have been published elsewhere.
7. Send four copies of your manuscript to the following address: Jeanne L. Higbee, Center for Research on Developmental Education, General College - University of Minnesota, 333A Appleby Hall, 128 Pleasant Street SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

You will receive a letter of acknowledgment that your manuscript has been received. The review process will then take approximately three to six weeks at which time you will receive further notification related to your work. If your manuscript is accepted for publication, a computer disk or e-mail transmission will be requested.

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The mission of the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) is to support learning assistance professionals as they develop and maintain learning centers, programs, and services to enhance student learning at the postsecondary level.

What Does NCLCA Do?

- Promotes professional standards in the areas of administration and management, program and curriculum design, evaluation, and research;
- Acts on learning assistance issues at local, regional, and national levels;
- Assists in the creation of new, and enhancement of existing, learning centers and programs;
- Provides opportunities for professional development, networking, and idea exchange through conferences, workshops, institutes, and publications; and
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Send application form and a check made out to NCLCA for $40.00 to:

Mary Knasinski
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