

## Abstract

### **Using TV411 in a Facilitated Group**

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TV411 can be accessed by ABE adults in many ways, from watching and studying at home to engaging the materials as part of a course in a formal classroom. This study examines the use of TV411 in a Facilitated Group. In this model, a group of learners meet and study the TV411 materials on a regular basis. A facilitator helps the group engage the materials, helps individuals identify skills which they want to improve, and facilitates students helping each other develop those skills. The facilitator does not “teach” a curriculum in the traditional sense.

The goal of the study was to determine the type and size of impact possible with this delivery model. The study was divided into two parts. In the first part (Spring-Summer of 2000) four groups were recruited from the New York and Pittsburgh areas. Group meetings lasted two hours. Meetings were held twice a week for ten weeks, totaling 40 hours of meeting time. Forty-five ABE adults started the program; 37 stayed for the entire ten weeks.

In the second part (Winter of 2001) 37 participants were recruited from a group that had been denied admission to a GED prep program because their reading and math scores fell just below the cutoff levels. Participants were promised admission to the GED prep program if they completed an intensive version of a Facilitated Group program dubbed Prelude to Success. The students were divided into two groups that met much more frequently, but for the same total of 40 hours. Thirty-four completed the Prelude to Success program and enrolled in the GED prep program.

Taking all 71 participants together, the Facilitated Group experience had a positive impact on attitudes, confidence and educational plans. The TV411 shows and workbooks used in the test promote 24 literacy activities such as using a dictionary, writing in a diary, writing an essay, and figuring out everyday math problems ranging from estimating to calculating a percentage. Over the course of the 40 hours of meetings participants increased their expectations that they would engage in 17 of the 24 activities in the following week or month.

Each activity represents a skill—e.g., the ability to use a dictionary or estimate the total in a shopping cart. As a result of watching and practicing these skills in the Facilitated Group learners showed increased confidence that they could do the skills, with larger-than-average increases observed for confidence related to writing an essay, writing a letter to a business, writing a poem or song, using a thesaurus, changing a fraction to a percent, calculating an average, figuring out the price of an item on sale, and knowing what to include in a resume.

Approximately half of the participants in the first field test changed their plans for the future to include enrolling in school some time in the six months following the test. Students in the Prelude to Success program were already committed to continuing their education. They were followed through their first semester in the regular GED prep program and their performance was compared with a matched set of controls and with all other students in the program. Prelude students were much less likely to drop out of school than the matched controls, and their grade point average was as good or better than the matched controls.

All participants were tested to see whether they learned the various facts and procedures presented in the videos and workbooks. Baseline knowledge was relatively high (68% for math and 72% for language concepts), and learning gains were small—six percent for math concepts and 16% for language concepts. Learning factual and procedural knowledge may be secondary to participants' changing their literacy interests and increasing their confidence. But these changed literacy interests may lead them to engage the books and related activities that will enhance their knowledge.

The Facilitated Group shows great potential for enhancing the literacy life and educational attainment of ABE adults. But wider use of the model faces two challenges: (1) recruiting and retaining ABE adults to this non-traditional form of learning and (2) gaining acceptance for the outcomes fostered by TV411: motivation for learning.

Large numbers of adults need the attitude adjustment and confidence building experience of a TV411 Facilitated Group before they will willingly choose to enroll in school. But current reimbursement formulas for traditional adult education providers do not recognize this goal. Greater acceptance of TV411 by traditional providers might be achieved by pairing the Facilitated Group with traditional instructional programs in ways similar to the Prelude to Success program.