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Getting at adult basic education students' study strategies: a pilot study.

van Groenestijn, Mieke (ed.) et al., Mathematics as part of lifelong learning. Proceedings of the 5th international conference of adults learning maths – research forum, ALM 5, Utrecht, The Netherlands, July 1–3, 1998. London: Goldsmiths College, University of London (ISBN 0-902986-46-5). 85-91 (1999).

In 1997, the author combined a course assignment to conduct a pilot field research project with a long-standing interest in learning more about mathematical understandings of adults who enroll in adult basic education (ABE) programs. The setting was an adult learning center in Massachusetts in a math class of 16 adult learners, three of whom were the focus of the study. Through twelve participant class observations and five interviews she aimed to devise a way to begin to investigate and to document strategies low literate adults with little formal education use to successfully negotiate the mathematics embedded in the activities and demands of their lives. The findings from this initial foray suggest that adults enrolled in basic skill programs use some sensible strategies in their everyday math activity that either appear idiosyncratic or differ from traditionally taught school math. The author's questions were: (1) What sturdy methods, strategies, and algorithms do adults (who enroll in ABE programs in the U.S.) use in their out-of-school mathematical practice? (2) How might it be possible to uncover such strategies in an ABE setting? (3) Once we do uncover personal strategies, what do we as teachers do with that information?

Classification: B60