

An ABE teacher goes to Antarctica

So, how does an adult basic educator from Oregon get to Antarctica? Stay tuned over the coming months as we trace a project that has taken Susan Cowles, an adult basic skills instructor from Oregon, on a scientific expedition with a team of scientists from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). The team is studying the presence of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in the Antarctic. In January-February 2002, Susan Cowles will travel with the VIMS scientists to Palmer Station on the Antarctic Peninsula. She will post a daily report so students can be with the team as they study POPs.



The site contains learning activities that allow students to find out how scientists think and work. A glossary helps them understand terms that the scientists use. If there are any other words that a student wants to learn, there is a dictionary box on every page. If a student types in any word and presses the “Go!” button, a window will pop up with the meaning of the word.

Several projects have allowed Susan to make this extraordinary trip [\[see BELOW\]](#). Programs such as these give ABE students opportunities to learn in the same ways that high school and university students learn today with access to the most current and sophisticated media. For teachers, the chance to work with science and math from an authentic science lab is obviously exhilarating. To have a colleague producing curricular materials and posting daily observations are further attractions.

This site, of course, can be used by higher level students as well since users can choose the level of knowledge at which to follow the scientists. Susan Cowles is the project director for the Science and Numeracy Special Collection at the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). She teaches classes in adult basic skills development at Linn-Benton Community College, Corvallis, Oregon. Susan provides the learning activities and other content for the Polar Science Station website.

Susan will be in Montreal from June 27 –29, 2002, to participate in the Summer Institute on Adult Numeracy, cosponsored by The Centre for Literacy and NIFL. We are trying to arrange a session for local teachers to meet Susan prior to the Institute.

<http://literacynet.org/polar> is a project of the Science and Numeracy Special Collection, National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). The special collection provides online science and numeracy resources and curricular materials for teachers, tutors, learners, and others who are interested in adult literacy and numeracy programs.

Teachers Experiencing Antarctica and the Arctic (TEA): This project, funded by the National Science Foundation, trains and sends teachers on scientific field expeditions to the polar regions. While in the field, teachers work alongside scientists and communicate with learners via email. Teachers also send journal articles about their experiences to the TEA website.

Office of Polar Programs, National Science Foundation (OPP): The Office of Polar Programs coordinates the U.S. scientific research carried out in Antarctica and the Arctic.