

# Secrets of Teaching and Learning

## SCENARIOS

### Scenario 1

Rosa, who taught the computer skills module for the jobs program, was hired to teach an "Introduction to MS Word" class. She's modified her curriculum to serve a group of 8 adults who will meet for 2 hours a session once a week for 5 weeks. "We have a lot to do," Rosa began, "Does everybody know what a toolbar is? You need to know this, so you should make a list of new vocabulary words in your notebook. You can find definitions in the Help section on the top row. You can just click on the buttons to do things." And she began to move on through the menus and toolbars. One student complained, "But, my computer doesn't *have* any buttons."

Rosa walked around and noticed that while two students were exploring the menus and toolbars, another was typing something, two were whispering to each other, one was scribbling furiously in his notebook, and the last smiled an apology as she gathered her things to leave. Quickly showing the first student that passing the mouse over the icons created a button to click on, she asked, "Didn't you all learn this in your computer basics class?"

"No," the first student said, "I couldn't go to both classes."

"We covered this," said another, "but it was quite a while ago."

A third student told her, "I can't wait for the next basics class -- I figured I have enough experience with typewriters to make up for it."

"Wow," Rosa said. "I hope you'll have time in your practice sessions to review these things. I'll make a list of vocabulary and things for you to do."

"Wait," said a student, "What if we don't have time for practice sessions? I work during open access hours."

**Q:** Can this class be saved? How?

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## Scenario 2

Jackson works part-time at the CTC. He had never touched a computer before coming to the center as a client and has since become quite an expert. He is very proud of his skills, and wants to help others develop the same skills. He helps out with the MS Office classes, and has agreed to support the drop-in session "Surf's Up!" in the late afternoon. He starts the session by using a tech support web site to demonstrate how to click on hyperlinks and use the browser's "back" button, then talks about computer networks and search engines. With a cheery "Have fun and call me if you need me!" he returns to his own workstation. Before he can even launch his browser, though, participants are asking him questions. He answers their questions, but often finds it faster and easier to sit down and solve the problems they're having while they watch. The problem is, after a month of "Surf's Up!" he's spending all his time answering the same questions--often for the same regular participants. He can't figure out why they're not learning how to navigate the web independently!

**Q:** Can you?

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## Scenario 3

The CTC is happy to have Suzanne, a web developer from a local high-tech company, volunteering for one month at the center. She will offer a session on web development every Thursday to whoever shows up at the center. The first night, she gives the group a virtual tour of her web page and source code. Then she shows them some of her favorite web sites on the Internet—very flashy sites with cutting-edge technologies and features. She encourages the group to go to their individual computers and “play”—and ask her if they have any questions. To get started, she directs them to a web site with the fundamentals of html coding. After the second meeting, only a few users have managed to produce the basic structure of a web site, and many of the users spend their time surfing the Internet for cool sites. Other users have stopped coming to the sessions.

**Q:** What can Suzanne do to foster a more effective learning environment?

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