

Women's Health in the Classroom

by Sabrina Kurtz-Rossi

Cancer touches everyone. One in four deaths in the U.S. is from cancer, and while lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related death in both men and women, breast cancer is the most common cancer among women. You probably know someone with breast cancer, perhaps a mother, sister, friend or co-worker, or perhaps you have faced breast cancer yourself. These days it seems everyone has a cancer story.

The sooner most cancer is found the easier it is to treat. That is why mammograms (which look for lumps in the breast) and Pap tests (which look for abnormal cells on the cervix) are so important. But many women do not have access to screening and treatment. Women with low-income and women with limited education are less likely to have mammograms or Pap tests. Many new immigrants cannot access screening and treatment because of language and cultural barriers.

The *Health Education and Adult Literacy (HEAL): Breast and Cervical Cancer (BCC) Curriculum* combines literacy and health education to bring critical information about breast and cervical cancer screening and early detection to women in adult basic education (ABE) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes. The following lesson, from the HEAL: BCC Curriculum, can be used to encourage discussion about early detection and screening as well as a wide variety of other women's health issues.

Sabrina Kurtz-Rossi directed World Education's Health Education and Adult Literacy: Breast and Cervical Cancer Project (HEAL:BCC). She is currently director of the LINC'S Health & Literacy Special Collection www.worlded.org/us/health/lincs.

Using Stella's Story

Steps

- 1 Display the "Stella's Story" illustrations. Invite learners to tell the story that they see in the visuals.
- 2 To guide your class discussion, ask the following questions:
 - Why does Stella go to her health care provider?
 - What happens during the visit?
 - Do you think it is going to be easy for Stella to take care of herself? Why or why not?
 - What are the obstacles she may face? What or who might give her support?
 - Have you ever felt like Stella? If so, what did you do?
 - What can you do to make it easier to change your life in order to prevent or detect health problems? Who or what can support you in this?

Additional Resources

- *How to Feel Good: Learning to Relax and Exercise, An Invitation*, by the students of the Jamaica Plain Community Center Adult Learning Program in Boston, Massachusetts. This collection of writings by ESOL students describes the different activities they choose to stay healthy, especially as they confront the stresses of immigration. Available at: www.alri.org/feelgood/feelgood.html
- *The Health & Literacy Special Collection Web site* www.worlded.org/us/health/lincs is for teachers, students, health educators, and health care consumers. The site can direct you to free and low-cost materials, or you can download them directly.