Observation report from Glenn Clark, Swing Literacy teacher who assisted in a Newcomer Intensive that was split into two parts. The first part was taught by Myles & Tessa and employed the Swing Literacy teaching method, and the next workshop was taught by other teachers using the more traditional method.

"I recently had the privilege to assist in the Newcomer (brand new to WCS) Intensive. Having studied both Swing Literacy and traditional methods, I expected the Swing Literacy method to work better, but I was not prepared for just how effective it was and how quickly it worked.

During the Swing Literacy segment of the newcomers' workshop, I noticed the students were able to perform many of the skills to a level I would typically expect from more experienced dancers. Dancing with newcomers and being able to feel their elasticity and having them connect to me like an intermediate dancer was definitely a surprising experience: t was easy and enjoyable - it wasn't a chore or struggle to dance with them. I observed them smiling, laughing, keeping their eyes up, and focusing on their partners. After the workshop was over, I was impressed that they were able to sustain these skills as they practiced on their own.

The traditional-method workshop was taught by very experienced and lovable teachers, but about 10 minutes in, the atmosphere in the room changed. I noticed that the students started struggling: the usual frustrations that go along with learning dance for the first time were back. I had one couple ask me for help with the patterns that were being taught, and the leader refused to dance until he could figure out his own steps. At this point he was so frustrated that no matter what I did, whether breaking down the pattern or asking him to ignore the pattern and just dance had no effect. He was already too stressed out to dance or learn at this point: a common problem that I have seen in many classes.

When I danced with the Newcomers in the traditional workshop, many of their skills that made our dances enjoyable for me during the Swing Literacy workshop had disappeared: they stopped their momentum, they stopped using elasticity, their heads were down, looking at their own feet, and they were all focused on trying to do the patterns instead of leading or following.

As someone who has both danced and taught WCS for years I found myself a little confused during the traditional method workshop - I can only wonder how much the Newcomers must have been struggling at that point. From my personal experience during these workshops I would definitely say that the Swing Literacy method taught WCS in a way that newcomers could easily understand and allowed them to not only progress faster but also to enjoy their experience far more than the traditional method of teaching."

-Glenn Clark, Bellingham