



Preface

The GED high school equivalency exam has been available to adults for nearly 60 years. Yet, according to the 2000 Census, an estimated 1,000,000 adults in Virginia have neither completed high school nor taken the GED. They are at a disadvantage in our fast-paced, information-driven age, where formal learning and schooling are more important than ever. Helping those adults achieve success on the GED remains, as it has been for many years, a central tenet of adult education in Virginia and across America. The implementation of GED 2002 presents a unique opportunity for adult educators to help adults achieve their goal of attaining a GED. Now seems an appropriate time to examine current needs, practices, and state of the art for preparing adults to pass the GED. We must take a fresh look not only at the subject matter, but also at the way it is taught.

We have examined the GED: its content, its structure, both old and new, and the skills embedded in the test. In addition, we have reviewed many current teaching methodologies. Our review has led us to propose *GED as Project: Pathways to Passing the GED* as a means of achieving effective results with adults pursuing their GEDs. As the name implies, the overarching principle of *GED as Project* is the value of project-based learning in adult education. We propose that the GED test itself can be a powerful project for those adults who choose to pursue it.

In *Volume 1: Introduction*, we describe our concept of the *GED as Project*, articulating the role of the instructor, the role of the individual (both as test taker and as learner), and the role of instructional materials in the classroom. We outline for instructors the necessary practices for using this approach. Central to *GED as Project* are the Inquiry Activities, designed to stimulate discovery by the learner, facilitated by the instructor. Grouped together by the theme and/or skills to be explored, Inquiry Activities are the basis of Learning Projects. We define Learning Project and Inquiry Activity, provide a template or guide to use in developing Inquiry Activities, and provide sample Inquiry Activities for two Learning Projects: “GED and You” and “GED and You Revisited.” In addition, we provide an annotated list of references for use with GED 2002.

In *Volume 2: Mathematics*, we use items from an Official GED Practice Test to develop the Inquiry Activities that, grouped together, form the Math Learning Projects. Also included in this volume is a Learning Project called “GED Math and You,” which has been designed as a companion to “GED and You” in Volume 1.

In *Volume 3, Language Arts, Reading*, we again use an Official GED Practice Test to develop the Inquiry Activities that form the Language Arts, Reading Learning Projects. “GED, Language Arts, Reading and You” is included in this volume, offering the opportunity to explore this content area as well.

Volume 4, Language Arts, Writing uses the Official GED Practice Test to provide the subject material for essays and to develop revision techniques necessary for strong performance on the GED Language Arts, Writing test. The Scoring Guide is included in this volume to inform the learners about how the essays will be evaluated. “GED Language Arts, Writing and You” is also included in this volume.

Volume 5: Science and Social Studies completes the set. These two content areas are taken together, since the techniques and strategies for dealing with each are the same. Again, we use the Official GED Practice Tests to develop the Learning Projects. This volume includes the Learning Projects “GED Science and You” and “GED Social Studies and You” to complete the exploration.

Through the learning approach advocated by *GED as Project*, the adult who seeks help in achieving the GED is regarded in two distinct ways: as a test taker and as a learner. Using *GED as Project* allows instructors to facilitate adults in the skill of taking tests as well as the skill of learning. One helps the adults to pass a credentialing test; the other equips them for both life-long learning and competing in today’s world – a win/win for all adults pursuing their GEDs.



Foreword

GED as Project: Pathways to Passing the GED has been developed through the hard work, dedication, and vision of many adult education professionals. Funded by the Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Virginia Department of Education, the project was begun by Virginia's Workforce Improvement Network (WIN), a partnership between James Madison University and the Virginia Literacy Foundation. This final phase was developed by the Virginia Literacy Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The first phase of this project included the development of the problem-based approach as presented in *GED as Project*, and the math Learning Projects found in Volume 2. Phase two of the project includes Volumes 3 and 4, *Language Arts, Reading and Writing*. The third and final phase presents Science and Social Studies in Volume 5. Go to the *GED as Project* website at: www.jmu.edu/gedproject to see the most current information about this project

The project team members are as follows:

- Barbara E. Gibson – Principal Investigator
- Marcia Phillips – Project Coordinator
- Susan Holt – Instruction
- Randall Stamper – Editorial Assistant
- John Vaughan – Technology

We are deeply appreciative of the consultants who guided and supported this phase of our work. Their commitment to the vision of *GED as Project* inspired the team to higher levels than we had imagined possible. Consultants for this phase of the project were:

- Gene and Mary Boteler, social studies teachers in Montgomery County, Maryland, and consultants to the GED Testing Service.
- Dr. Diane Foucar-Szocki, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Adult Education/Human Resource Development Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Program in the College of Education at James Madison University.
- Suzanne Kirk, Liaison for Statewide Initiatives with the Science Museum of Virginia
- Eric M. Rhoades, Director of Science Education at the Virginia Department of Education.

Field testing of this volume of *GED as Project* was conducted with three adult education programs across Virginia. The instructors and administrators who participated in the field test not only used the materials we provided, but also made suggestions for varying approaches. They provided important insights and ideas to the project team, many of which were integrated into the final manual. The adult learners who agreed to participate in the field test also contributed significantly to *GED as Project* by allowing us to collect samples of their work, sharing their thoughts and ideas while in the classroom, and giving valuable input during site visits.

The field test sites and participating adult educators are:

- Mt. Rogers Regional Adult Education Program – Christy Hicks, Coordinator. Instructors: Jerry Mays, Rita Roper, Bobbie Taylor.
- Prince William County Public Schools, Adult Education – Susan Garlock, Coordinator. Instructors: George Bartlett, Debbie Caselli, Vickey Logan, Eileen Rakshys.
- Suffolk City Schools, Pruden Learning Center – Robin Rose, Coordinator. Instructors: Deb Habecker, Rebecca Mohler, Cindy Smith

The following deserve special recognition for their contributions to specific areas of the project:

- Gwen Smith, who wrote the script for the videotapes accompanying *GED as Project*, and starred as Mrs. Harriman, the instructor.
- Workforce Improvement Network (WIN) for its continued partnership on this project.

Finally, we wish to recognize Dr. Yvonne Thayer, Director of the Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Virginia Department of Education, for her commitment to the advancement of adult education practice and her dedication to the adults for whom the GED is a pathway to success as workers, parents, and citizens. Her desire for an articulated approach to teaching the new GED ultimately led to the development of *GED as Project*. We thank her for her leadership and her vision.