



The Virginia Literacy Institute

by Randall Stamper

First meeting of the VLI Board, from left to right: Robert Ritter, Dr. Yvonne Thayer, Vice Chair William Boshier, Laura Virgin, Mark Emblidge, and Jane Bassett Spilman. Not included are Chairperson Jeannie Baliles, David Baldacci, and Dr. Robert Holsworth.

Mark Emblidge, Director of the Virginia Literacy Foundation, wants you to understand something: “You can’t underestimate the importance of local programs working with public policy makers.” He also wants you to know that you have a new partner dedicated to ensuring that policy makers hear what you have to say. Emblidge is also the Director of the Virginia Literacy Institute, formed in May 2003. The Institute is a partnership between the Virginia Literacy Foundation and VCU’s School of Education and Center for Public Policy. Its mission is to lead the Commonwealth in research and development projects in the field of adult education and literacy.

Dr. William Boshier, who was appointed Dean of VCU’s School of Education in July of 2002, was instrumental in the VLI’s formation. “Before I came into this administrative post,” he explained, “I really served as a mediator, a broker, where I brought people around a table...and tried to hammer out a contract. Then, to my surprise, I also had the opportunity to implement the contract [when I became Dean].”

By partnering with the School of Education and the Center for Public Policy, the Institute is able to draw upon the pedagogical and public policy expertise each department offers. “People – and by people I mean funders and state policy makers – want to know how we’re

In this issue:

- 1 Virginia Literacy Institute
- 1 Susan Joyner Tribute
- 3 Read with Understanding
- 4 Kits Available for Blind & Vision-Impaired
- 4 Fairfax Family Literacy Curriculum
- 6 Knowledge Under Construction
- 8 Universal Design
- 10 Reading Difficulties
- 10 *Nickel And Dimed*: Review
- 12 VALRC Web Redesign & New Resources
- Back True Dedication

doing in the field of adult education,” Emblidge explained. “In the past, we haven’t always done a good job of letting them know. The Institute is in a unique position to craft an agenda for adult literacy in Virginia that makes an impact on state policy makers.”

Dean Boshier echoed this observation. “Historically, in so many fields, we took great pride in talking about the programs we had delivered, and the test of our strength was the capacity to deliver. Today, the test of our strength

Continued on page 13...

Susan Joyner received a plaque from VAACE in recognition of her many years of service.



A Tribute to Susan Joyner

by Andrew Stowe

The last time I saw Susan Joyner, she was driving away from my home at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains in her trademark Chevy pick-up. She had come to have a last ride on her beloved horse, Kitty, before journeying “across the pond” to her new home in England. At that moment I found it difficult to acknowledge that someone who had been so supportive of adult education, so dynamic in spirit, and who brought such style and grace to her interactions with our field was leaving.

I first heard about Susan in the summer of 1999. Curious about why so many people from different agencies were excited about working with her, my co-worker, Christy, and I just *had* to

meet her. At the time, we worked with the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), attempting to forge ties with the Department of Social Services (DSS) and other agencies to help uncover and accommodate disabilities, including those in learning, within the welfare population. Barbara Cotter with DSS set up a meeting between Susan and us. Not long after that initial encounter, we began a partnership out of which *Bridges to Practice – The Virginia Collaborative* was born.

Through our work together, I came to learn that Susan is one of those people who can make things happen. She is a true leader in planning sessions,

Continued on page 5...

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Letter from the Director



I always think that September is the real beginning of the year. For those of us in education, Fall often brings an expectation of the new and a resolve to improve the old. In this issue of *Progress*, we bring you strategies and methods to help improve instruction and, we hope, engender some new vitality in your work. From reading to family literacy to learning disabilities, this issue is filled with practical, easy-to-access approaches for you to try.

In this issue, too, we pay tribute to the many contributions made by Susan Joyner to the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center and to our field. As you may know, Susan retired as VALRC director in July to return to her home country of England. She will be greatly missed by all of us who had the pleasure and privilege of working with her.

Finally, the lead article provides an update on the Virginia Literacy Institute and some its activities. The Institute, based at Virginia Commonwealth University, incorporates the VALRC and has an overall mission of research, development, and public policy.

Best wishes for a meaningful and productive year.

Barbara E. Gibson
Interim Director, VALRC

Calendar of Events

<http://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/vaelc/events/calendar.asp>

January

10-14 American Correctional Association
Nashville, TN / <http://www.aca.org>

29-31 Technology, Reading & Learning Disabilities Conference
San Francisco, CA / <http://www.trld.com>

February

4-7 NABE 33rd Annual Bilingual/Multilingual Education Conference
Albuquerque, NM / <http://www.nabe.org>

March

1-3 National Center for Family Literacy Conference
Orlando, FL / <http://www.famlit.org>

5-9 National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs (NAASLN) Conference
Tampa, FL / <http://www.naasln.org>

29-April 3 2004 TESOL Conference
Long Beach, CA / <http://www.tesol.org>

Read with Understanding

EFF Project Provides Strategies, Skills for Teachers and Learners

by Meta Potts with Amy Trawick

Roughly 85% of children diagnosed with learning difficulties have a primary problem with reading and related language skills. Reading difficulties are neuro-developmental in nature, and they don't go away (Rivkin 2002.) Many of the adults who enter our ABE programs were among those 85% when they were in school. Had their problems been identified early, they might have learned strategies that would have helped them progress in school and in life. Unfortunately, that didn't happen, but research is showing that it is not too late.

Recent reports on reading research (Kruidenier 2002; National Reading Panel 2000) have helped the Equipped for the Future Read With Understanding Project (NIFL 2003) identify the knowledge, skills, and strategies that expert readers integrate during the reading process. Knowledge refers to what readers have learned about the four reading elements: alphabets, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Skill refers to what the reader can do with that knowledge. Strategies refer to intentional ways that readers perform skills. Skilled readers organize these reading elements so that they can select the most appropriate ones to match their reading tasks. Knowing what these elements are, when they are useful, and how to apply them, indicates that the reader is aware of his own thinking. These metacognitive abilities help him monitor and adjust his thinking and actions to achieve his reading goals. If lower-level readers learn to use these elements as they read, they can begin to understand and experience reading as a process that requires them to make decisions. The EFF Reading Project focuses on teaching all four of the reading elements.

This information has enormous implications for teaching and learning in ABE classes. The research indicates that while skilled readers have developed their knowledge, skills, and strategies in all four areas, the students in ABE classes

are more likely to have strengths in some areas and gaps in others. Those gaps provide the targets for intentional and purposeful instruction.

Reports from the EFF Reading Project conclude that a mix of explicit instruction in knowledge, skills, and strategies, combined with the practical application of these concepts, is essential to build expertise. These findings underpin the concept of a balanced approach to reading instruction.

Amy Trawick led the Equipped for the Future Reading Project Team. Her team provided training and technical assistance to 10 sites in 2002-03. Writing about the teaching of these strategies, Amy says:

There is a growing understanding in the field that an "ecologically balanced" approach is a more effective metaphor of balance than one that uses the image

of a fulcrum, positioning holistic learning opportunities and skills instruction as two opposing forces to be equalized. David Pearson explains that the term "ecologically balanced" suggests a symbiotic relationship among elements within a coordinated system. It is precisely this symbiotic potential of authentic activity and explicit instruction that I want to promote by using the term, "balance." The EFF Reading Project advocates this approach through its emphasis on purposeful and contextualized reading instruction, beginning with authentic purposes for reading and continuing with the development of lessons to emphasize the key elements of knowledge, skills, and strategies. As teachers, our task is to support adult learners in building their bank of strategies by (1) explicit instruction in the knowledge and strategies learners need

Continued on page 14...

Useful Strategies for Teaching Reading:

- Access their prior knowledge and use other pre-reading strategies
- Clarify their purposes for reading
- Select texts that will help them reach their reading goals
- Learn to make letter and sound relationships when they are having difficulties decoding
- Make predictions and ask questions to help them comprehend passages and longer texts
- Organize texts for better understanding
- Develop a schema that will help them look for relationships
- Develop vocabulary and search for meaning in passages
- Use think-aloud strategies during reading to help them decide next steps
- Paraphrase ideas in passages to ensure comprehension
- Take simple notes to help them with retention
- Become persistent in completing reading tasks

Kits Available for Vision-Impaired Learners

by Carol Cornett

The Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI) in Richmond provides rehabilitative teaching in academic, vocational, and daily living skills. The teaching enables adults with visual impairments to return to their communities as contributing members.

Clients come to VRCBVI with varied goals. Some wish to explore different vocational opportunities. Others plan to return to their jobs with new skills. There are adults attending the Center whose long-term goal is to pass the GED. While some students take their GED at VRCBVI, the program is not designed to work with students who need long-term instruction. These students are given a basic academic foundation during the several months they stay at VRCBVI and are encouraged to contact literacy programs where they live after leaving the Center.

VRCBVI was recently awarded a grant administered through the American Foundation for the Blind National Literacy Center. This grant enables VRCBVI to provide technical support, training, and a materials kit to community-based literacy programs. The materials and training are designed to help these programs comply with the guidelines spelled out in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The kit contains materials such as a bar magnifier, a tape recorder, and a talking calculator. Kits are available to any instructor or program that requests one. If a student is a client of the Department for Blind and Vision Impaired, recommendations can be made for visual aids or assistive technology devices. ■

For further information, contact:

VRCBVI

401 Azalea Avenue
Richmond, Virginia
(804) 371-3338

<http://www.vrcbvi.org/>

The Fairfax County Family

by Betsy Lindeman Wong

The new Fairfax County E.S.O.L. Family Literacy curriculum is an offshoot of the county's beginner-level EL/Civics curriculum and contains health- and consumer-related topics adapted from it. Starting in the fall of 2002, eleven family literacy sites piloted the new curriculum, with six of them field-testing the computer-based activities that are integrated into the lessons.

The curriculum has four modules:

- Self, Family, and Community
- Schools and Community
- Medicine and Stress
- Shopping and Making a Budget

Each module is comprised of four lessons. The lessons present core activities - including a parent-child activity - and materials. Many of the lessons feature Internet- and Word-based computer exercises. They also have supplementary

activity ideas for literacy students and "extra practice" suggestions for beginner and intermediate students.

The curriculum is designed to improve parents' English language proficiency and enhance their knowledge of U.S. schooling practices, so that they can participate more actively in their children's education. In an activity that drew upon parents' prior knowledge, learners contributed differences between the school practices in their countries and in Fairfax County.

"In Hong Kong, children wear uniforms to school."

"In Peru, children sing the hymn for the country every day."

"In El Salvador, children stand up when an adult enters the room."

In addition, the curriculum aims to raise the parents' awareness of health and consumer issues, enabling them to make informed, proactive decisions for them-



The Fairfax County Family Literacy CURRICULUM

Introduction <p>The Fairfax County Family Literacy Curriculum is designed to be used in a multi-level adult ESOL family literacy class. There are four modules to choose from: Introductory (Self, Family and Community), Government (Schools and Community), Health (Medicine and Stress), and Consumerism (Shopping and Making a Budget). Each module provides easy to follow lesson plans and activities for adult English language learners at the literacy through intermediate levels and includes parent/child activities, computer/internet activities, and reproducible worksheets. A list of recommended texts and websites is included in the appendix. The curriculum was written by Betsy Lindeman Wong, an experienced ESOL and family literacy teacher and was piloted at over twelve sites in Fairfax County.</p>	Table of Contents <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Introductory Module: Self, Family, and Community■ Government Module: Schools and Community■ Health Module: Medicine and Stress■ Consumerism Module: Shopping and Making a Budget■ Appendix: Web Sites Used with the Family Literacy Curriculum■ Bibliography <p><i>The Fairfax County Family Literacy Curriculum was developed using English Literacy/ Civics Education grant funds awarded by the Virginia Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Literacy.</i></p>
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You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to view this publication. It is available for download free from Adobe's website.

The Fairfax County E.S.O.L. Family Literacy Curriculum can be found online at <http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/familitcurri/>.

Literacy

CURRICULUM

selves and their children in these areas.

An important part of the curriculum is the parent-child activity time, which introduces parents to educational games they can play at home to help their children in school. Parents also learn ways to share a book with their children when they are not able to read all the words in English. As they use illustrations to tell a story in their native language, parents instill in their children a love of books and story-sharing.

A basic organizing principle of the E.S.O.L. Family Literacy curriculum is student participation in cooperative group projects that draw on their problem-solving skills and, often, their parenting expertise. The multilevel projects allow all students, regardless of their language abilities, to make contributions, thus keeping every student engaged.

The core activities of the curriculum are geared toward multilevel groups of students, who often have different tasks. For example, in creating a booklet for parents whose children are starting school for the first time:

- One group of parents uses a digital camera to photograph different parts of the school (e.g., library, cafeteria).

- Another group writes sentences describing the parts of the school (e.g., “This is the cafeteria. This is where the students eat lunch.”) and the information found in a previous Internet lesson about the school (e.g., “The school’s enrollment is ___”).
- A group of intermediate students reads stories about problems parents are having with their children’s education and writes advice for them (*see Problems Parents Have below*).

As a follow-up activity, students can type the information for the school booklet. Subsequent lessons build on this basic knowledge of the school and allow parents to practice communicating with their children’s teachers and with the school office.

After final field testing last spring, the curriculum was turned over to the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center and is available at: www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/famlitcurric/. ■

Betsy Lindeman Wong, the author of Fairfax County’s E.S.O.L. family literacy curriculum, has taught family literacy classes in Fairfax County.

Problems Parents Have

José feels bad because his daughter is having a problem with her algebra class. José didn’t study algebra, so he doesn’t know how to help her with her schoolwork. What are some ideas for José?

Ying’s daughter wants Ying to go with her class on a field trip. Ying can’t understand English very well. She is afraid to go because she won’t understand what her daughter’s teacher and classmates are saying. What should she do?

Salome can’t read in English. Her daughter’s teacher says she needs to read a story with her daughter each night. What should Salome do?

A Tribute to Susan Joyner (continued from front page)

encouraging creativity, focusing group energies, and helping to transform ideas into detailed action plans. When we had to solve a particularly thorny problem, we would often turn to Susan. She was especially keen at recognizing what would make sense for the “flow” of a training, meeting, or session, and deftly guided us through the warp and weft of politics, personalities, and bureaucracy. Her calm presence was integral in helping us create a wonderfully successful collaboration between and across agencies. With a group of individuals from differing organizations, with different vocabularies, goals, and dynamics, this was no mean feat.

One of Susan’s passions outside of her work was to ride her horses, Kitty and Spencer. When she drove away that day in July, she and her husband, Doug, bestowed upon my family a wonderful gift. They not only entrusted us with their horses, but they brought a model of teamwork and collaboration between them and these two animals that still reverberates among us. We, along with many others, will miss her enthusiasm, determination, spirit of community building, fine eye for detail, and quiet gift for action that she brought into our lives.

[Editor’s Note:] *When Susan Joyner joined the Resource Center in 1994, it was little more than a library with a Director and one full-time staff member. Over the next nine years, Susan engineered a merger with the Center for Professional Development, started the distance learning project, and built the VALRC into a nationally recognized center for training, publication, and dissemination of adult education materials.* ■

Andrew Stowe is Staff Development Manager with Career Support Systems, Inc., a company that provides employment supports to people with disabilities and other employment barriers. He lives in Afton, VA with his family and their pets, including Kitty and Spencer.

Knowledge Under Construction:

by Matt Hart

Building a Workplace Literacy Program from the Ground Up

It seems that everybody is jumping on the workplace education bandwagon these days. Grant funds and donations seem to be drying up, and the monies that are available from government and industry seem to be tied to outcomes such as the number of students entering the workforce, upgrading existing skills, and retaining employment. If you are considering implementing a workplace literacy program, you should be aware of a few issues related to such a startup.

There are five main reasons why you and your agency should consider implementing a workplace literacy program in your area:

- There is a need for this program.
- You are the best person for the job.
- Your agency is the best agency for the job.
- No other agency offers this service.
- This service will enhance and complement existing programs in your agency.

There are also five main reasons why you shouldn't:

- There are no businesses or industries that need services in your area.
- You are not convinced of your skill or effectiveness.
- You are not convinced of the skill and effectiveness of your agency.
- Other agencies already offer the same level and types of services.
- There are no similar services that exist within your agency.

The reasons why you shouldn't consider starting a workplace literacy program are just as important, if not more so, than the reasons why you should. If you've been able to answer all of these questions and concerns and still think that workplace literacy is a good idea, you're probably wondering, "What do I do next?"

In building your program, never underestimate the necessity of building relationships so as to market your skills and services more effectively.

You're now ready to take a long, hard look at your personal strengths and weaknesses as well as those of your agency. Evaluate yourself and your agency objectively, and answer the following questions:

- What do I already know about workplace literacy?
- What do I know about curriculum design?

- Am I experienced in marketing?
- Do I know all that I can about businesses and services in my area?
- What do I do best/better than anyone else?
- Can I/my agency deliver what I promise?

There's always something to learn, and that's one of the best examples that a workplace literacy coordinator can set. It's easier to encourage others to be lifelong learners if you yourself are one. If you're not a curriculum designer or an experienced marketer, don't despair. There are myriad resources available at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) and the Workplace Improvement Network (WIN). Addi-

tional resources regarding businesses and services in your area may vary, but check with your local Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Investment Board, economic development council, and/or local community college. Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley also has information available for agencies that wish to start workplace literacy programs. And don't overlook asking other professionals

5 Reasons to Implement a Workplace Literacy Program

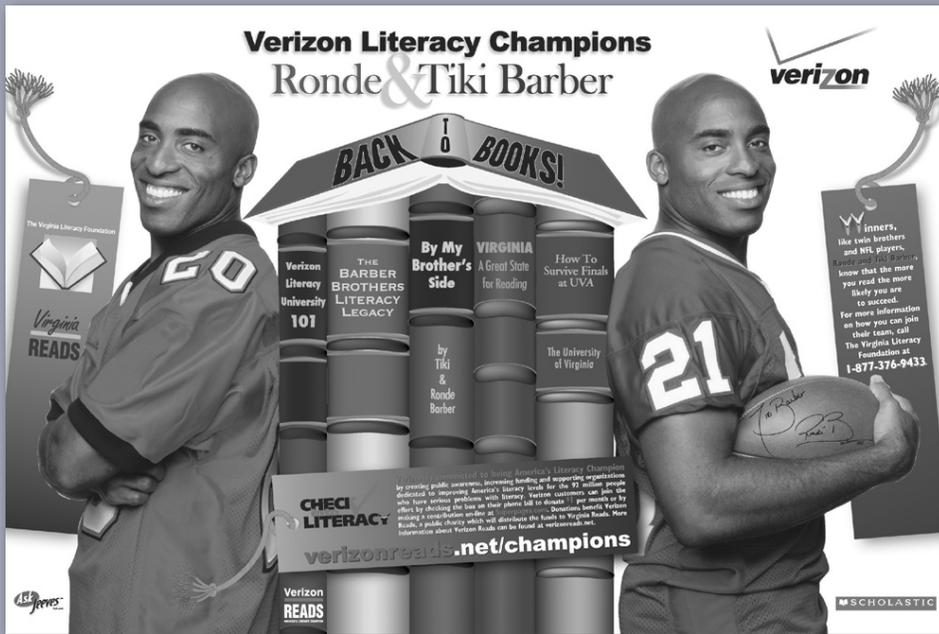
- There is a need for this program.
- You are the best person for the job.
- Your agency is the best agency for the job.
- No other agency offers this service.
- This service will enhance and complement existing programs in your agency.

5 Reasons Not To Implement a Workplace Literacy Program

- There are no businesses or industries that need services in your area.
- You are not convinced of your skill or effectiveness.
- You are not convinced of the skill and effectiveness of your agency.
- Other agencies already offer the same level and types of services.
- There are no similar services that exist within your agency.

Evaluate yourself and your agency

- What do I already know about workplace literacy?
- What do I know about curriculum design?
- Am I experienced in marketing?
- Do I know all that I can about businesses and services in my area?
- What do I do best/better than anyone else?
- Can I/my agency deliver what I promise?



Download these colorful posters featuring the Barber twins at <http://www.verizonreads.net/champions/barberbros.asp>.

Virginia READS

Virginia READS is a campaign to raise awareness about literacy services and funds in Virginia. The program is a partnership between Verizon and the Virginia Literacy Foundation. In June, twin brothers and NFL superstars, Tiki and Ronde Barber, were named Literacy Champions and spokesmen for Virginia READS.

Speaking of the importance of literacy programs in the Commonwealth, Tiki observed, "Many families in Virginia ... must persevere in the face of adversity because of low literacy skills. With the help of Virginia Literacy Foundation, I know these families can gain the skills and self-esteem they need to become successful learners and productive citizens."

or volunteers in your agency.

After you've determined your strengths, weaknesses, and available resources, you're ready to decide what sort of services you can offer. Let's say that you are an experienced interviewer and a co-worker is a certified resume writer. This combination would be perfect to offer an employability skills workshop focusing on interviews and résumés. Always build from a source of personal/agency strength. If your agency has skilled ESL teachers, let this be your source of strength.

In building your program, never underestimate the necessity of building relationships so as to market your skills and services more effectively. Word of mouth is one of the best sources of publicity, but how do you build a "buzz" about workplace literacy? Start small and build from there. An advisory board consisting of professionals from your agency along with all interested stakeholders (economic development, allied agencies, business leaders) is a wonderful place to start.

No one can ever know it all. That's why an advisory board just makes sense.

From your members, you will make initial and often invaluable contacts. As your knowledge base increases via the VALRC and WIN, so will the scope of your program. Your advisory board will continue to keep you abreast of current needs and trends.

In order to market your workplace literacy program effectively, you will need to be aware of your production costs. The simplest cost/benefits analysis is this: take the total cost of your program and divide it by the benefits.

Caution: mathematical word problem ahead

If it takes 15 hours for administrative start-up at \$25 per hour (item total: \$375), plus 20 hours of instruction at \$30 per hour (item total: \$600), plus 10 hours of prep time at \$20 per hour (item total: \$200), plus \$250 worth of instructional materials (item total: \$250), the total costs associated with this program would be \$1,425. These costs would have to be divided per student or per hour to achieve the cost/hour and cost/benefits analyses. Costs would be higher if there were additional administrative details. These costs

(\$1,425 minimum) would have to be met in order to make the benefit worthwhile to your agency.

Don't undersell yourself or your program. That's one of the most important things to remember – you, your agency, and your agency's services have value! You are worth it! Sometimes that is forgotten in the equation. Workplace literacy services are valuable to businesses whether an individual business recognizes this or not. Employees are a valuable resource, and communication and soft skills make a big difference for both the employer and the employee. Don't forget that you and your agency are not alone. Virginia has many fine resources, and together, we can achieve more than we ever could individually! It's not easy to begin a new program, but with hard work and a little luck, it can be one of the most rewarding things you've ever done. ■

Matt Hart is the Workplace Literacy Coordinator at Literacy Volunteers of New River Valley in Christiansburg. He authored "A Guide to Workplace Literacy," available through the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

UNIVERSALDESIGN:

An Approach for Reaching the Greatest Number of Learners

by Don Finn

A concern shared by both adult education teachers and administrators is whether classroom instruction is understandable and effective. Most programs face a growing diversity of learners representing various ethnicities, nationalities, and learning differences. Adult educators are challenged to address such a multiplicity of student needs in a single classroom. Although no “silver bullet” exists to address all of those needs, one approach shows promise for creating instruction that reduces many barriers. This approach is called *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*, sometimes called *Universal Design for Instruction (UDI)*.

Making the Case

The need for adult education programs leading to a high school diploma or GED is great in the U.S. and in Virginia. The 2000 Census indicates that nearly 20% of the U.S. population does not have a high school diploma or equivalent. In Virginia, according to the 2001 Task Force on Adult Education and Literacy Report, nearly 700,000 adults in the Commonwealth have not earned a high school diploma. Recent estimates now place that number at over one million. This represents approximately 10% of the population.

Serving Learners with Disabilities

Physical accessibility to buildings and organizations has been a public focus for decades in America. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which became law in 1990, is a landmark legislative act resulting from years of lobbying and awareness-building by groups of individuals with disabilities and their supporters. Under ADA, a person has a disability if one of three conditions is met:

1. Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
2. Has a record of such an impairment
3. Is regarded as having such an impairment

While most physical disabilities may be evident, the major challenge for adult education programs, with regard to UDL, is identifying and providing appropriate accommodations for individu-

als with hidden disabilities, specifically learning disabilities. In the K-12 setting, students with identified learning disabilities are served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its amendments. IDEA mandates that school systems test students for learning disabilities and provide appropriate services in the “least restrictive learning environment.” There are no federally mandated requirements for programs serving adult learners with LD to provide special services without appropriate documentation.

How Many Adults have LD?

Some data suggest the percentage of adults with learning disabilities ranges from 3% to 10%. This figure includes those who have been diagnosed and

Adult education programs face the potential of serving several million adults with learning disabilities. One way to enhance the opportunities for these adults ... is the integration of UDL principles into the instructional environment.

those who have not. Adult education programs face the potential of serving several million adults with learning disabilities. One way to enhance the opportunities for these adults to realize academic success is the integration of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles into the instructional environment.

Universal Design, an Architectural Movement

Originating in the 1960's as an archi-

tectural principle, the guiding premise of UD is to provide access for the widest range of users possible. In American society, we have become so accustomed to UD architectural principles that they often go unnoticed. Features like curb cuts, automatic doors, elevators, and escalators make our movements easier but are often taken for granted. If these architectural features were removed, we would immediately miss them.

The Rise of Universal Design for Learning

Educators began exploring ways to adapt Universal Design concepts into the instructional setting during the 1980's. One of the leaders of this movement was The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), founded in Boston in 1984. According to CAST, UDL generates “curricula, teaching practices, and policies which are inherently flexible and therefore may reduce the demand on educators to develop and implement modifications and accommodations to meet individual differences within general education learning environments.” CAST notes that the integration of UDL principles shifts old assumptions about

teaching and learning in four primary ways:

1. Students with disabilities fall along a continuum of learner differences rather than constituting a separate category.
2. Teacher adjustments for learner differences should occur for all students, not just those with disabilities.
3. Curriculum materials should be varied and diverse including digital and online resources, rather than center-

ing on a single textbook.

4. Instead of remediating students so that they can learn from a set curriculum, curriculum should be made flexible to accommodate learner differences (CAST.org).

The “universal” in UDL does not indicate that one style or single methodology exists that will effectively reach all learners. Rather, it means that each learner has unique learning needs and styles, and that efforts should be made to accommodate as many differences as possible.

Some Practical UDL Techniques

The integration of UDL techniques into the classroom ranges from the basic and “low tech” to the very expensive, involving specialized computer, scanning, and video technologies. Some of the more practical ideas include:

- Providing documents written in a standard font like Times New Roman or Arial
- Using different colored fonts or highlighters to distinguish words or sections of text
- Allowing learners to use the Internet to locate tutorial or supporting websites
- Using videotapes to enhance understanding (whenever possible, use captioned video)
- Providing study guides and lesson summaries
- Using appropriate manipulatives providing “hands-on” experience practicing concepts and applying new knowledge

Diagrams can be used to illustrate major points and are easily created on the computer with software such as Inspiration Software, Inc.’s Inspiration®.

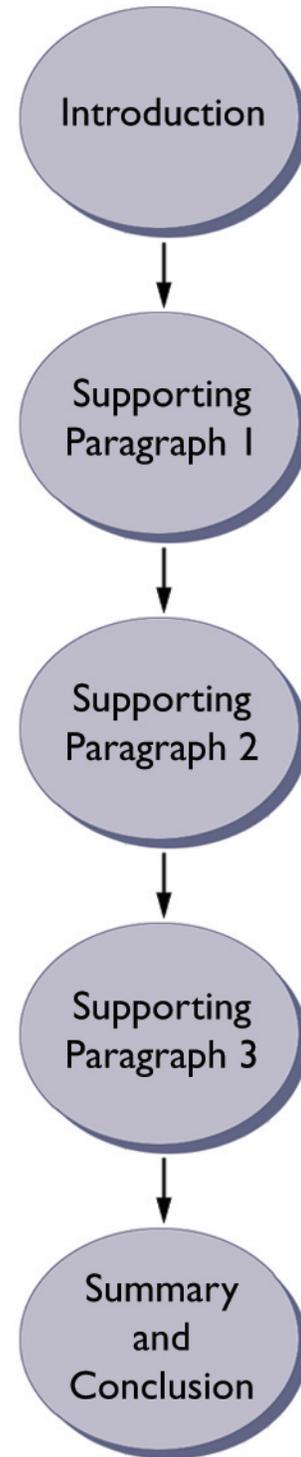


- Integrating diagrams or other visual elements to illustrate major points and/or sequences of events (see illustration)

Be Creative!

As you read through this article, you may have realized that you are already using Universal Design strategies. Most resourceful teachers do. If these ideas are new to you, and you’re not sure where to start, I would advise you to begin right where you are. Information about integrating UDL techniques into your instruction is provided on the websites listed below. With these techniques, you are well on your way to designing instruction that will reach a diverse group of learners! ..

Donald Finn, Jr. is the Higher Education Disability Training Coordinator for Professional Development Academy (PDA), a project of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Workplace Supports at Virginia Commonwealth University.



Universal Design Tools and Websites

- The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST): <http://www.cast.org>
- Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DOIT): A Project of The University of Washington: <http://www.washington.edu/doit/>
- Faculty Ware; a project of the University Universal Design for Instruction information and resources: http://www.facultyware.uconn.edu/udi_information.htm
- Inspiration Software, Inc., a publisher of visual learning software: <http://www.inspiration.com>

Reading Difficulties And a Couple of Satisfying Solutions

by Meta Potts

Jean's motivation for improving her reading skills is her new granddaughter, Jacquelyn. "I was never able to read to my daughter," Jean says, "but I want to read to Jacque."

When her ABE instructor, Edna, asked Jean to read from the children's book she had provided, Jean had trouble sounding out words and recognizing words out of context. She had little understanding of how the letters and the sounds they represent were connected. As Jean read word-by-word, without expression and ignoring punctuation, Edna recognized Jean's decoding difficulties. Furthermore, Jean could not concentrate and became confused about the meaning of words and sentences, and Edna recognized Jean's comprehension problems as well.

Edna is familiar with the "expert" opinions about how to work with Jean on her reading difficulties, and she intends to use all the strategies at her command. But Edna is an expert herself, and she knows that a couple of the most satisfying solutions for both the reader

and the instructor are reading with and reading to the struggling reader. And she will do both with Jean.

George Demetron,* a director of tutor training in Connecticut, says, "In the Assisted Reading Approach [reading with the student], the instructor initially

"Years ago, a student wrote on a class evaluation, 'Now I read better because when I am reading, I can hear your voice in my head reading to me.'"

reads a few lines of a short passage with students following along, at first subvocalizing and gradually taking over the reading process in successive readings. This allows beginning-level readers to work with connected and interesting texts and to simulate the process of

fluent reading well before independent mastery is attained."

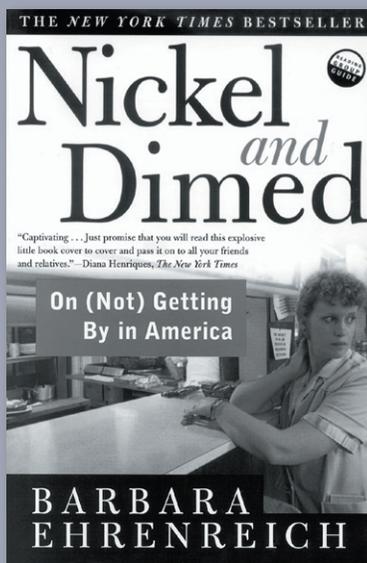
Meriel Collins agrees. Collins, a tutor trainer and instructor in an adult high school diploma program in Hawaii, uses the Duet Reading or Neurological Impress Method and finds that these strategies "work well in helping students develop reading fluency and reading with expression." She has found that as students see words and hear the instructor's voice combined with their own voices, they are surrounded by multi-sensory stimulation, which addresses various learning styles. Collins suggests using this approach with one-to-one teaching and in group sessions.

But when Nancy Faux, an ESOL specialist with the VALRC, read these listserv messages from Demetron and Collins, she asked, "When do adults read aloud in real life?"

In considering her question, I thought first of religious services. Then, I thought of three other times in the past month when I participated in adult, read-aloud group settings: a wedding,

Book Review:

Nickel and Dimed



by Mary Lynch

"How does anyone live on the wages available to the unskilled?" Barbara Ehrenreich poses this question in *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, an investigation into the fallout of welfare reform. Conducting one-month experiments in Key West, Minneapolis, and Portland, Maine, Ehrenreich casts herself as a divorced homemaker, plunges into the job and housing markets, and tries to make ends meet.

Ehrenreich has clear advantages over most low-wage workers. She allows herself a car and \$1300 in start-up money. She is healthy and has no dependents. She is articulate and literate. And she has an emergency ATM card in her pocket.

In all three cities, Ehrenreich hunts in vain for housing with a reasonable combination of affordability, safety,

privacy, and proximity to work. In Minneapolis, for example, she encounters skyrocketing rents and one of the lowest vacancy rates in the country. She ends up in a residential motel, paying \$245 a week for, essentially, a cell (except that a cell would have a deadbolt).

Ehrenreich has less trouble finding work, but will her paycheck cover her expenses? Make that paychecks. In Key West and Portland, Ehrenreich takes on two jobs. She attempts two waitressing jobs in Key West, finds the combination logistically impossible (not to mention exhausting), and abandons one position in favor of housekeeping at a hotel. In Portland, she works as a maid during the week and as a dietary aide in a nursing home on weekends. In both cities, she finds that two paychecks might pay the bills, but she wonders how long she could

a funeral, and at the ballpark. I realized that such activities can be very valuable for people who are trying to learn the rhythm of the language.

Karen Jones, an ABE instructor at a Missouri correctional facility, is sold on the second solution, reading aloud to her adult students. Jones explains, “Years ago, a student wrote on a class evaluation, ‘Now I read better because when I am reading, I can hear your voice in my head reading to me.’” Jones says that although she wondered at times whether “hearing her voice” was a good thing, she believes that the model of fluent reading, which this student had never experienced before, created both a sense of connected language, and a new joy in reading.

I have been reading aloud to adult students and conducting workshops on this practice for more than 20 years. My belief in this strategy is supported by recent studies conducted by Purcell-Gates and others. But more than by academic research, I am encouraged by comments from teachers of adults who have tried and succeeded with this method. This is what they say:

- Listening to good literature nourishes students’ eagerness to learn and provides a way for instructors to direct learning.

- Sharing the reading experience provides physical and social supports, which expand the developmental potential of struggling readers. All students have the opportunity to learn what is necessary.
- This support through reading aloud helps diminish the affects of language differences on learning. Everyone in the room has a common literary experience, called “anchor experiences.”
- Reading aloud increases phonologi-

“Sharing the reading experience provides physical and social supports, which expand the developmental potential of struggling readers.”

cal awareness, which is a precursor to reading in its own right. Phonics taught while reading emphasizes phonics as part of the reading process.

- Reading aloud provides a knowledge base and enlarges vocabularies that students will use as prior learning, helping them to make sense of new learning when they are on their own.
- Reading aloud aids comprehension. Teachers adopt monitoring strategies that help students extend their learning.

- Teachers who love to read aloud and who do so with excitement and skill are those necessary mentors who stimulate learning by deepening students’ knowledge and understanding of language.
- Reading aloud provides teachers with opportunities to share sophisticated ideas and themes from books that may be too difficult for students to read alone but not too difficult to understand.
- Teachers read to highlight concepts in all disciplines, such as math, science, social studies, art, music.

As teachers, instructors, and tutors of adult learners, we are often mystified by when and how the reading process broke down with our students. The students themselves are bewildered by their reading difficulties. They often attribute their reading failures to their own inabilities or shortcomings. Not so. Let’s not allow them to blame themselves and give up easily this time. Let’s try a couple of satisfying solutions. ■

**The instructors/tutors mentioned above contributed their ideas to the Equipped for the Future Listserv.*

Meta Potts is the moderator for the NIFL:4EFF listserv.

endure such a rigorous schedule. In Minneapolis, Ehrenreich needs a second paycheck to cover her expensive residential motel room, but her erratic hours at Wal-Mart make another job impossible.

*Nickel and Dime*d is full of examples of “if you don’t have this, you can’t have that.” If you don’t have any savings, you can’t afford the deposit and first month’s rent on an apartment. So you live in a motel room, which probably doesn’t have a kitchenette. So you buy convenience food, another expense standing in the way of a more affordable apartment. You’d like a higher paying job, but you can’t search for one because unpaid time off now might mean homelessness later.

Based on her three experiments, Ehrenreich imagines that she might scrape by as a low-wage worker. Temporarily. But one missed paycheck – one in-

jury or illness – could upset the balance. “Something is wrong, very wrong,” she concludes, “when a single person in good health, a person who in addition possesses a working car, can barely support herself by the sweat of her brow. You don’t need a degree in economics to see that wages are too low and rents too high.”

Aside from its themes of wages and housing, *Nickel and Dime*d also provides an eye-opening account of what it’s like to be a waitress, a housekeeper, a maid, a dietary aide, or a Wal-Mart “team member.” For example, Ehrenreich details the maid service’s cleaning techniques, which emphasize speed, ostentatious servility (scrub that floor on your knees, please), and the mere illusion of cleanliness. The maids wear vacuums on their backs, are encouraged to “work through” injuries, are forbidden from accepting a

glass of water, and can’t scrape together enough money for an extra scouring pad, much less a decent lunch.

Ehrenreich concludes that, “low-wage work doesn’t lift people out of poverty,” and that welfare reform has been “a catastrophic mistake.” An engaging read, *Nickel and Dime*d will fill you with indignation (over the plight of the working poor or, depending on your politics, over Ehrenreich’s unabashed leftist views). Ultimately, Ehrenreich hopes that low-wage workers will “tire of getting so little in return and demand to be paid what they’re worth.” ■

Mary Lynch has worked as a teacher, trainer, and administrator in literacy and community college settings. She now stays home with her two young children.

VALRC Website Redesign *by Stephen Grainer*



Added another new face to your roster this year. The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center has a new look for the same great content, plus some new publications to sweeten the deal. But before you read another word of this article, fire up your computer, jump on the Internet, and waltz (or skip or promenade, but don't tarry!) over to the new VALRC website located at www.aelweb.vcu.edu.

If you haven't already discovered our new site, take some time to familiarize yourself with the following features:

1) Resizable text – Don't squint if you don't want to. Just click one of the larger Ts in the upper left-hand

corner of our site to increase the size of the text.

2) Navigational trails – It's easy to get lost on the Internet. At the top of every page (except our homepage) is a figurative trail of breadcrumbs so you can find your way back to where you started.

3) Global search bar – Instead of checking every nook and cranny of our site yourself, let our search engine (well, okay, Google) do all the work for you. Just type in the keywords you're looking for and press Enter.

If you accessed the site using an older browser (like Netscape 4), you

probably noticed a lack of design. No, we didn't design the site to be that bland, but rather than trying to support an obsolete browser, we decided to build our site to comply with web standards and government-approved accessibility guidelines. You can still access our content using an older browser; it just won't look as pretty. Or you can always upgrade your browser...

Got a general idea of how to use our site? Good. Now for the whirlwind tour of our new resources! (*see below*) ■■

Several new (and hopefully useful) features on the VALRC website include **1. resizable text, 2. navigational trails, and 3. a global search bar.**

New Online Resources

We've added a number of new publications and projects to our website in the last several months. Get the lowdown on these great new resources and then check them out online on our new website. (*Also be sure to check out the Fairfax County Family Literacy Curriculum that we discuss on pages 4 and 5.*)



Practitioner Research as Staff Development: Interested in using inquiry groups and research methods to improve your program? This guide provides the basic materials and information to help formulate research questions, conduct inquiries, and analyze research data to implement changes and improve programs.

Find it here:
<http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/research/>



Fairfax EL/Civics Curriculum: If you need curriculum resources to help with your English literacy and civics lessons, there's no better place to look. This curriculum boasts complete lesson plans and reproducible handouts about using the Internet, consumer awareness, government involvement, and health care for all levels of learners.

Find it here:
<http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/ELCivics/>

The Virginia Literacy Institute *(continued from front page)*

is in results. What can people do because of what we delivered? It's about achievement and progress...we're looking for a comprehensive and continuous program of development."

To facilitate such progress, the VLI will focus its fundraising efforts on winning state and federal grants and contracts, while the Virginia Literacy Foundation (VLF) will continue to raise support from the private sector. To date, the Institute has secured \$1.6 million in contracts and grants and is overseeing research in several fields including English Literacy/Civics Education, Even Start evaluation, standards development, and reporting procedures.

Current Projects

The Institute is now responsible for the management of the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC). Barbara Gibson, the Institute's Associate Director, is also interim director of

the VALRC. She is participating in the nationwide search for a new director and hopes the process will be completed by the first of the new year. Commenting on the VLI's unique position, Gibson said, "There are a lot of demands being placed on our field right now, but

"The Institute is in a unique position to craft an agenda for adult literacy in Virginia that makes an impact on state policy makers."

— Mark Emblidge

this is a very exciting time. By bringing research and development activities together with the Resource Center, the Institute has the opportunity to provide a wide range of programs and services that will help the field move to a higher level of performance and provide higher

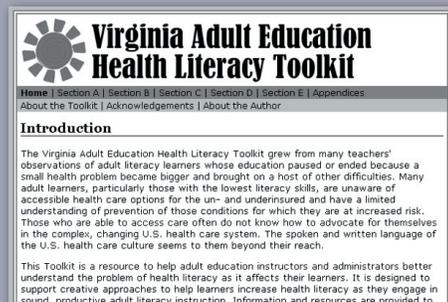
quality instruction to adult learners."

Standards

Though reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act is still pending, the Institute is working proactively to prepare for the Act's requirements. Dr. Yvonne Thayer, Director of Adult Education and Literacy for the Virginia Department of Education, has made it clear that the Commonwealth will pursue and institute content standards. Since funding for adult literacy programs is dependent upon progress as defined by the National Reporting System (NRS), aligning content standards with NRS requirements will be a priority.

To that end, Dr. Roberta McKnight is working on a VLI contract to research and develop standards for Virginia's adult education programs. McKnight's study has included a survey of other states' standards, an extensive literature

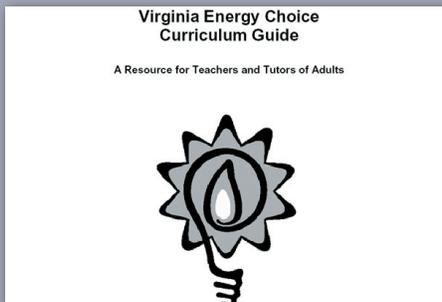
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Virginia Adult Education Health Literacy Toolkit: Health literacy can often be a difficult subject to teach, even for those with experience in the health field. Luckily, this toolkit provides an incredible amount of resources, both print and on the web, to aid the learning process for both educators and learners.

Find it here:

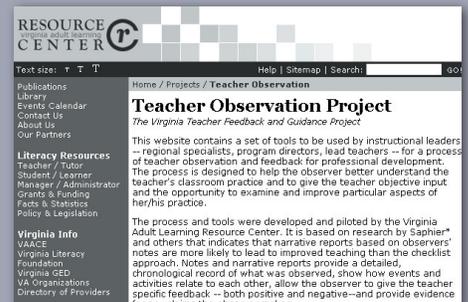
<http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/healthlit/>



Virginia Energy Choice Curriculum Guide: Virginia consumers will soon have the option to choose their energy suppliers. This guide provides a starting point for educators who want to build lessons around this important topic and was developed and tested by experienced teachers throughout Virginia.

Find it here:

<http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/energychoice/energychoice.pdf>



Teacher Observation Project:

This step-by-step program provides teachers, specialists, and directors with everything they need to improve teacher observations and feedback. This process is designed to help teachers reflect upon and improve their own techniques. Supplemental materials are also available for download.

Find it here:

<http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/projects/observation/>

Read with UNDERSTANDING (continued from page 3)

and are ready for, and (2) providing lots of opportunities to read authentic texts for real purposes that are selected by the students (Trawick 2003).

The Equipped for the Future Read With Understanding Project is ongoing. Trawick and her team will be working in Virginia during the coming year to correlate their findings and to train teachers in the methodology. But already, the Project has provided teachers with useful strategies (see *Useful Strategies for Teaching Reading on page 3*) they can use to give their students the help and guidance needed. ■

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Much of the information in this article was taken from Amy Trawick's longer presentation, *Read With Understanding—Up Close and Personal*. *EFF HOT Topics*, Fall, 2003.

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Meta W. Potts has been a family literacy specialist for many years. She currently serves as the national moderator of the NIFL:4EFF listserv.

Amy R. Trawick is the Coordinator of the Equipped for the Future Reading Project, a partnership of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL).

review, and the creation of a matrix outlining current content, progress, and performance standards for adult basic education programs around the country.

"In a field of diverse sub-specialties such as GED, ESOL, Family Literacy, Workplace Education, and Correctional Education," McKnight explains, "collaboration will be the watchword for the development of content standards that will meet the needs of all adult learners in Virginia."

GED as Project

The Institute is continuing the work on *GED as Project*, and recently secured a \$200,000 grant to complete the program. Prior to the formation of the Virginia Literacy Institute, *GED as Project* was conducted through the Workforce Improvement Network, a joint enterprise with the Virginia Literacy Foun-

development project funded by the VLF. The VLF and VLLC both recognized the need for a database designed specifically for community-based literacy organizations that would store and report data to a number of stakeholders, such as the Virginia Department of Education, ProLiteracy America, and the Virginia Literacy Foundation. "This project is in its beginning stage," Chapin explained. "At the next VLLC meeting, I will make a presentation about the project and give the membership an opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns before the bulk of the design work takes place."

Future Goals and Projects

The excitement about the VLI is evident. Its future goals and projects include continued development of best practices, content standards, national reporting practices, and other contracts

"... the Institute has the opportunity to provide a wide range of programs and services that will help the field move to a higher level of performance and provide higher quality instruction to adult learners."

—Barbara Gibson, Associate Director, VLI

dation and James Madison University. Project Lead Specialist, Marcia Phillips, is currently developing the fifth volume of the program, which will focus on Science and Social Studies. Phillips joined the project as an editor in its first year, but she explains, "My role has expanded, as we finish this project out, to the actual writing of the Learning Projects and Inquiry Activities. With so much of the training at the Resource Center geared toward *GED as Project*," Phillips added, "we will have a great opportunity to focus on the responses from and needs of the field."

CBLO Database

Nancy Chapin, former president of the Virginia Literacy Leadership Council (VLLC), has begun work on a database-

for evaluation and research projects.

As Dean Bosher stated, "Already we've seen the opportunity to use the leverage we have together, not to compete. In the past, we would have gone to the U.S. Department of Education or others, and competed for grants, competed for funding. Now we're going together with all of our expertise."

"The Institute was established to help people who work hard in the field of adult education and literacy," Emblidge stated, "and to help equip them to do their jobs better. We want to help them find more resources." ■

Randall Stamper is the assistant editor of Progress and publications manager for the VALRC.

Online Education Opportunity For Adult Education Practitioners

by Patty Shortt

Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Education and its Office of Continuing Education, in partnership with the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, are currently offering a pilot three-semester program of online coursework and practicum for a cohort of adult educators. The VCU-VALRC partnership provides a significant reduction in tuition to cohort participants.

The four, 3-credit-hour courses focus on adult education and are offered sequentially in a Blackboard platform:

Fall Semester

- The Adult Learner
- Instruction for Adult Learners

Spring Semester

- The Writing Process
- Curriculum and Development for Adult Education

"The online format gives students the flexibility and convenience to work on assigned tasks at their leisure between the semi-weekly due dates. Frequent online conversations, courtesy of Blackboard's 'discussion board' feature, provide a forum for the instructor and students to share thoughts, feelings, and reactions on course topics."

Don Finn, Instructor, VCU

The cohort is comprised of adult educators from public programs, community-based organizations, and the business sector.

All participants are improving their qualifications for teaching and working as an adult education professional.

"My personal experience so far has been pleasantly surprising. The Blackboard forum allows for meaningful dialogue between all students whereas, in a classroom setting, individuals often monopolize the discussion, leaving little time for all to participate. People take the time to be selective and think through their ideas, making the quality of the contribution high. I actually

have more direct access to the instructor online than in a time-structured formal class and am able to get answers to my questions quickly through the webmail."

Sharon Wills, Fairfax County Adult Education

"I have enjoyed my experience so far learning online. I love the convenience of working on my computer when it fits my schedule. The time I work can be long or short, late at night or early in the morning, or anytime I choose. I don't have to be 'dressed up' and I can forget the put on make-up and fix my hair routine."

Donna Brandt, Amherst County School Board

"Online learning and being able to think about the content and write, re-write and review, gives me a second or two to think about the learning in a more in-depth and thoughtful way."

Mary Jo Maralit, National Institute for Literacy

"I am feeling very comfortable with the online learning experience. By having to do everything utilizing this particular mode of technology, I am forced to break through my uncertainties and give it a go! I appreciate the instructor feedback as it has been a calming effect on my nerves."

Deborah Hamrick, Franklin County Public Schools

Individuals may continue to register for one or more of the online courses at any time on a course-by-course basis. Participants will be added until maximum capacity is reached in each course. If you are interested in joining the cohort, please contact Patty Shortt at 804-828-6158, or go to VALRC website, www.aelweb.vcu.edu, and see the online education opportunity announcement. ■

Patty Shortt is a Program Development Specialist with the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center at Virginia Commonwealth University.

A Preview of our Next Issue:

• Sustainable Funding II:

Part I of this series discussed fund development planning and the board's role in fundraising. Part II will offer insights from three foundations about finding sustainable, capacity-building funds for your organization.

• Teacher Observation:

A teacher participates in the process of creating a system for observing teachers to give support and feedback

• The Language of Opportunity:

A review of a NIFL study about expanding employment prospects for adults with limited English skills

• Content Standards: Who wants them? Who needs them?:

Roberta McKnight will summarize her findings from the literature to reflect upon the role of content standards as a means to improve adult education.

We'll also be adding a new, regular column on technology in adult education beginning in the next issue.

PROGRESS

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True Dedication

“He wanted ... to complete something he had left undone years before.”

by Susan Garlock

When Frank walked through the door of Prince William County’s Adult Learning Center, my life would be touched forever. Frank’s curly, brown hair and bright, blue eyes were secondary to his vibrant smile and warm personality. He wanted to enroll in the National External Diploma Program (NEDP) to complete something he had left undone years before. Recently, at age forty-four, he had gained custody of his young grandson, and he wanted to be a good role model.

Although Frank had a satisfying career, he was aware of the importance of a good education. He loved to learn and was always reading. He enjoyed repairing and building things. By reading “how to” books, he built an addition onto his home. Gardening was also one of his passions. His yard was lovely because of the research he did and the care he gave to his surroundings.

I was Frank’s advisor in the NEDP. He had an appointment with me one afternoon after a doctor’s visit. He was visibly shaken when he arrived, so I inquired about his demeanor. Frank had been diagnosed with lung cancer, and his prognosis was dire. We researched his condition together, and he decided on a course of action. His main concern was that the doctors give him enough time to finish his high school diploma. I was astonished! Over the next few months, we became fast friends.

Frank quickly moved through the diagnostic phase of the NEDP and onto the assessment phase, focusing on a June graduation. I continued my friendship with him while he underwent treatment. I watched his beautiful hair fall out. I watched the luster leave his blue eyes. I was there as Hospice took over his care, and he was put on oxygen and pain medication. He never once lost sight of

his goal.

On June 9, 1995, in his wheel chair and carrying his oxygen, Frank received his high school diploma and a standing ovation from the audience. He shared hugs and tears of joy with his advisor and assessor. Five days later, Frank passed away peacefully with his high school diploma on the pillow beside him. He never once complained or gave up.

This program changes lives, not just those of the clients receiving their high school diplomas. Our lives are touched by the clients we serve. This is just one example of the caliber of individuals succeeding in the NEDP. ■■

Sue Garlock has taught ABE/GED in Prince William County for many years. She is currently the Lead Teacher for High School Completion.