One of the Best Kept Secrets

By Marti Giese

Riddle:

- What allows adults to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through self-paced, real life activities
- Helps them get employment
- Gives employers workers who can think on their feet

AND ends in a high school diploma?

Solution:

External Diploma Program (EDP)

EDP is a convenient, practical high school completion opportunity for adults who want to _____ their employment sta_____ ho want to go to college. Designed as an altern_____ assessment program, EDP is especially good for those who are not good test takers and for those who do not hav____ the time to sit throug____ traditional classes.

_"I did this at my own pace, no one _____ down my back, no long class time, and with one-on-one help."_
Shelly, homemaker

"I was able to get my diploma while working long hours. Convenience was the best for me, and for any working adult."
Abdul, taxi cab driver

"It gave me an opportunity to move up in my job and also a good chance to go to college."
Hamid, restaurant manager

Using the life skills they developed since leaving school several years ago, Shelly, Abdul, and Hamid met with their EDP advisors and assessors at nearby learning centers. Though each finished at a different time, they all completed the program in 6-12 months.

EDP provides a framework for validating academic strengths within the context of job and life skills. Adult _____ nstrate their ability _____ f simulations that _____ ob and life situations. _____ lemonstrations _____ rolve speaking, _____ reading, writing, _____ and problem solving. Performance is _____ aluated against _____ nally established _____ EDP candidates _____ responsibility for _____ rmation from the _____ community to demonstrate mastery of the competencies required.

EDP is good for those who want to be employed.

In demonstrating the 65 required competencies at 100% mastery, EDP graduates leave the program better able to communicate in oral interviews, listen and respond to questions, and to write letters, resumes, and reports. The 65 generalized competencies are

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Dear Reader,

"The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and preserve change amid order." These words of the mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead are an apt inspiration for this newsletter. Change is a constant strand in our understanding of teaching and learning. All stakeholders in education recognize learner progress and achievement when results are expressed in terms of life changes and personal transformation.

Many elements came together in Randolph Hinton's story to help him change his life. He possessed his own powerful motivation and spirit. He made his first contacts with his local literacy organization at a time in his life when he needed them most. His tutor connected him through reading to his community. Education services in his area worked together as a system to help him progress. Teachers Karen Anderson and Sadie Alexander, both of whom have won state awards for their work, showed him the way.

As educators we help people change. Cheryl Williams is excited at the changes she sees in the Norfolk Even Start program because of the Equipped for the Future reading project. By emphasizing reading for understanding, learners now see this critical skill in a new way. Similarly, Nancy Companion reflects on how the External Diploma Program (EDP) enables learners to "see that they can learn" and go on learning. Also, as educators we need to keep on learning and changing ourselves. Ronna Spacone explains how teachers involved in practitioner research are enabled to "make informed decisions about implementing changes in their practice and improving their program."

The Progress staff is grateful to those of you who responded to the survey in our winter issue. We learned that, overall, you find Progress to be a quality newsletter. You appreciate being kept informed, you like reading about different ideas, and keeping current with the problems and successes of your colleagues. The majority of those who responded were teachers. Several voiced the need for more practical articles by instructors. We also learned that less than 40% of you would continue to read Progress if it were only published online.

Returning to the subject of change, I am experiencing my own transitions. This will be my last letter, since I am retiring from my position at the Adult Learning Resource Center this summer. It has been a privilege to work with the newsletter team, to be of service to you, and to learn from our contributors' rich experiences.

Sincerely,

Susan Joyner

EL/Civics in FCPS: Taking Root

By MaryAnn Florez

In March 2001, Fairfax County Public School's Office of Adult and Community Education received a grant from the Virginia Department of Education to develop curricular materials that would support English literacy and civics instruction for nonnative English learners enrolled in various programs: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), high school completion, GED, and external diploma. The goal was to provide a thematically organized framework of instructional activities and resources that would support learners in their awareness of and engagement with the communities of which they are a part. The materials would serve as a collection of relevant, ready-made resources that teachers could integrate into their existing curricula.

We have come a long way in the two plus years since receiving this grant, thanks to the hard work and creativity of the numerous teachers, learners, and administrators who have contributed their time and expertise to the process. To date, we have reached a number of milestones:

• Developed and piloted a collection of curricular materials for high intermediate/advanced ESOL and adult high school levels that consists of modules on health literacy, consumerism, and government. These materials will shortly be available on the VALRC website at http://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/vaelc/publications/

• Created a collection of curricular materials for beginning and low intermediate ESOL levels, focusing on health, community access and involvement, and basic U.S. government/history information framed by the 100 questions used in the citizenship application process. The materials will be piloted through Spring, 2003 and are targeted for revision and finalizing this summer.

• Provided training sessions and support to teachers who have indicated an interest in implementing the materials in their instruction. The trainings have offered overviews of the materials and the approaches underlying them, as well as extended opportunities for teachers to share experiences and advice with each other, and receive information on how to address specific challenges and issues that have arisen as they have used the lessons, activities, and resources.

We have learned that creating curricular materials like this has two equally important parts: developing the materials and cultivating their use. Writing and refining the materials is a labor-intensive process that unfolds over time, involving needs assessments, generation of ideas, piloting, and revision based on use and feedback. But this work quickly grows sterile if there are not resources and plans in place for dissemination and training and supporting teachers as they begin to use them.

To support the implementation of the materials and generate interest in them, we have opted for a series of paid training sessions. These sessions first introduce teachers to the materials and their underlying approaches and themes, and then provide teachers with follow-up meetings in which they can discuss how they are using the materials and address questions and challenges that are arising from that use. As a result, working with the curricular materials has also become a valuable professional development opportunity for the teachers. Participants in the trainings have commented that the process of reviewing the materials, thinking about how they can be used within current instruction, and engaging with learners as they interact with the materials has been an enriching experience all around.

The process of developing and implementing the EL/Civics curricular materials has been a beneficial experience for FCPS Adult ESOL in many ways. Teachers, administrators, and writers have benefited from the opportunity to step back and ask themselves what the learners really need to know and be able to do; to re-evaluate and re-commit ourselves to teaching philosophies and techniques that effectively support English language learners; and to work together to develop creative, interactive, and vital instructional activities and resources. Learners will hopefully benefit from the support it gives them in tackling the challenges, questions, and opportunities of life in our communities. It has been a win-win situation!

MaryAnn Cunningham Florez is an ESOL Specialist with Fairfax County Adult and Community Education and a volunteer administrator of St. Anthony's Adult ESOL Program in Falls Church. She was previously assistant director of the National Center for ESOL Literacy Education. She has worked in the field of ESOL as a teacher, staff developer, and materials writer for over 10 years.

Showcase for Virginia EL/Civics Grant Projects On-line

Albemarle County Public Schools
Web Project
http://www.webesl.com

Arlington Education and Employment Program
REEP ESL Curricula Website
http://arlington.k12.va.us/departments/adulted/REEP/reepcurriculumwebsite/index.html

James Madison University
Main Street Virginia
http://web.jmu.edu/mainstva

Charlottesville City Schools
ESL Health Curriculum
http://www.charlottesville-esl.org/healthcivicsproject.htm

Family Literacy, EFF, and Reading Research: National and Local Programs Find the Intersection By Susan McShane

Translating research into classroom practice is one thing–and not always an easy thing at that. But integrating three different bodies of research and best practice is at least three times more complicated. The EFF Reading Project is doing exactly that, with the help of pilot programs in Virginia and other states.

The project will create a training package aimed at helping family literacy educators to make sense of–and make use of–the EFF framework and scientifically based reading research (SBRR) within the context of the four components of a comprehensive family literacy program. The ultimate purpose of the project is to help enrolled parents improve their own literacy and employability skills, while also developing the knowledge and skills to help their children learn to read and to support their children's education. All the teacher-training materials are being developed, piloted, evaluated, and revised this year.

The EFF Reading Project is a partnership between the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and the National Center for Family Literacy. NIFL has two initiatives participating: Equipped for the Future and the Partnership for Reading. Project staff are providing three multi-day training sessions and technical assistance for the staff of the pilot programs.

In Virginia, the Norfolk Even Start program is a pilot site. The Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy is providing financial support, and the other state partner is the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.

Susan McShane is a staff development coordinator at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. Her focus areas for training and product development are learning disabilities, learner assessment, and family literacy. She participated in the EFF Reading Project training as a representative of the state partner agencies: the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, and the Resource Center.

Norfolk Even Start Family Literacy Program

Reflections: Equipped For the Future Reading Project (EFFRP) By Cheryl Williams

As I reflect on the past few months of teaching and learning, it is evident that the adult learners have been working diligently to become equipped for the future. Adult learners in the Even Start classroom are reading and discussing texts like the Booker T. Washington autobiography *Up From Slavery*. Students are using

computers on a regular basis to write memos, practice Pre-GED and GED skills, create and publish documents, and search the Internet. They are planning and participating in activities that meet the developmental needs of young children. Although the class has been working to improve skills in all areas, this year Even Start's focus is on reading across all content areas and components of the program.

As the adult educator, I have been working with students to teach reading skills, with special concentration on improving *Read With Understanding* abilities. *Read With Understanding* is one of the Equipped for the Future Standards for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning that places emphasis on the following skills:

- Determine the reading purpose.
- Select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose.
- Monitor comprehension and adjust reading strategies.
- Analyze the information and reflect on its underlying meaning.
- Integrate it with prior knowledge to address reading purpose.

Several strategies have been developed to help students acquire the ability to read with understanding. One of the most effective strategies has been to break down the reading process into three stages: Before Reading, During Reading, and After Reading. Each stage includes tips to help students raise their awareness levels as they read. Breaking down reading into these three stages really helps readers

focus on reading, and it allows them to think more deeply about the materials they are reading.

The strategies and techniques that have been utilized are the direct result of in-service training and resources that are available to us as participants in the *Equipped for the Future Reading Project*.

So far this year, Even Start adult learners are actively developing and improving their skills in reading through purposefully planned lessons and activities, increased use of tools such as graphic organizers, and access to a variety of reading materials. This year as reading materials are selected for a specific lesson, I focus on a specific reading skill that can be taught based on the needs of the learners. We have learners keep an Active Reading Diary to help them focus on their reading. The Active Reading Diary is a worksheet supplement that allows students to track their progress as it relates to the aforementioned skills of the *Read With Understanding* standard. Some of the topics include:
• establishing a purpose for reading
• finding the strategies that fit that specific purpose
• self-monitoring of comprehension.

I usually incorporate mini lessons within the lessons as a way of teaching certain reading strategies like skimming, scanning, and highlighting. It has also become second nature to include word study lessons or activities as needed. While it is the choice of our learners to participate in whole group activities, individual reading instruction is also available to students who have realized their need for additional

instruction. The reading instruction is incorporated in all areas of academic study, as well as program components. In other words, during parenting, workforce development, science, social studies, and even PACT, if there is an opportunity to teach or use a specific reading skill or strategy – I go for it.

We have also experimented with using more graphic organizers this year to help develop reading skills. Although there was resistance at first, many of the adult learners are beginning to see the benefit as they develop these strategies to enhance their comprehension skills in reading. The "herringbone," one of the most popular tools among learners, has been particularly useful at helping us identify main ideas and supporting details. Adult learners have also used other graphic organizers to map out stories (Story Mapping), identify cause and effect (Cause and Effects), and to identify character traits (Venn Diagram). One of the challenges that I have faced when using the graphic organizers is to be sure to connect the use of the organizer to the goal –


Herringbone Graphic
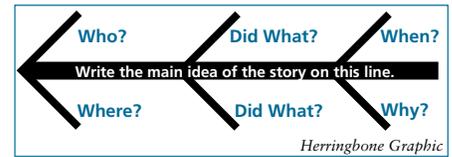
reading with understanding. It is important to relate how acquiring the skill of using the graphic organizer will lead to their ultimate goal, so learners will not see it as just an activity. In other words, in the language of EFF, be sure to make it purposeful.

This year, through funds available to participants, we were able to purchase more classroom novels. As a result, a variety of reading materials is available to the adult learners. The students are choosing novels to read independently or in reading pairs. We are also using the daily newspaper, *Parent & Child Magazine*, and *American Legacy: The Magazine of African-American History & Culture* on a regular basis in the classroom. Presently, the adults are able to work on the Internet on a limited basis. They have worked in teams, researching information related to specific projects and activities that they have undertaken.

This year we have focused a lot more on reading instruction in Norfolk Even Start's adult literacy class. Adult learners are consciously determining their purpose for reading, and choosing strategies that will help them to **read with understanding**.

Cheryl R. Williams teaches for the Family Literacy Program at Norfolk Even Start. Ms. Williams has been working in the field of education for the past twenty years. Her educational background is in Early Childhood Education with training in Parents as Teachers and Family Literacy.
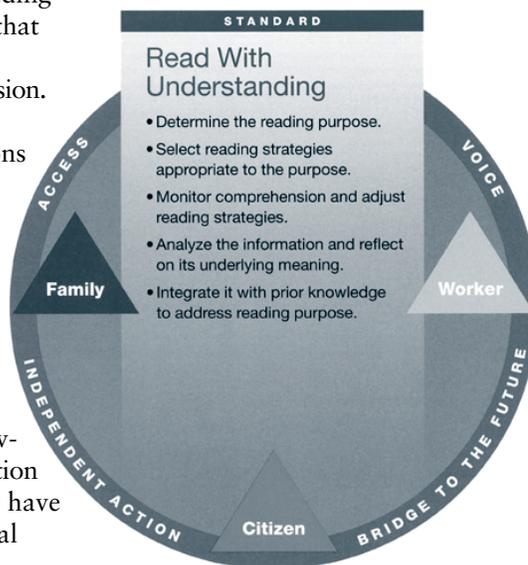
Finding Sustainable Funding For Nonprofit Organizations: Strategic Planning and Program Evaluation By Victoire Gerkens Sanborn

"The only way your organization can optimize the work it is doing for the community is for your fund development efforts to focus on the long term, and to revolve around the mission work you are already doing… [Focus] NOT on what your funders require, but on what the organization feels is the best way to serve the community."
--Hildy Gottlieb, "Mission-based Sustainable Fund Development: How to Do It"

During the 1980's, start-up community based literacy organizations struggled to keep their doors open. Some programs failed, others flourished. Today, many still depend on restrictive grants, too few donors, and time-consuming fundraising events. The challenge for these nonprofits is to find sustainable funds that will allow them to focus their limited resources on their missions, provide critical services, and strengthen their organizations.

Strategic Fund Development Planning:

What can programs do during this time of cutbacks to find diverse and unrestricted funding? Or to attract a dependable group of donors who are willing to donate repeatedly? The answer – a strategic fund development plan – has always been at their doorsteps.

Recruiting strong leadership and a capable staff committed to the mission are the first crucial steps toward finding stable funding. Board members, staff, volunteers, and important stakeholders must also agree to share roles in shaping fund development policies. Such cohesiveness is forged over time, from three to five years, at monthly meetings, during yearly retreats and regular planning sessions,

or in written and oral communications. A two-hour fund development meeting here and there will only convince a skeptical board and staff that such planning exercises are a waste of time.

"If board members, who are the volunteers most closely related to the organization, do not support it financially, it is unrealistic to expect others to contribute to the nonprofit's mission and work."
--Robert E. Fogal, Handbook of Non-profit Leadership and Management

What Funders Look For:

• **A Strong Board:** 100% board giving is essential. Board donations, as vital as board participation and commitment, should be written in the bylaws and made absolutely clear during board recruitment. Board members who are recruited for their fundraising skills and community ties can identify new prospects or supply new information on current supporters. In general, board members should be skilled (or trained) in researching potential donors and asking for donations. Jane Carlson, former fund development director of the Richmond Ballet, recommends that executive directors keep board members regularly informed.

"Deliver a written and oral development report at each board meeting. List current year and previous year figures, names of donors, and amount of gifts/pledges, totals for the period and year-to-date. Board members should also know the fundraising goals for each sector of prospects – corporations, foundations, individuals, board members, special events, etc."

• **Program Strengths:** Foundations that fund capacity building grants look for the following program

characteristics: a clearly defined mission and vision, mission-based programs and services, credibility, strong leadership, teamwork, tight financial management, trustworthiness, technological capability, skill-building capacity, and a clear understanding of internal and external environments. Nonprofits must also be able to: demonstrate a critical need for its services, change as community needs evolve, collaborate and network with corporate partners and other community organizations, identify assets and resources, maintain accurate records, and provide reliable data on program effectiveness.

"Donors, as a rule, do not so much give money to organizations, as they give money to people – to people whom they know, trust and respect – which means that who does the asking is at least as important as the cause for which the funds are being raised."
--The Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership

• **Realistic Self-Assessment:** Capacity-building foundations want to know how their funds will be spent. Research has shown that most nonprofit organizations need strengthening in the following areas: organizational evaluation and assessment; board, staff, and fund development, including planning for revenue-generating activities; new or improved facilities; marketing and public relations; and financial management. Organizations should use an outside facilitator when identifying organizational strengths and weaknesses. *How are we doing? An Inquiry Guide for Adult Education Programs* by Beth Bingman and Olga Ebert, available at the Resource Center, provides

ESOL Institute for New Practitioners

Sweet Briar College • July 15-17, 2003
By Nancy Faux

The ESOL Institute for New Practitioners will offer an intensive learning experience to help teachers and tutors gain the knowledge and skills they need to successfully teach English language learners. This institute is for instructors who have not taught adults and/or have little or no training in ESOL, and there is a special program-planning strand for program managers who are new to ESOL. Institute participants will join a cohort of fellow practitioners to attend a sequence of workshops that address core knowledge areas, including second language acquisition theory, lesson planning, assessment, reading, cross-cultural communication, and early oral production strategies. Our team of trainers has many years of experience in professional development, and in ESOL teaching and program management in Virginia and nationally.

The institute location on the beautiful Sweet Briar College campus will build a sense of community in a supportive and relaxing environment. To gain the most benefit from the experience, all participants are asked to register for the entire institute.
Coordinator:
Nancy Faux, nfaux@vcu.edu

Instructional Training Institute

Radford University • July 21-23
By Jane Swing

The 2003 Instructional Training Institute will focus on the inquiry learning process. With the help of keynote speakers and workshop presenters, you will learn to define inquiry learning and determine why and how to incorporate this instructional method into your program. You will hear from your peers who are currently using this method in their teaching and you will become familiar with the materials developed by WIN for GED as Project. Housing, meals, workshops, institute materials, and vendor exhibits will be provided for participants. Publisher exhibitors will be on hand to share the latest materials available for adult education and literacy learners.
Coordinator:
Jane Swing, jswing@radford.edu

ESOL Institute for Experienced Practitioners

Marymount University • July 30-August 1
By Patricia Bowyer

The first annual conference of the ESOL Institute for Experienced Practitioners, with the theme "Drawing on Experience," seeks to emphasize the value we place on the experience gleaned from past institutes, the experience of our ESOL practitioners, and the experience of our students. The institute will offer a wide variety of sessions both in 4 hour in-depth format and 1.5 hour workshop format. Adult ESOL practitioners with varying degrees of experience who teach in intensive and non-intensive programs and at levels from literacy to advanced will find many topics of interest that will inform and embellish their practice.

You can choose from sessions on reading, writing, pronunciation, technology, video, family literacy, assessment, fitness for the ESOL teacher, and many, many more presented by experienced practitioners and experts in their fields.
Coordinator:
Pat Bowyer, Pat.Bowyer@fcps.edu

Registration information available at (800) 237-0178 or at www.aelweb.vcu.edu/summerinstitutes

One of the Best Kept Secrets By Marti Giese

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organized under the following topics:
• Communications
• Computations
• Self Awareness
• Social Awareness
• Consumer Awareness
• Scientific Awareness
• Occupational Preparedness
• Technological Awareness

Since EDP candidates must also demonstrate a vocational skill, diagnostic career instruments are administered as part of the program. Referrals to training programs are part of the process, too, whenever a candidate wishes.

EDP is good for employers, too.
As self-responsibility is the cornerstone of the program, candidates learn to read directions and solve problems in real-life contexts. Since candidates work at their own pace, must manage their own task completion, and identify resources in the community from which to acquire the needed information to complete their tasks, they become more self-reliant

employees, learning from mistakes, and taking initiative to identify and solve problems at work.

Everybody grows.
Those who administer the program enjoy the same self-directed learning process that their clients use. Initially, National External Diploma Program (NEDP) approved trainers teach and mentor new faculty, called advisors and assessors, to administer the EDP program. Fairfax County Public Schools has such a training site. Then advisors and assessors come together periodically to review "tough calls", difficult decisions they've had to make regarding their client's work. Through referencing the EDP training manuals and facilitated discussion, consensus is reached as to guidelines for acceptable answers to those tough calls.

Visit the National External Diploma (NEDP) Website
Tune in to www.nedp.org to learn more about the history, design, and key characteristics of the EDP process.

You can also learn more about EDP for business and industry, sign the guest book, and watch for the coming discussion group.

Facts about the External Diploma Program
• **Where it's offered:** Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, New York, Rhode Island, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and the District of Columbia.
• **Graduates each year:** Approximately 1,800 – 2,000
• **Average time to finish:** 6-8 months
• **Percent pursuing higher education:** 40%
• **Better job upon completion:** average increase of $7,000 per year
• **Contact:** National External Diploma Program, 1-888-298-6337, www.nedp.org

Marti Giese has an M.A. in Human Resources Development and holds broker certification from the Workforce Improvement Network. Until recently she developed site-based workforce and workplace training programs for businesses and community agencies in Northern Virginia. She currently coordinates the External Diploma Program for Fairfax County Public Schools.

Hampton Roads External Diploma Program

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak with Nancy Companion, Program Manager for the Hampton Roads External Diploma Program about the benefits of the EDP. The Hampton Roads program serves the entire peninsula area, working in conjunction with many of the high schools in the region.

John Anderson: How long has your program been using EDP?

Nancy Companion: Since March of 1994. I've personally been working with the program and coordinating for 3 years. I am the program's third coordinator.

John Anderson: What needs does EDP meet that your program couldn't meet before?

Nancy Companion: The EDP allows the self-directed adult with good basic skills (at or about the 7/8 grade level) to earn a high school diploma. Many older adults are not comfortable in a test taking environment or with being timed. So the GED is not the best method of assessing their knowledge. In the

Nancy Companion

EDP, the individual does most of the work at home, is not timed and has unlimited chances to re-do things until he is successful. Many of the skills demonstrated in the EDP are the same as those on the GED test. They are presented in a more comfortable manner; that is real life rather than academically based.

John Anderson: What do you like best about EDP? What difference has it made for your program, your learners specifically?

Nancy Companion: I most enjoy seeing how earning a high school diploma changes people's lives and opens new doors to a better job or more education.

John Anderson: What is one personal story that stands out to you?

Nancy Companion: We worked with a lady who came to us from adult basic education and had been going to GED classes for years. She was also afraid of losing a job she disliked because she had lied on her application about having a diploma. We helped her find a math tutor (her real weakness) through the literacy program at the public library. She was laid off

from her job, although not because they found out she had no diploma. We were able to put her in touch with Workforce Express. They paid for the EDP and additional training at Thomas Nelson Community College when she earned her diploma. Today, she has passed the state exam to be a pharmacy technician and loves her job. I love the way all our agencies were able to work together to serve our mutual client. None of us could have done it alone.

John Anderson: What are some unexpected things that occurred with EDP?

Nancy Companion: Going through the EDP often leads the individual to experiences that they would not otherwise have had. They attend a live performance and find out how much they enjoy it. Or they write a

EDP Programs in Virginia

Fairfax County
Fairfax, Virginia 703-207-4014

Hampton Roads
Hampton, Virginia 757-727-1049

Henrico County
Highland Springs, Virginia 804-328-4095

Lynchburg City
Lynchburg, Virginia 434-522-2320

Northumberland County
Lottsburg, Virginia 804-580-3152

Spotsylvania County
Spotsylvania, Virginia 540-898-8165

Prince William County
Manassas, Virginia 703-791-7357

Suffolk City
Suffolk, Virginia 757-925-5651

Prince George County
Prince George, Virginia 804-733-2670

Reading Changed My Life

By Randolph Hinton

In May 2002, Randolph Hinton graduated with an Associates Degree in Fine Arts from Thomas Nelson Community College. During his time with Peninsula READS and the Hampton Adult Education Program, Randolph not only worked to achieve his own educational goals, but made great efforts to reach out to other adult learners. He served as a leader in our Student Support Group, as a volunteer tutor/mentor to a selected group of elementary school children, and as an advocate for adult literacy and adult education. Randolph graciously adjusts his schedule to join Peninsula READS' staff to speak to community groups and leaders about the importance of community-based literacy organizations and adult education.

I grew up in Tarboro, North Carolina. I lived with my grandparents on a farm. As I grew older, I had to work on the farm to help out. I stayed out of school in the spring and fall to work the farm. As time went on, I stopped going to school all together.

When I was barely an adult, I moved to Hampton, Virginia. One day I was riding the bus and I saw a slogan on the inside of the bus. The advertisement read, "if you would like to read and write better, come to the United Way Building on the third floor, Room 302." I called the number of the Peninsula Literacy Council, now called Peninsula READS.

In May 1991, I was matched with a tutor named Cynthia Metzger. She started helping me to read Laubach Level 1 and the headlines of the newspapers. She helped me learn to read, and she also taught me about the history and different places in our area. We went to the Virginia Air & Space Center, Miss Hampton Boat Tour, and the Hampton Public Library. I had never been to places like this before and I learned about so many different things. She said it was O.K. to call her if I needed some help while I studied at home. That really meant a lot to me. I worked with her for two years before she moved to Florida.

Before Cynthia moved, she encouraged me to enroll in adult education classes. She said I was ready to start studying for my GED. I didn't think so, but I went ahead and started a pre-GED class in September 1993. My teacher was Mrs. Sadie Alexander. She taught me reading, writing, and mathematics skills. By January 1997, I'd worked my way to the GED Refresher class taught by Mrs. Karen Anderson. She was very helpful by working with me before and after class as I prepared to take the test.

Finally, in May 1997, I received my GED. I was so grateful to all my teachers who helped me study and understand the material. All the teachers I had at the Hampton Adult Education Program were willing to spend extra time answering questions and explaining things to students. They were also the same people who encouraged me to enroll in Thomas Nelson Community College.

This past May 2002, I received an Associate's Degree in Fine Arts. I plan to enroll in Old Dominion University to work toward getting a Bachelors Degree in Fine Arts. Currently, I am taking some additional courses from Thomas Nelson to prepare for ODU.

I can honestly say that since I started working with the people at Peninsula READS and Hampton Adult Education Program, I have been surrounded by some of the nicest people on this earth. When I was a child, the teachers had favorite students. I was shy and I missed a lot of school. It's so different learning to read as an adult. The volunteer tutors and teachers treat students equally and are very encouraging.

Reading changed my life. Two weeks before I saw the ad on the bus, I had come out of an alcohol rehabilitation program. I started drinking early on because it made me a different person –I didn't have to face how badly I felt about the fact that I couldn't read well. Reading has kept me sober for 11 years. It keeps me focused. It has changed my life.

Submitted by Laura Barthello, Executive Director, Peninsula READS.

The Paradigm Shift

By Patty Shortt

Adult education programs in Virginia have historically employed different visions of adult education when deciding what services to offer and for whom. Consequently, adult education programs across the state lack consensus on the mission, purpose, and intended outcome of adult education.

The paradigm of adult education is shifting as the result of the evolution from the earlier *traditional vision* of Adult Education to the current *comprehensive vision* of Adult Education defined in 1998 by Title II of the Workforce Improvement Act. The two visions of adult education are poles apart and this major disparity is responsible for the paradigm shift.

The *traditional vision* of Adult Education evolved over a century ago with a focus on enhancing the personal lives of illiterate and under-educated adults through literacy. The *traditional vision* assimilated adult education, self-esteem, personal development, and basic life skills to help adults achieve personal goals.

During the Agricultural and Industrial eras of the Twentieth Century, most family-supporting employment did not require a high school education. In fact, it required little more than a strong back and a good work ethic. Many Virginians traded the opportunity to achieve a high school diploma for the promise of good wages and steady work. Virginians were lured out of school at an early age to work long hours in the mines, mills, farms, factories, and other industries that made Virginia an economic power.

It was a time when workforce development focused on narrow, short-term job training that supported the economy but did not require

adults to acquire literacy skills. Virginia's large number of adults with limited literacy and language skills today is, to some extent, the result of Twentieth Century work requirements that subsequently created regions in the state where low levels of cultural and intergenerational literacy exist.

However, we now have very different requirements of the workforce. Most jobs that do not require a high school education have relocated to less developed countries where labor is cheap. Every day, Virginians are losing their jobs or are unable to apply for jobs, because they do not have a high school education. This serious problem is devastating individuals, families, and Virginia's potential for economic development.

Today, knowledge creation increases the pace of advancement, technology increases the speed of communication, and global competition increases employers' requirements of the workforce. In order for American business to maintain a competitive edge in the global marketplace, the U.S. workforce must keep pace with higher work skill requirements.

A Knowledge Era emerged with the turn of the century and intellectual capital is the primary economic value today. Workforce readiness now requires U.S. workers to have a high school education in order to have adequate skills to keep up with increasing work requirements.

Educators of the *traditional vision* of Adult Education characteristically adjust slowly to the realities of a knowledge-based economy and the integration of adult education with workforce development. Some argue that economic outcomes should not be part of their mission.

The impact of societal changes and economic consequences necessitate an assessment of how well adult education is meeting this challenge. The implication of how well prepared we are to successfully instruct the undereducated adult population in Virginia is vital to the state's future growth and development.

The *comprehensive vision* acknowledges adult education, as the critical factor in successfully competing in a knowledge-based economy. Adult education is recognized as a public mission as well as an individual one. The heart of this vision lies in its effort to address both personal and societal needs in ways that support learners and their families, and sustains local economies and employers. The *comprehensive vision* embodies a commitment to provide adults with literacy and competencies necessary to function successfully in a progressively changing world.

In 1998, The Workforce Investment Act affirmed the *comprehensive vision* and officially anchored the adult education system within the workforce development system to establish stronger links between education, employers, and labor market needs. The intent is to help learners achieve their personal goals and develop skills that improve their employability. The result is a positive economic outcome for individuals, communities and the state. The relationship between workplace success and personal success is strong and clear. Adult education can meet employment goals without losing its' long-standing commitment to personal development goals.

Achieving a GED increases the self-esteem of graduates and improves

A New Web-based Resource

By Ronna Spacone

A new training resource is available for programs interested in using inquiry groups and research methods in their program improvement efforts. *Practitioner Research as Staff Development: A Facilitator's Guide* provides basic materials and information to implement a practitioner research network in your program or region. In practitioner research, participants systematically conduct inquiry about their work and their students' learning, reflect on the findings, and make informed decisions about implementing changes in their practice and improving their program.

Practitioner Research as Staff Development: A Facilitator's Guide is based on a model that the Virginia Adult Education Research Network (VAERN) adopted from 1998-2000. During that time, two groups (a total of twenty-five adult educators) designed and conducted research in their programs. In their research briefs, participants described their projects and what the results meant for them, for the people involved, and for their practice. The process and the materials they used are collected in this guide, making it possible for others to replicate this practitioner research approach.

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center developed this guide as a website, http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/research/index.htm. It is organized into four meetings. Each meeting focuses on a primary stage of the research process:

- Coming Up With A Research Question
- Collecting Research Data
- Analyzing Research Data
- Making Our Research Knowledge Public

For each meeting, the following materials are provided:
- An agenda of activities with guidelines for the facilitator
- An outline of the group process with the participant handouts
- Information about homework requirements and meetings preparations
- Work samples from practitioner research networks
- Research references and resources

In practitioner research, participants identify the issue to study and what questions to investigate in their program. They decide how to conduct their research and what the appropriate purpose or outcomes might be, given the constraints or demands of their working contexts.

"The project I developed as part of my assignment for the Research Network resulted in a major policy change for Fairfax County. Working with Marti Giese, we designed and implemented an "Orientation to Learning" approach to the adult high school completion program intake process. The results of the project demonstrated that adult students appreciated and worked better using the discovery method of learning while working in the FC Learning Centers and staff that participated was shown practical methodology.

Learning to apply the Inquiry Method to my work as a practitioner was new to me. Learning to ask the simple questions, 'What are we doing?' and 'Why are we doing it?' and 'What is going on here?' while using a systematic approach to data collection and analysis made all the difference in my further work as a professional." (Donna Chambers, 1998-1999 VAERN participant)

Practitioners conduct informal research all the time. They think about why some instructional activities work better than others, how to reach certain students, or why some students learn more rapidly than others. Practitioner research formalizes the process.

"So often in the classroom, one has a hunch or intuition about a technique or strategy that might be worth trying but even if one acts on this idea, seldom does one keep documents tracking the results. A research project requires this." (Pat Bowyer, 1998-1999 VAERN participant)

It is essential to good professional practice to continually question what is happening in classrooms and programs, to try out new strategies and innovations, and to make informed decisions for taking action in the future. *Practitioner Research as Staff Development: A Facilitator's Guide* was developed to help forward the process.

Ronna Spacone, Coordinator of the 1998-2000 Virginia Adult Education Research Network, developed this guide. Currently, she is an Education Program Specialist at the Office of Adult Education, United States Department of Education.

Assessing Success in Family Literacy and Adult ESL
A Book Review by Charla Faulkner Crews

This handbook is a revised version of a 1994 handbook written by one of the editors, Daniel Holt. The 1994 edition focused on evaluating family literacy programs. This revised edition, while preserving the timely information from the previous addition, expands its focus to programs serving adult English learners. Editors Holt and Carol Van Duzer present a systematic approach to assessing a family literacy program and include considerations for an ESL component. They advise using both alternative assessment and standardized assessment measures to obtain a more complete picture of a program. This book can be helpful to the seasoned specialist as well as to the newcomer to the world of family literacy and ESL instruction.
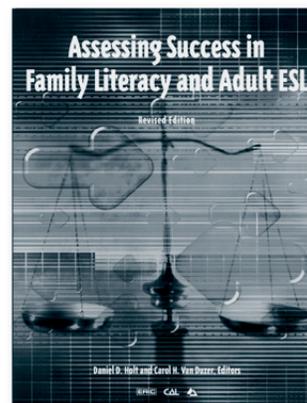
Contributors David Ramirez, Kathy Graham, Heide Spruck Wrigley, and Sal Gelardi, along with the editors, guide the reader through each step in the process of designing and implementing an evaluation program. Early in the text, the editors establish the purpose and importance of evaluation. They present practical and useful information such as the distinctions between standardized and alternative assessments and the special characteristics of programs for adult English learners that should be considered when designing an evaluation program. Holt and Van Duzer provide a table that outlines the standardized tests commonly used with ESL students. The table includes four tests and describes the purpose of each. This information can guide staff members who are responsible for deciding which assessment is best for addressing their needs.

The book continues with a detailed explanation of the Planning Process Model by David Ramirez. Programs build this process by starting with a collaboration of staff members and adult learners who share a common understanding of the design of the program. The process creates a cycle that is made up of three phases– preplanning, planning, and evaluation. Ramirez also addresses several issues in assessment and evaluation using a question and answer format, providing a quick way to find the answer to pertinent questions that may arise as the staff designs a process of evaluation.

Following Ramirez, Kathy Graham discusses two significant concepts: initial assessment and alternative assessment approaches. A diagram of the "Influence of the Needs Assessment on the Entire Project" illustrates the importance of initial assessment in the planning stage of the project. This initial assessment includes needs assessment, intake and placement and is imperative for ensuring that staff plan appropriate learning activities and accurate measures to assess the progress of the learners. Needs assessment reinforces the Planning Process Model in that the use of an established procedure for evaluation, staff collaboration, and predetermined evaluation criteria are built into the program. Graham continues by providing a description of several alternative assessment approaches and gives examples at the end of the chapter.

Heidi Spruck Wrigley writes, "Progress assessment can help staff determine the extent to which their instructional efforts lead to beneficial results and have positive effects on the learners' lives." Wrigley goes on to describe the characteristics of alternative approaches to assessing ongoing progress. She offers helpful strategies that influence daily program methods. In the section "What To Do," Wrigley lists realistic activities that can be used by the staff. She also touches on different types of assessment, their purposes, the methods of assessment, and an example of each.

Sal Gelardi summarizes the process for collecting, analyzing, using, and reporting data obtained from four alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation: surveys, performance samples, interviews, and observation measures. The book concludes with a useful glossary related to assessing adult ESL and family literacy programs.

This handbook presents a process for designing an evaluation for family literacy and adult ESL programs. It will prepare staff to address accountability issues with stakeholders involved in their program. This is a book which can help lay a strong foundation for a new program or revive an existing program by suggesting ways to evaluate program success in terms of participant effectiveness, as well as the effectiveness in meeting the program's goals.

Charla Faulkner Crews is Coordinator for the Family Literacy Program that is sponsored by Halifax County Public Schools and Longwood University Institute for Teaching Through Technology and Innovative Practices. Charla comes to the program after 18 years of classroom experience.

The BEST Plus–A new way to assess oral English skills
By Carol Van Duzer

In this era of accountability, programs serving adult English language learners have been searching for an assessment tool that meets accountability requirements, can be administered in a reasonable amount of time, and provides feedback on learner progress and information that will assist in improving program quality. The BEST Plus responds to these needs.

Developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the BEST Plus is an individually administered face-to-face scripted oral interview designed to assess the English language proficiency of adult English language learners. The assessment is an adaptation of the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Oral Interview that was developed during the early 1980s. Like the BEST, the BEST Plus assesses *interpersonal conversational* communication using every day language. It is able to assess a wider range of English language proficiency levels than the original BEST--from Student Performance Level (SPL) 0 (no ability whatsoever) to SPL X (native-like proficiency). The BEST Plus integrates current knowledge in the assessment of speaking and listening skills with the latest knowledge and practice in educational measurement to present a precise and flexible oral assessment. The adaptive nature of the BEST Plus means that examinees will receive different tasks each time they take the test, particularly as their skills improve and they are administered more challenging items.

Two Versions of Best Plus

The BEST Plus comes in two versions –a computer adaptive assessment on CD or a semi-adaptive print-based version. The BEST Plus begins with "warm-up" items to make the examinee feel comfortable conversing with the test administrator. These include personal information questions that are commonly asked of English language learners (e.g., What languages do you speak?). The examinees are then administered several sets of thematically related questions on topics such as health, recreation, and education.

In the computer-adaptive version, the test items are delivered via a computer. The test administrator asks the examinee a question presented on the computer screen, listens to the examinee's response, determines the score for that item, and enters the score into the computer. The computer then selects the next test item, choosing items most appropriate for the examinee according to the scores entered for each response. The examinee only sees the computer screen if the test item involves a picture. At the end of each interview, the computer automatically generates a score report. This report includes the examinee's scaled score, SPL Level, National Reporting System (NRS) level, and sub-scores for listening comprehension, language complexity, and communication. The time it takes to administer this version of the test ranges from 5-15 minutes, depending upon the ability level of the examinee. Generally, examinees with higher language proficiency have more to say, increasing the testing time.

In the print-based version, a quick locator test determines the level of test items (1, 2, or 3) that will most efficiently determine the functioning level of the examinee. These items are arranged in fixed-form level tests. The test administrator asks the examinee each item on the level test, scores the items, and marks the score on a score sheet. When the test is completed, the test administrator can total up the score to receive an estimate of the examinee's proficiency. A more precise level can be determined by entering the score data into a simple computer program that generates the same score report as the computer adaptive version. The print-based version of the test takes approximately 10-12 minutes to administer. There are three forms of the print-based version so that pre- and post- tests can be administered without compromising the validity of the test.

For both the computer-adaptive and print-based versions, the test administrator uses the same rubric to guide scoring decisions. Each examinee response is scored for three aspects of language:
- *Listening comprehension* refers to how well the examinee understood the question.
- *Language complexity* refers to how well the examinee organized and elaborated the response.
- *Communication* refers to how clearly the examinee communicated meaning.

Breaking New Ground

As the first computer-adaptive oral language assessment for adult English language learners, the BEST Plus is breaking new ground. At the same time, the BEST Plus is responsive to the needs of the field for an assessment tool that can link learner progress to accountability purposes, produce diagnostic information, be administered quickly, remain easy to score, and generate a new version of test questions each time it is administered. The BEST Plus will be available from the Center for Applied Linguistics in late March 2003. For additional information, visit the BEST Plus web page at http://www.cal.org/BEST/compbest.htm.

Carol Van Duzer is a Research Associate with the National Center for ESL Literacy at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C.

Finding Sustainable Funding For Nonprofit Organizations

By Victoire Gerkens Sanborn
...continued from page 6

detailed instructions for conducting a systematic, 12-hour inquiry process. Programs can also consult the 2003 Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence found online at http://www.quality.nist.gov/ or compare their program standards to ProLiteracy America's program standards (http://www.proliteracy.org). In addition, the Literacy Support Center offers online resources for program improvement and strategic planning at http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/literacy_support_center/.

Finding sustainable, renewable funds for nonprofit adult literacy organizations is an extremely complex subject. A second article on sustainable funding will appear in the fall 2003 Progress to discuss the implementation of a strategic fund development plan and to describe foundations that offer grants for program sustainability and capacity building.

Victoire Gerkens Sanborn is Director of the Literacy Support Center at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Hampton Roads External Diploma Program

By John Anderson
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government official or vote for the first time and find that they like making a difference.

John Anderson: What does it mean to be an advisor? How does this differ from being a teacher? How does being an advisor change the relationship you have with learners?

Nancy Companion: Being an advisor is working one adult with another. It's a relationship of equals where the individual finds the answers rather than having them given to him.

John Anderson: How have learners' perspectives and attitudes changed under the EDP program?

Nancy Companion: Learners see that they can learn and this often leads to more education and training.

John Anderson: In what ways do you see EDP evolving or changing to increase its impact and influence?

Nancy Companion: I see the External Diploma Program growing tremendously. In today's job market, a high school diploma has become the most basic requirement. The EDP provides the only means to that diploma for many adults.

The Paradigm Shift

By Patty Shortt
...continued from page 11

their quality of life through employment. Once grounded in general education, the GED graduate is a prime candidate for postsecondary education and training. GED graduates are a critical factor in meeting the state's economic development prerequisite – intellectual capital. Furthermore, GED graduates convey the importance of education to their children and, thus, break the cycle of intergenerational illiteracy.

Adult education holds several essential keys to Virginia's economic future including producing a strong workforce that will strengthen opportunities for economic development.

Have you made the paradigm shift? Does your local program reflect a *comprehensive vision* of Adult Education? If so, you are an integral part of Virginia's future.

Patty Shortt is a quality systems consultant with a Master of Public Administration degree from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. For the past two years Patty worked with the Division of Adult Education and Literacy conducting an operations audit of the Regional Adult Education Program and developing Level 1 NRS Training. Patty is now a Program Development Specialist with VALRC.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For a complete calendar of events go to:
http://pubinfo.vcu.edu/vaelc/events/calendar.asp

STATE

ESOL Institute for New Practitioners
July 15-17
Sweet Briar College
Contact: Karen Peffer, (800) 237-0178

Instructional Training Institute
July 21-23
Radford University
Contact: Jane Swing, (540) 831-6207

ESOL Institute for Experienced Practitioners
July 30-August 1
Marymount University
Contact: Pat Bowyer, (703) 714-5566

NATIONAL

44th Annual Adult Education Research Conference
June 5–8
San Francisco State University
San Francisco, CA
Contact: http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca/aerc/informat.htm

Summer Institute 2003: Literacy and Health
June 26–28
Centre for Literacy of Quebec and the Canadian Public Health Association and World Education
Montreal, Canada
Contact: http://www.nald.ca/PROVINCE/QUE/litcent/whatsnew/SI2003/1.htm

Voice for Adult Literacy United for Education (VALUE)
June 26–28
Adult Leadership Institute
Tampa, FL
Contact: http://www.valueusa.org

Correctional Education Association 59th International Conference
July 6–9
Oklahoma City, OK
Contact: http://www.ceanational.org

25th International Conference on Learning Disabilities
October 9-11
Seattle, WA
Contact: http://cldinternational.org

First Annual ProLiteracy Worldwide Conference
November 13-17
Washington, D.C. at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill
Contact: www.proliteracy.org