# *GED as Project* . . . Taking Off!

By Diane Foucar-Szocki, Ed.D.

If you were to survey adult educators and ask them to identify the goal of their learners when they walk through the doors of the Learning Center, it would likely be "to get their GED, now!" From beginning literacy level learners to those who are GED-ready, the majority of our learners feel that getting the GED is their project. To respond to this reality and build on what has been learned in recent years about problem-based learning in facilitated classroom environments, the Virginia Department of Education funded the Workforce Improvement Network (WIN) to develop an instructional approach for pursuing the new GED that could be extended to other classrooms. The result is *GED as Project: Pathways to Passing the GED*.

Central to *GED as Project* are Learning Projects and Inquiry Activities using the Inquiry Process Template. *GED as Project, Volume I: Introduction* sets the stage for passing the GED as a project. The introduction was completed in the fall of 2001, and *GED as Project*, Volume II: Math, with Learning Projects and Inquiry Activities using the Official GED Practice Test PA was completed in spring 2002. The *GED as Project* Inquiry Template provides learners a process for addressing GED test items and encourages them to better understand how they learn and how the content of the GED adapts to many other contexts. Students learn to connect the test with their day-to-day lives. We are teaching through the test, rather than to the test.
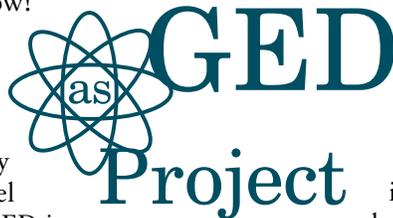
Using the inquiry template and the questions it poses puts the teacher into a mode of explicit instruction in which students actively explore their current understanding of a problem and pursue new understandings. This is in contrast to the more traditional mode of direct instruction in which the learner is often passive, exposed to and receiving information, but not actively engaged in making the information meaningful.

Template for the Inquiry Process

1. Identifying the Problem
2. Becoming Familiar with the Problem
3. Planning, Assigning, and Performing Tasks
   • Doing the Work
   • Reaching a Conclusion
4. Sharing with Others
5. Reflecting, Extending, Evaluating

How do we use strategic questioning to create this learning environment?

Focus on the process that learners use to understand a question and arrive at an answer. The *GED as Project* Inquiry Template begins with

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Dear Reader,

Whether you call yourself a tutor, an instructor, a trainer, or a facilitator
of learning, chances are that your students call you teacher. Learners seem
to have no trouble identifying a good teacher, yet educators have a hard
time defining what it means to teach. I went into the family trade; both
my parents were teachers. My first notion of teaching was to be like the
teachers who taught me. With the admonition, "Don't teach them, help
them learn," came the realization that the role of teacher is not so simple.
Figuring it out can be a life's work.

A variety of perspectives on the teacher's role are reflected in this issue of
Progress. Clysta Walters' conviction that learning should be an active role
for both teacher and the student lead her to embrace the new *GED as
Project* curriculum approach. The *GED as Project* inquiry-based learning
template challenges the traditional notion that the teacher's job is to get
directly to the right answer. "The teacher as facilitator creates an atmos-
phere that supports both the right answer and the wrong answer as a
means of understanding the content in the learning process." In fact a
wrong answer may be as helpful as a right answer.

Different situations require teachers to take different roles. Michele
Whitaker explains how she could relate to an adult student's fear of facing
a computer-based test. Taking the role of mentor, she used technology to
recreate the test-taking experience for him. Kitti Mann, the teacher in
Spotsylvania's Bridges to the Future project, joined a team of professionals
assisting welfare-to-work clients. In this situation, she became a counselor
as well as an instructor for women struggling with multiple barriers to
self-sufficiency.

Teachers bring their personal lives along with their content expertise to
the classroom. Trish McLaurin Rodriguez writes about incorporating
civics. She encourages teachers to share their knowledge about their
communities with the newcomers in their classes: "Your life can serve as
a community resource."

The best reading experience is when you recognize yourself in a text but
are able to learn something new. The editorial team hopes that every issue
of *Progress* presents new ways to think about our roles in adult education
and literacy. A readership survey is inserted in this newsletter. Please take
a moment to let us know how we are doing.

Sincerely,

Susan Joyner

Bringing the Community into the Classroom and the Classroom into the Community

By Trish McLaurin Rodriguez

You don't have to plan an elaborate field trip or rewrite your entire curriculum to incorporate civics into your adult ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teaching. Lessons that bring the community into the classroom and the classroom into the community can be exciting and motivating, without being complicated, costly, or time-consuming. Here are some tips and easy-to-use ideas that can help you integrate community activities and information into an ESOL lesson.

• REMEMBER, YOU ARE PART OF THE COMMUNITY. Think about what you do when you are not teaching. Your life can serve as a community resource; you can be the guest speaker! Perhaps you work in a bank–students can interview you about banking services, locations, and hours. Maybe you volunteer at the library– you may not be able to organize a field trip, but you can easily get library card applications for students and bring flyers, brochures, and books to show them. Perhaps you could tell students about the time you had to go to the health department and then have them ask you follow-up questions.

• YOUR STUDENTS ARE PART OF THE COMMUNITY. Think about– and get your students to think about–what they do when they are not in English class. One student may use the county employment office. Another may know all about the DMV. Many likely know where and how to wire money overseas. They are part of the community and can serve as excellent resources for each other. Your job as the teacher is to get students to share and build upon what each brings to the class.
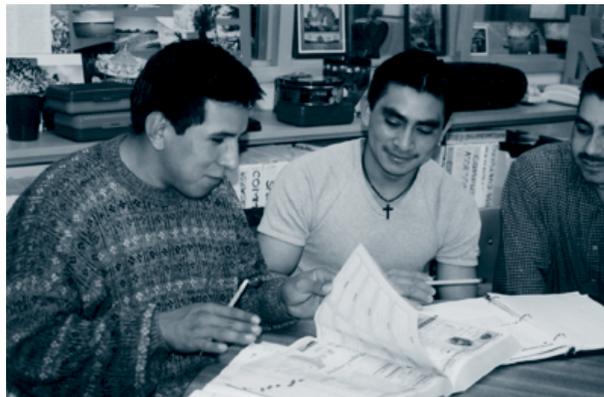
• ROUND ROBIN BRAINSTORMING can generate a variety of community topics simultaneously. Topics might include: getting a driver's license, healthcare, finding a job, and immigration. Post topics on flipchart paper at different locations in your classroom. Students rotate from one to the next, writing their ideas for resources related to each topic. After 10-15 minutes, the whole class reviews the lists. If there is a list with few or no ideas, the whole class discusses the topic and how they can get more information. Getting the needed information can turn into a class project.

• COMMUNITY MAPPING is another great way to integrate civics in your lessons. Give students maps of your area or have them create maps on paper. Working in small groups, students decide what community resource they would like to plot on a map–Western Union locations, county services, or places to buy Latino foods, for example. Each group creates a "community resource map" and presents it to the whole class. The class can ask questions or add to each map.

• PROBLEM SOLVING ACTIVITIES can help students better understand how to use various community resources. For example, after students have created resource maps, present the class with scenarios like the following: "Maria is on the corner of Columbia Pike and Glebe Road in Arlington. She needs to send $200 to her mother in Peru. Where should she go?" Using the map of Western Union locations, students determine the best location. Better yet, keep your ears open for students' problems related to community resources that the class could help solve. You can even create a 'HELP!' box where students can anonymously drop problems for the class to solve!

• DON'T OVERLOOK THE OBVIOUS, especially if you are working with a beginner class or with students who have recently arrived in this country. In addition to the knowledge that you and your students bring to class, many easy resources are available that often get overlooked. Spending time with the phone book, which has lots more than phone numbers, with a newspaper, or just taking a tour around your building to look at the different signs are great ways to bring the community into the classroom and to help unlock the mysteries of how life works in the United States.

Trish McLaurin Rodriguez is the Volunteer Coordinator with the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP). She has been teaching and working in adult ESOL for six years. Her article was born out of a VAILL-ESL panel presentation in which she participated entitled "Bringing the Community in the Classroom and the Classroom into the Community."

Improving Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities: The Virginia Initiative By Andrew Stowe

Overview

Let's call her Barbara. A 33-year-old single mother of two on welfare, she has worked sporadically in restaurants, housekeeping, and child-care. When Barbara was a child, she witnessed her father shoot her mother in a bloody, but non-fatal, confrontation. Her own husband, whom she has left, was abusive. After nine years on welfare, she began working with a special project designed to increase collaboration among welfare, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation services. Psychological evaluation revealed that she has learning disabilities (LD) in math, spatial orientation, and auditory processing, as well as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Barbara also suffers from panic attacks.

Little wonder that Barbara has had difficulty keeping a job. Her LD alone has played a significant role, hindering her ability to succeed in school or to get along with her peers. Vocationally, her LD has kept her from working successfully as a cashier, a teller, and every other occupation involving math use. It has hampered her when a supervisor did not write things down or post instructions in written form, or if she had to remember when and where to meet someone for a social or medical appointment. Her difficulty with spatial orientation has posed challenges to cleaning not only her home but any structure. Combining these challenges with her emotional problems, it is to her credit that she was able to hold down any job at all.

Virginia Bridges to Practice History

In the summer of 1999, numerous cases such as Barbara's caught the attention of representatives in adult education, welfare, and vocational rehabilitation in Virginia. A number of these representatives began discus-sions at the state level about how to improve services to those with LD. Figures at the time indicated that the percentage of those on welfare with a learning disability might reach as high as 40%. It was clear that a con-certed effort was needed to address the situation. With mandated employment and time-limited benefits brought about by welfare reform, participants realized that they had a number of goals in common. This article will discuss the history of what came to be known as the Bridges to Practice-Virginia Initiative.

The first step taken was to convene a conference of interested parties from the adult education and literacy, social services, and vocational rehabilitation communities. The initial four areas chosen to nurture these systems-change efforts included the counties of Henrico and Suffolk, the city of Arlington, and the larger area known as the Coalfields. This training, like the others that followed, had an ambitious four-fold purpose:

- To educate selected staff from the four localities regarding learning disabilities and associated issues;
- To create groups in each area dedicated to systems change across the adult education, social services, and vocational rehabilitation disciplines;
- To create a nucleus of trainers able to educate their peers;
- To establish a system of communication and collaboration at the state level in those respective agencies to help support and expand the efforts at the local level.

Efforts were coordinated with the national Bridges to Practice efforts through the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and the Department of Education's Office of Vocational

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The Literacy & Learning Disabilities Special Collection
http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/

What is it? A one-stop gateway to resources on LD issues important to adults with learning disabilities and their families; adult education teachers and tutors; staff from Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, One-Stop Centers; employers.

What kind of information and links will I find on this site? Free or low cost materials on:
- News Updates & Research
- Understanding LD & Related Legal Issues
- Adaptations / Accommodations / Technology
- Screening & Assessment Tools
- LD Appropriate Teaching and Learning Strategies
- Learning to Live with LD
- Training and the Bridges to Practice Project

Where is it from? Content development partners at the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee create, compile, and maintain the website that is part of the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS network. LINCS is a national effort to provide Internet access to information for adult literacy practitioners. The Literacy & LD Special Collection is one of ten LINCS collections related to specific content areas within literacy education.

and Adult Education (OVAE). A national training team with materials and resources was made available through this cooperation. The group adopted certain key principles to undergird the Bridges materials:

1. An adult with a diagnosed LD is eligible for accommodations and support under the Americans with Disabilities Act;
2. All training and materials developed for assistance in the identification, screening, and service provision to individuals with LD are carefully research-based;
3. Systems change is an integral component of any Bridges program.

The meetings in late 1999 became the first in a series of eight statewide training and partnership efforts. They included the active participation of national trainers and consultants with highly respected credentials in the field of LD such as Paul Gerber, Jim Koller, and Glenn Young. Each training event aimed at creating collaborations locally to improve the identification of, the array of services for, and the eventual empowerment of adults with LD.

In 1999, the Virginia effort was new in that it included the cross-agency partners. It further emphasized the need for systems to identify, support, and to find good-fitting, long-term jobs for those diagnosed with LD.

After more local and statewide meetings and success in creating these partnerships, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) awarded grant money for further development. By April 2001, seven proposals received funding to identify and serve adults with suspected learning disabilities who were on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Projects

continued in the four original areas and were expanded to Alexandria, New River Valley, and Spotsylvania County. Spotsylvania's specific efforts are discussed in the article on page 10. All of these geographic areas had a goal to integrate NIFL's Bridges to Practice principles of systems change and learning disability awareness, identification, accommodation, and self-sufficiency into their social service systems.

The Accomplishments

After three years of both voluntary and grant-funded efforts, these programs have achieved some resounding successes, including accomplishments in the following four areas:

A. Screening, referral, and diagnostic services. This includes adoption of a research-validated screening tool across all areas, an increased understanding, through psychologist participation, of the needs of all the partners, and more specific reports about educational and employment accommodations.

B. Collaboration, teamwork, and systems change among the core partners. Notable achievements include streamlined referral and intake procedures within and across agencies, regular team meetings that bring together all the core partners, and staff whose time and efforts are focused on the needs of adults with LD.

C. Provision of education and reasonable accommodation for those diagnosed. Specific program successes include:

- Systemic attempts to provide information in multiple visual, auditory, and kinesthetic formats to accommodate those with LD/ADHD;
- Creation of a brochure that reduces the fear of meeting with a psychologist;
- Successful integration of several

different Adult Education curricula that accommodates those with LD, focuses on enhancing self-esteem, and teaches job seeking and readiness skills.

D. Training in LD awareness and specific facets of LD to inter-agency groups. Over 1200 people have received at least a two-hour training in LD awareness.

Follow-Up

Finally, let's return to Barbara's experience with this collaborative system. First, she was diagnosed with several specific learning and emotional disabilities. Next, she was accommodated at her workplace as a childcare aide with wall calendars, written instructions, individualized math tutoring, and other strategies. She was able to maintain this employment successfully for over six months, longer than she had ever held a single job before. Her experience of enhanced job success and self-esteem is due in part to her own courage and initiative. Yet it is also because of the efforts of her teachers, her counselors, and her social workers to educate themselves and to work together to accomplish more. The continuation of these Bridges to Practice-Virginia Initiative projects in our Commonwealth will ensure continued success for Barbara and her peers well into the future.

Andrew Stowe is the Staff Development Manager for Career Support Systems, Inc. He has worked closely with social service, vocational rehabilitation, and adult education and literacy agencies on issues of disability and employment for the past three years.

GED as Project . . . Taking Off! By Diane Foucar-Szocki, Ed.D.

asking learners to identify and become familiar with a problem before they are asked to do the work of finding the correct answer. We want to encourage learners and allow them to explore their current understanding of the problem before pursuing the answer. Questions to ask here include:
• Have you seen problems/questions/ passages like this before?
• What words/symbols are unfamiliar, and what do you think they mean?
• What information do you think is relevant to what you need to find?
• What do you know about the situation this problem is posing?
• Have you experienced anything like this in your life before?

"We are teaching through the test, rather than to the test."

This approach helps us resist the temptation to launch immediately into direct instruction and explain how we think the correct answer should be attained. With this exploration of the problem, learners, whether working alone, in pairs, with a small group, or with the instructor, can pursue their own processes to answer the question.

The teacher as facilitator creates an atmosphere that supports both the right answer and the wrong answer as a means of understanding the content in the learning process. It is important to instill an understanding in learners that deriving the wrong answer may be as helpful as deriving the right answer, if the ensuing

discussion focuses on why the answer is wrong and how the right answer might be achieved. Some of the questions that can be used to encourage this kind of thinking are:
• How did you arrive at your answer?
• Explain to others why you think your answer is correct. Teaching others is one of the best ways to learn.
• What mental steps did you use to come up with your answer?
• Where might you find support in a book or other resource to support your answer?

Encourage learners to Reflect, Extend, and Evaluate their learning. One of the most significant contributions of *GED as Project* is the final phase of the five-step template. (See the template on page 1.) This last phase is called Reflect, Extend, and Evaluate. Reflecting gives learners the chance to think about their experiences and learn from both the process and the material being discussed. Reflection questions might include:
• Think about what you learned.
• How did you know to use the specific process required to solve this problem?
• What if the question had been . . . ? How would you write the equation?
• Can you think of any other situations in your life that are similar to this one? Explain.

Extending provides further opportunity for learners to integrate the material and other learning, to transfer what they learn to practical, everyday situations, and to be creative in that transfer. These questions focus on extending the content of the problem that was solved and what was learned to other aspects of life. Some questions that help learners transfer their learning include:

• Discuss situations in your life that would require you to use (triangles, circles, circumference, etc.).
• What overall story does the graph tell?
• If you were telling someone else how you become familiar with reading passages, what words would you use to describe what you do?
• Connect the reading strategy you used in other Learning Projects to this problem.
• How has the reading of this passage helped you to understand disciplinary procedures?
• What questions would you ask the company president if you met him or her?
• Create a question from the reading passage that asks the test-taker to recognize supporting detail?

Finally, through evaluation, learners begin to learn *how* to learn, to determine which approaches work best in various situations, and to build a collection of learning strategies to call upon in a variety of circumstances. Some questions that move learners toward evaluating their learning include:
• What strengths of mine were apparent during this Inquiry Activity?
• Which idea from this activity (example drawn directly from the Inquiry Activity) was easiest for you? Which was the most difficult? Explain.
• Does algebra seem less mysterious now and more practical or logical? If so, why?
• Remember your first reactions when you read this question. Now that you have answered the question, what advice would you give to test-takers?
• How does the math way of thinking help you prepare for the GED?

GED as Project Pilot

Nine instructors from Prince William County, New River Community College, and Planning District 9 were selected to field-test the GED as Project approach. From January to March 2002, the groups implemented the Introductory GED as Project Learning Projects and many of the math Learning Projects and Inquiry Activities. In April, the instructors met to Reflect, Extend, and Evaluate their learning from the 3-month experience. They reported that students were learning the content, internalizing the Inquiry Process, and using the process on tests. In some cases, retention improved as a result of the bonding among classmates in the small groups. Although the instructors found *GED as Project* valuable, they offered many improvements and enhancements as a result of their experiences. Their insights were invaluable, and the quality of the final product is a result of their input and hard work.

In June of 2002, at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, the WIN team trained 40 adult educators in using the GED as Project Inquiry Process. Participants were mostly Regional Specialists and Program Planners, who then began strategizing ways to incorporate this facilitative Inquiry Process into their programs and planning support mechanisms to put into place as their instructors begin implementation.

Enthusiasm is high. The Inquiry Process is being implemented in GED preparatory classes around the state. Fairfax County will use the *GED as Project* approach in all of its adult classes and will serve as a case study to demonstrate how the Inquiry Process translates in a variety of classroom circumstances. Most encouraging, teachers are transferring the Inquiry Process Template to use in other classes including: ABE, Pre-GED, Family Health, SOL-aligned Adult High School curricula, and Workplace Essential Skills-based classes.

Want to learn more?
Contact: Workforce Improvement Network, 800.261.9397 or winvlf@richmond.infi.net
http://web.jmu.edu/gedproject

Available now:
GED as Project, Volume I: Introduction and Volume II: Math Training videos on CD
Available in 2003:
Volume III: Reading and Volume IV: Writing
Available in 2004:
Volume V: Social Studies and Volume VI: Science

Contact the Resource Center for trainers, 1.800.237.0178
Four-hour training module available electronically from Susan Holt at msholt@att.nett

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GED as PROJECT : A New Approach That Works

By Clysta Walters

I have been a teacher for 26 years. Although I haven't always taught the same subject or age group, I have always held the same belief about teaching. I believe, and have tried to hold fast to the idea, that learning should actively involve both the teacher and the student. Currently I teach a two-and-one-half hour adult GED class one night a week in addition to the math classes I teach at Orange County High School. My evening students also attend a second night of class where they work on their writing and verbal skills. Both classes have science and social studies content. I deal with the charts and graphs, and my colleague deals with the comprehension.

I have been teaching adults for several years, but I have never been quite sure that the content I am teaching will actually show up in that form on the test. Inevitably, students would come back after taking the test and tell me, "none of that stuff you taught was on the test." While I know that is not altogether true, it might well be the case with some of the material.

Then I attended a conference where the Workforce Improvement Network (WIN) presented their research and plan for a new teaching process, *GED as Project*. I was fascinated by this method of teaching. The process was in line with what I believe about teaching, and it was clear that students would know exactly what was necessary to pass the new test. When the request for sites to pilot this new program went out, I knew I wanted to be involved. I suggested to our manager that we put our name on the list, and I prayed we would be chosen. In order for us to be chosen as a test site we needed three instructors to participate. Two of my colleagues,

Margaret Buraker and Eileen Moser, agreed to participate, and we were on our way.

We attended a training session in December and implemented the program in January. *GED as Project* offers an inquiry-based process that develops thinking skills as well as content knowledge. Throughout the field test, the developers were responsive to our comments and suggestions. Changes were made that reflected our experiences, which made the finished project very user friendly.

One of the consultants, Myrna Manley, is a former test item developer and a current reader for the GED Board. She developed the Inquiry Activities for the math section of the project using the PA practice test as a model. I did not need to worry whether what I was teaching would be on the test or not. I must admit that I was a bit uncertain whether this would work, but my students loved it.

A typical night in our class using the *GED as Project* template for the

Inquiry Process looks like this: For the first hour, the students work on their own areas of need. This gives me time to deal with new students (yes, we have open enrollment) and to address issues individually. We take a stretch break and come together as a group. Our *GED as Project* lesson begins when I pass out the student forms of the Inquiry Activity for the night.

Each individual gets a student form, which contains the question and the steps participants need to follow in order to complete the process. The students work individually through the first 3 steps of the template (See page 1). They must have an answer before they go to their small groups which, because of attendance, I permit them to choose. Once in their groups, the students discuss their answers and plan their presentations for the large group. If we don't have enough students for a large group, the students share with me.

Step 4 allows students to compare their answers and explain to others how they reached those answers. Then they decide on the best way

to share their work with the large group. Most students want to be involved, although I did have one young lady who refused to work in a group, until she saw that they always had a chance to check the answers before they shared. It was not long before she associated herself with a group, and now she participates in every lesson. After each small group has shared with the other groups, we proceed to step 5 of the template, which is probably the most important one. It is in this step that we reflect, extend, and evaluate what we have done in class. This step allows individuals to analyze their thought process, practice the math they have learned, and respond to the activity. My students all have journals, so this step provides excellent writing assignments, providing practice in yet another skill needed for the GED test.

So what is left for the teacher to do while the students are working? Instead of being a fountain of all knowledge, I have become a resource they can tap into. I spend much of my time observing and making notes to share when the sharing time comes. I always try to get at least one good quote from each student somewhere during the different steps. The students are very excited when I quote them later. It validates the fact that their knowledge is useful and worth sharing. Also during this time, I can deal with any misconceptions the students might have as they arise. Sometimes the students lack the necessary knowledge to complete a problem. When this happens, we stop the process and do what we call a "burst lecture."

My students have responded very well to this type of learning and are doing more math than they ever thought possible. And they are enjoying the math they are doing, many of them for the first time in their lives. One student who had been with me before I started *GED as Project* made me promise that I would never go back to teaching the old way. That was all I needed to hear about how they felt. I will keep my promise and continue using the Inquiry Process.

The *GED as Project* has what I call the three Es of teaching math:
- Enticement: If the student knows a concept will be on the test, that provides a reason for learning to take place.
- Engagement: The student is actively engaged in the process of learning.
- Empowerment: The student can use what s/he has learned in places other than only on the test.

I liked the process and saw such positive results with my adult students that I have taken it back to the high school. We have a group of 9th grade students who are at risk in math. They did not make a passing score on their 8th grade SOL tests and need remediation before moving on. Many of these kids are the ones I will see coming to my night class in time. Five of my staff members looked over the Inquiry Process, and we decided to write our course in the same way using the released items on the 8th grade test. We are just starting this trial, but the positive comments are already coming in. Teachers are pleased with the way the students are acting as a cohesive group instead of each one on his/her own. Won't it be really cool if something that was developed to help adults who dropped out of high school helps to prevent a large group of kids from taking that route? I'm eagerly awaiting

the next round of activities on GED Reading and Writing, which WIN is planning to release in June 2003.

I am pleased that I have been able to hold to my belief that active involvement and good questions are the best way to teach. This process has validated for me many of the things I intuitively knew from years of experience. It has provided an organized method for presenting what my adults need to know. I encourage you to attend training and get started. Check it out at *http://web.jmu.edu/gedproject*.

Clysta Walters has an M.A. degree from Long Island University in Secondary Math. She has taught math in Adult Education classes for 13 years. ❈

Virginia Energy Choice

Several programs are developing lesson plans for the Resource Center's Virginia Energy Choice consumer education grant. They are:
- Blue Ridge ESL Council
- Planning District 9
- Prince William County Adult Education
- Richmond READ Center

Energy Choice is a statewide consumer education program to inform Virginians about energy restructuring in Virginia. The program, which includes a website and a community outreach program, is designed to help Virginia's citizens make informed decisions about energy needs when suppliers begin offering their services. *For more information about Virginia Energy Choice, visit the website: www.yesvachoice.com or call 1.877.YES2004.*

Spotsylvania's Bridges to the Future

By Susan Hahn

In April of 2001, a new partnership between the Spotsylvania Department of Social Services (DSS), adult educators, and other service professionals was launched. The goal of this project was to identify and serve those with learning and other disabilities within the welfare population. Although Virginia's welfare reform efforts had resulted in a 50% reduction of the rolls statewide since 1996, a significant majority of the individuals left were often individuals with multiple barriers to employment. This group included individuals with little success in either education or employment and suspected physical, cognitive, or emotional difficulties that lay hidden just beneath the surface. Despite intensive case management by competent and dedicated social workers with numerous incentives at their disposal, many of these clients remained unemployed or failed to keep their jobs for any significant period.

To meet the needs of this population, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) provided grant funding to a Spotsylvania plan to address these issues. The design of the project had three basic components:

1. To identify, diagnose, and provide services to adults with learning and other disabilities within the DSS population. This would be accomplished through the development of a strong system of coordination and communication among the various service providers in adult education, welfare, vocational rehabilitation, and mental health;

2. To combine instruction in basic academic skills, GED preparation, and key elements of the PBS Workplace Essential Skills (WES) program through use of an eclectic classroom approach. The goal was to create an atmosphere that enhanced self-esteem and improved proficiency in both academics and employment;

3. For the Bridges project coordinator to carefully integrate and weave together these strands.

After almost twenty years of adult education experience, both in the civilian and military communities, I was hired as the coordinator for the new Bridges project. This was my first experience working with the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) population. As coordinator, I screen all TANF participants in the VIEW (Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare) program for possible learning disabilities using a research-validated screening instrument for learning disabilities known as the Washington State Screening Tool. We ask the VIEW clients whether or not they would like to participate in a survey for Virginia Commonwealth University. The survey asks the participant to indicate whether or not s/he has a problem in fourteen different areas, any one of which could present a barrier to obtaining or retaining employment. Problem areas include the following: transportation, childcare, housing, substance abuse, domestic violence, low educational level, mental retardation, learning disabilities, and physical and mental health problems.

Statistically we will have to wait for the researchers at VCU to complete the study, but the personal stories I have heard from these women are both gut-wrenching and heartrending. I have yet to interview a woman with just one barrier to employment. The typical profile is of a single mother with multiple disabilities and a whole host of other problems. These women suffer not only from a lack of educa-tion, but also undiagnosed mental illness, domestic violence, homelessness, and generalized despair. They are para-lyzed by poverty, and there are no stop guards in their lives, no safety nets. They free fall from one crisis to the next. Intervention is paramount to their individual survival as well as to the survival of their families.

"Intervention is paramount to their individual survival as well as to the survival of their families."

In addition, Spotsylvania's Bridges to the Future Project has been able to step in and assist the overburdened social services system by establishing a Workplace Essential Skills class at the DSS Community Resource Center. The six-week class prepares VIEW clients for the GED, teaches job-readiness skills, and introduces computer training. More importantly, under the constant vigilance and guidance of the instructor Kitti Mann, the women's confidence is nurtured. "Miss Kitti," as her students affection-ately call her, works as hard at alleviating anxiety as she does at remediating fractions. As the clients' self-esteems increase, so does the likelihood of their gaining meaningful employment.

None of this would be possible with-out the open minds and creative planning of experienced social work-ers, like Marsha Jasinski. Marsha was able to explain the complexity of the VIEW and social services system to an adult education teacher and try something completely new and different. Without her support and mentorship, the program would

have had much greater difficulty in getting off the ground.

Many of the Bridges clients are sent for psychological assessment and diagnosis to document a suspected learning disability. Our psychologist, Dr. Roger Pasternak, is a vital member of our Bridges team. During weekly feedback sessions he meets with the client, the caseworker, and me to explain the test results. He not only writes accommodations for the GED test but also recommends specific job accommodations. He screens the clients for mental illnesses and counsels them to receive treatment if necessary. Additionally, he comes to the Community Resource Center to meet with the classes and participate in Bridges team meetings. He has been a key player in our program's success by lending keen insight into some very difficult cases.

Based on Dr Pasternak's diagnosis, many of the clients now have docu-mented disabilities, thus enabling them to receive services from the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) and affording them protection under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Through the Bridges initiative, DRS and DSS have been able to link services and staff cases jointly. This makes efficient use of community resources and provides better services to the client. Liz Kelly, Spotsylvania's DRS counselor, now provides intake and counseling appointments at the Community Resource Center.

Interagency planning and development isn't easy. It requires great effort and cooperation among the partners. However, thanks to this effort, eighteen of Spotsylvania's Bridges clients earned a GED this year, one received her C.N.A. (Certified Nursing Assistant), and five have gone on to community college, with several more starting this fall. Our first student passed the GED with accommoda-tions after having failed the test sev-eral times without them. Many of the clients have begun mental health counseling through our community services board, beginning the long road to recovery and healing.

Spotsylvania's Bridges to the Future program has succeeded because of the tremendous interagency support and cooperation. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a com-munity to help someone off welfare.

Susan Hahn has twenty years experience in the field of adult education both at home and abroad. She has taught advanced and basic skills to our military personnel over-seas; ABE, GED, and high school completion classes; and coordinated literacy services. In addition, she has also instructed at the community college level.

Does Your Program Have a National Adult Education Honor Society Chapter?

The National Adult Education Honor Society (NAEHS) is an organization that has been recognizing adult learners since 1993. The primary goals of NAEHS are to improve student attendance and create student ambassadors for local adult literacy programs.

Establishing your own chapter of NAEHS is simple. Simply request an NAEHS Charter, decide which students to recognize, and inform NAEHS of the number of students selected. The cost is a one-time Charter fee of $50. In addition, the materials needed to recognize a student cost $12 and include a letter of recommendation from NAEHS headquarters, a certificate of achievement, and a handsome lapel pin.

A student's only obligation as a member is to share with family, friends, and co-workers what adult education has meant to them. There are no dues to pay, no oaths to take, or any other obligation except to help promote adult education in the community.

To contact NAEHS, phone 888.210.0935 or go to www.naehs.org for an online charter application, history, and program details.

Teaching Adult Second Language Learners

A Book Review by Carolyn Harding

Teaching Adult Second Language Learners has a great deal to offer to both new and experienced teachers. The authors, Heather McKay and Abigail Tom, have been teaching English to adults for many years. Because their classroom experiences are similar to those of adult ESOL teachers in Virginia, I found the material in this book practical, real, and easy to use. Many of you who have attended their workshops at ESL VAILL have commented on the effective, useful, and engaging lessons they demonstrate. In this book they share with language teachers everywhere a rich compilation of what works for them.

In the Introduction to the book the authors set out some basic information teachers need in order to plan and deliver an effective class. The topics covered are:
- What do adult learners bring to a class?
- How can teachers gather information about their students?
- What assumptions about language learning underlie this book.
- How do you plan a course?
- What makes a balanced lesson?
- How can a teacher work with a multilevel class?

Each topic, summarized in several paragraphs, could provide the basis for a training course for new teachers or a discussion group for experienced ones. For each topic, the authors provide clear handouts for readers to copy and use successfully in class. For example, to assist the teacher in gathering information about the learners, one handout provides the teacher with suggested interview questions while a second lists interesting writing prompts.
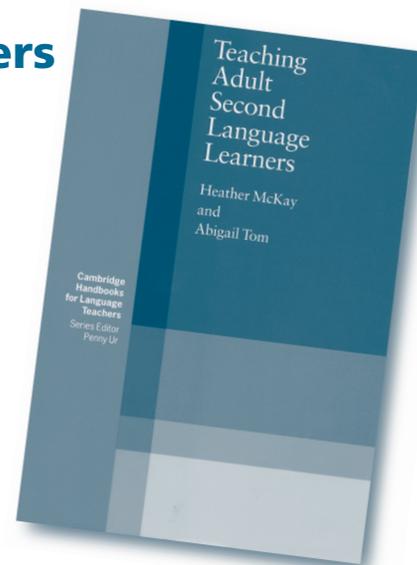
In the second part of the book, the authors emphasize the value of forming a community of learners and give practical ideas on how to do it. McKay and Tom believe strongly that ESOL classes should focus on helping students use the language. For learners to achieve enough confidence to use new language, they need to be comfortable in their class environment so that they are willing to try out new vocabulary and structures, and able to make mistakes without fear of embarrassment. To help the teachers accomplish this goal, the authors include specific suggestions on arranging the classroom set-up, on establishing possible opening and closing routines, and on managing pair and group work.

Almost 200 pages of the book are devoted to theme-based units that contain multiple lesson plans per unit. The units are based upon the assumptions spelled out in the Introduction; language is an interrelated and meaningful whole, learning language is an integrated process, mistakes are a normal and necessary part of language learning, classroom atmosphere affects learning, and the learner is an active part in the learning process. Therefore, they organize the units around themes with the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) addressed in the context of the theme.

The themes covered are personal identification, family, community, food, clothing, housing, health, work, and money. One of the lessons on community appealed to me. Students first interview each other and then people outside of class to find out their favorite places in the community.

This survey activity can serve as a model that can be adapted to many different topics. In addition, learners can write their own surveys and interview classmates about any topic of interest to them. This activity could evolve into a class project with students doing research on the internet or in the library on places they would like to learn more about. Further, they could produce a book of favorite places in the community and distribute it to other classes. The lessons in this book offer the possibility of creating many such extensions.

The activities chosen for the lessons represent many different kinds of interactive strategies: information gap, jigsaw, sentence strips, surveys and questionnaires, dictation, riddles, discussion cards, matching games, bingo, describe and draw, repair of split dialogues, and problem solving. These activities are fun, they encourage students to use the language, they appeal to different learning styles, and they encourage learners to take an active part in their learning. By using the strategies in these lessons as models, teachers can create similar lessons on different topics as needed.

Teaching Adult Second Language Learners is a treasure trove for teachers to select from according to their needs.

Carolyn Harding is a former program specialist for Adult ESOL in Fairfax County.

Discovering DiscoverySchool.com

By Michele Whitaker

When colleagues would rave about excellent lesson plans they'd found online, I'd smile and nod and continue racking my own brain for ideas instead of searching the dreaded web, which always felt to me like exploring some dark cavernous space with an inadequate flashlight. For every helpful website I managed to find, I rejected twenty others as irrelevant, inaccurate, or otherwise undesirable. Somehow it just seemed like too much effort for too little return. My attitude changed, however, when I stumbled upon DiscoverySchool.com [http://www.DiscoverySchool.com].

The site, which describes itself as having "fresh ideas to enhance learning" and offering "teachers of all subjects an array of powerful tools," had one tool I was able to put to immediate and frequent use: Puzzlemaker. I was teaching a developmental reading course for students who needed to improve their basic literacy skills before entering a degree program at Eastern Shore Community College. Because this course involved vocabulary building, I was always looking for new ways to help my students practice using their weekly vocabulary words in context. Puzzlemaker enabled me to quickly and easily create customized crossword puzzles, which my students loved and looked forward to getting each week.

I'd also perfunctorily browsed the lesson plans on The Teacher's Channel, but until I met Scott, a student at the Eastern Shore Community College's GED and ABE learning center, I had no reason to branch out beyond these limited uses. Scott's goal at the learning center was to prepare for the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) exam. After weeks of dedicated study and review with his peer mentor,

Irene, Scott felt ready for the exam. Since the atmosphere of support at the GED center is strong, we all waited eagerly for the news of his results.

He didn't pass.

The exam was computer-based. Despite Scott's preparation, his lack of experience in working with computers caused his concentration to falter. Thinking of all the times I had opted to avoid using the computer, I could certainly relate. Plus, I had often heard older returning students express anxiety about their computer experience and knew that translating information from the page to the screen added an undercurrent of anxiety for them.

Irene asked if I knew any way to recreate the CDL test-taking experience. Because I had noticed a "Quiz Center" option in my visits to DiscoverySchool.com, I volunteered to help out.

Creating the on-line quizzes at DiscoverySchool.com's "Quiz Center" was as easy as typing up a traditional paper test. The very next morning, I was able to present Irene with a website address (the URL) so she and Scott could go online, visit the website I had created, and take the multiple-choice test I had devised online. The quiz automatically tallied his score, showing which questions he'd answered incorrectly and providing him with the correct answers.

After diligent practice with his online test, Scott passed his exam on the second go-round.

The Quiz Center is a tool that your students can easily manage, and one that will reinforce their knowledge while they gain computer experience.

The process is simple. You begin by joining "My Discovery" and setting up a "Custom Classroom," which essentially means that you establish a sign-in name and a password, which will allow you to save your tests online. There is no charge for joining the service. Follow the steps below to find Quiz Center:
- Type http://www.DiscoverySchool.com into your browser window
- Select "For Teachers" from the menu
- Select "Teaching Tools"
- Select "Quiz Center"
- Select "Quiz Center Tutorial Demo"

This thorough tutorial will walk you through every step of the process and the many options available: you can create tests with short answer, true/false, essay, or multiple-choice questions, or a combination of these. Every time you generate a quiz, Quiz Center provides you with a website address which you provide to your students so they can gain access to the quiz. You can specify a self-test, like the one I created for Scott that provides instant tallying and correction. You can also choose to have the tests corrected, except for essay and short answer questions, and the results emailed to you.

Scott's story is a perfect example of me learning as much from a student as he learns from me: if it weren't for his learning needs, I might never have further explored DiscoverySchool.com, and I might never have increased my confidence and trust in the computer, while helping him to do the same.

Michele Whitaker teaches English at Broadwater Academy in Exmore, Virginia, and is an adjunct faculty member at Eastern Shore Community College in Melfa, Virginia.

GED 2002 Update

By Bob MacGillivray

Despite a sluggish start in January, the Virginia GED testing program is now running at full throttle. The GED Testing Service (GEDTS) encountered unexpected challenges in their attempt to deliver materials to 3,300 test centers around the country. Most Virginia GED testing centers did not become fully operational until February 2002. After nearly two years of GED 2002 training and some last minute nail biting, it can finally be said that the transition to the new series of GED Tests is complete.

Battery Passing Rate Comparisons *(Chart 1)*
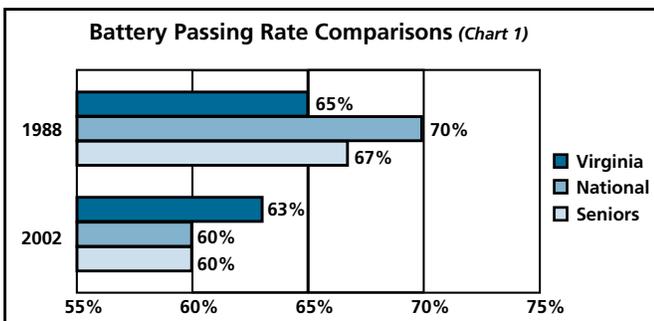
This article will provide an update on what is currently known about test-taker demographics and performance. Readers should understand that performance factors are subject to frequent change. Factors may include GED test outcomes of individual candidates or different subgroups of candidates. They may also refer to test center activity, such as the number of test-takers. Demographics of test-takers may change, but this will take some time. Locally derived information, such as local census information or adult education information submitted to the Department of Education (DOE) for national reports, may assist programs in sustaining high performance levels from their GED test-takers.

For the first time in the last decade, Virginia GED candidates are outperforming other candidates around the United States, as well as high school seniors who participated in the norming studies *(see chart 1)*. In September 2002, the passing rate of Virginia candidates was 63% compared to 60% for the other two groups. These pass rates refer to all first-time and repeat test-takers. At the end of April, the pass rate in Virginia was 65%. However, since April, the pass rate has dropped to 59%. First-time test-taker success has been only 58% nationally compared to 64% for Virginia candidates. Although it is a fact that Virginia candidates in September 2002 were outperforming the norming group and national program averages, we need to look closely at the performance slide in the pass rate.

The difference between passers' scores and non-passers' scores is significant. It appears that there are two distinct groups of GED candidates. The first group (currently 63% in Virginia) is comprised of well-prepared candidates who will earn their GED Certificate. The second group is comprised of individuals who are greatly under prepared to take the tests and who will need significant intervention in order to be successful.

The performance of retesters, both nationally and in Virginia, is significantly lower than first-timers on each of the five subtests *(see chart 2)*. As of this past September, the pass rate for Virginia candidates who retested in 2002 is 45%. The poor performance of retesters is a carry-over from the 1988 series of GED Tests. Many candidates will need to retake one or more subtests multiple times before they earn their GED Certificates.

Frequently, candidates who call the Department of Education for information are unaware of programs that can help them. After repeated attempts without intervention, all too many test-takers cease efforts to take the tests out of sheer frustration.

Specific test performance factors among Virginia candidates and other candidates nationally are similar. The difference in pass rates between the two groups on the five subtests of the GED Tests is negligible *(see chart 3)*. However, it is worth reviewing candidate performance on the math and writing tests. Clearly, these two tests provide the greatest challenge to candidates' efforts to earn their GED Certificates. The GED Testing Service staff has isolated some specific areas of concern on both the math and writing subtests.
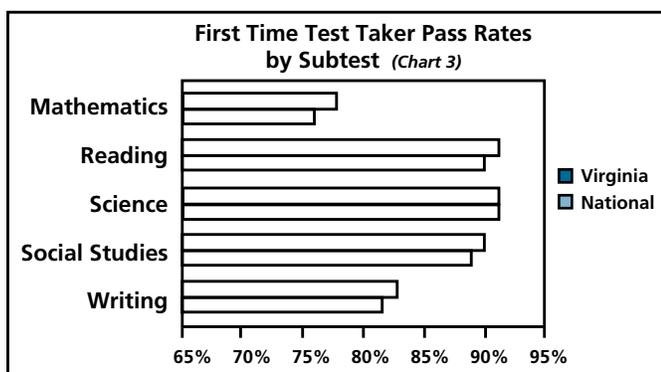
Math

- Number operations/procedural: Candidates were not consistently able to select which number operation to employ in problems.
- Coordinate plane questions: On part I of the math test, only 49% of the candidates provided correct responses to the coordinate plane questions compared to 60% of the high school seniors norming group. Of the candidates, 15% filled in more than one bubble per question

Retester Pass Rates by Subtest *(Chart 2)*
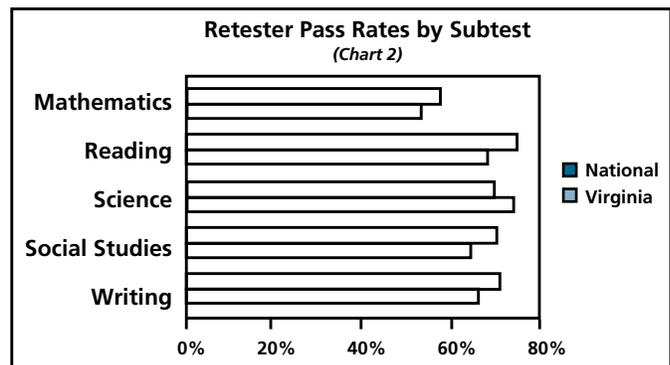
on this section. On part II of the math test, 74% of the Virginia candidates responded correctly to coordinate plane items compared to 48% for the high school seniors group.

Writing

- Writing off topic: As an example, GEDTS provided an excerpt from a candidate's essay that described an invitation to a friend's wedding. It appeared that the essay was well written with only a few minor mistakes. However, the topic was on describing a recent "invention" that has changed daily life.

Average Standard Scores (Chart 4)

new GED Tests *(see chart 4)*. Most of the 16- to 19-year-old candidates were currently or very recently enrolled in high school programs when they tested. Because students enrolled in high school programs must meet predetermined benchmarks set high enough to virtually guarantee success before they are permitted to test, this age group should perform well on the tests. Conversely, being older and farther away from formal instruction appears to adversely affect candidate performance. The correlation between years of education and performance on the GED Tests needs to be reviewed further, but it seems reasonable to counsel older GED candidates who have been out of school for a significant period of time to participate in GED preparation classes before having them attempt the tests, unless he or she can pass an official GED practice test.

According to the 2000 Census, there are 690,660 adults in Virginia over the age of 18 years who do not have a high school diploma or GED. New adults are added to the pool of 18-year-olds without a high school diploma or GED because they have left school. Each year adult education program providers are challenged to help more adults be more successful. Efforts to improve GED programs standing the best chance of success are those grounded in available data and research. The data presented here is only a snapshot of the Virginia GED testing program from January to September 2002. Other questions

First Time Test Taker Pass Rates by Subtest *(Chart 3)*

- Sentence structure/construction shift: e.g. The most effective combination of sentences x and y would include which group of words? The most effective rewrite of sentence x would begin with which group of words?
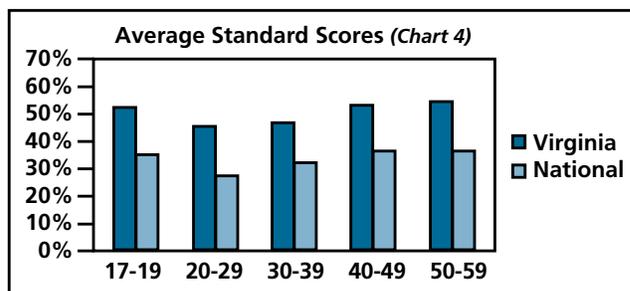
There are some gender differences in Virginia GED candidates' performance on individual subtests that are noteworthy. Female candidates are outperforming male candidates in writing 86% to 79%. Male candidates are outperforming female candidates in math 79% to 69%. In the other test areas, the differences were not significant. This information should cause adult education teachers to question performance differences. Appropriate research-based instructional adjustments may help close these gaps. As in the past, there is a clear correlation between age and pass rate on the

providers may want to consider include:

- What does the data mean?
- Are they satisfied with the current outcomes?
- How can they use the data to convince funding sources e.g. local school boards and the Department of Education of the needs?
- Can the data guide the discussion on setting annual program goals and objectives?

Answers to these questions may not be immediately apparent. In fact, the questions above may lead to even more questions. However, program improvement is not a quick fix. It is a deliberate, thoughtful, and ongoing process that includes, among other steps, reviewing available data.

Sources cited:
- GED Testing Service http://www.acenet.edu/calec/ged/
- Virginia Department of Education "Dropout" report at http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/publications/asrstat/2000-01/tab06.html
- "Graduates as Percent of Ninth grade Membership Four Years Earlier" report at http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Publications/rep_page.htm

Bob MacGillivray is the adult secondary specialist and GED administrator with the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy.

PROGRESS

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

STATE

Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference
March 13–15
Alexandria, Virginia, at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Center
Contact: Jane Swing, 540.831.6207

ESOL Institute for New Practitioners
July 15–17
Sweet Briar College
Contact: Nancy Faux, 800.237.0178

ESOL Institute for Experienced Practitioners
July 30–August 1
Marymount University
Contact: Pat Bowyer, 703.714.5566

Instructional Training Institute
July 21–23
Radford University
Contact: Jane Swing, 540.831.6207

NATIONAL

National Conference on Family Literacy and the State of California Family Conference
March 16–18
Long Beach Convention Center
Long Beach, CA
Contact: 502.584.1133, www.famlit.org/conference/conf2003.html

2003 TESOL Conference
March 25–29
Baltimore, MD
Contact: 703.836.0774
http://www.tesol.org

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics 81st Annual Meeting
April 9–12
San Antonio Convention Center
San Antonio, TX
Contact: www.nctm.org/meetings/sanantonio/

International Reading Association 48th Annual Meeting
May 4–8
Orlando, FL
Contact:www.reading.org/meeting/conv/call_2003.html

Value: Voice for Adult Literacy United for Education
Third Adult Learner Leadership Institute
June 26–28
Tampa, Florida
Contact: office@valueusa.org