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College Readiness:

What Does it Mean for Your Students?

by Cynthia Zafft

College readiness is a hot topic. It is most often defined and measured in terms of high school course-taking patterns, grade point average, and scores on national tests (e.g., SAT, ACT). This narrow definition of college readiness has some significant drawbacks, even for traditional high school graduates. In addition, open access institutions, like community colleges, often find that up to 60% of their new students, both traditional and nontraditional, are not ready for college-level courses when they arrive (Adams, 2010).

From the college's viewpoint, adults are considered nontraditional students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), a nontraditional student is one who has

any of the following characteristics:

- Delays enrollment (does not enter post-secondary education in the same calendar year that he or she finished high school);
- Attends part-time for at least part of the academic year;
- Works full-time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled;
- Is considered financially independent for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid;
- Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children, but sometimes others);
- Is a single parent (either not married or married but separated and has dependents); and/or

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(800) 237-0178
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vdesk@vcu.edu
or subscribe online through ERO.

Submissions and letters are welcome.

Contact Hillary Major,
Progress Editor, at:
(804) 828-7535
(800) 237-0178
hmajor@vcu.edu
We reserve the right to decline publication.

Director of Adult Education and Literacy
Randall Stamper

VALRC Manager
Barbara E. Gibson

Special thanks to:
Katie Bratisax
Kate Daly
Karen Chervenak
Caroline Thurston

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A Few Words on *Progress*

I am writing this letter while attending the Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Education Board's Go Alliance, which helps states develop and implement college access campaigns. From President Obama to state leaders across the nation, there is an understanding that economic success in the 21st century is tied directly to the education of the workforce.

In Virginia, Governor Bob McDonnell has set a goal of awarding 100,000 more college degrees over the next 15 years. During the recent Governor's Forum, Governor McDonnell and Secretary of Education Gerard Robinson made it clear that adults are a critical target audience in reaching this goal. While two- and four-year degrees are strongly encouraged, postsecondary certifications must also be a significant part of the effort to upgrade Virginia's workforce.

The late 1980s saw an unprecedented focus on adult literacy with Barbara Bush's advocacy work. Virginia's Governor Gerald Baliles and First Lady Jeannie Baliles provided the leadership that resulted in a more organized adult education system and a larger number of volunteer literacy programs. These initiatives benefitted our field largely because we were willing to leverage them to benefit our programs and the adult learners we serve. Such opportunities don't come often, and we know that they don't last long.

This time, we are being asked to change the way we have thought about adult education, to build a bridge to postsecondary programs and help our students understand that a GED® credential, while a valuable attainment, is not enough in today's world. It is not an easy challenge to accept. Adult education and literacy programs do not have discretionary funds for adding new elements to instruction or providing the level of counseling and support that will help our students transition successfully. Yet, we must find a way.

Virginia's Office of Adult Education and Literacy, led by Randy Stamper, is working on these issues in the Policy to Performance project. PluggedIn VA, a contextualized GED and postsecondary transition curriculum, is being expanded to include more careers. These are encouraging beginnings to what must be a larger, more comprehensive initiative to integrate transitions into adult literacy education. Through this issue of *Progress*, we hope to highlight some work already underway and inspire further discussion and action.



Calendar

December 2010

1
Forum on Women's Education and Economic Opportunity
Washington, DC

1-4
National Reading Conference
Fort Worth, TX

14-15
Road to Recovery: Strategies for ReEmployment
Washington, DC

February 2011

23-26
Learning Disabilities Association of America Annual Conference
Jacksonville, FL

24-25
Virginia Literacy Leadership Council (VLLC) Conference
Richmond, VA

March 9-10
Data Summit
Roanoke, VA

16-19
TESOL Convention
New Orleans, LA

31-April 4
Technology Literacy Conference at the Beach
Myrtle Beach, SC

Transitions in Virginia :

An Interview with OAEL Director Randall Stamper

Q: We hear a lot about transitions, but what does that really mean for adult educators in Virginia?

I think transition means a shift in our mindset as a whole, beginning with our understanding of what the word transition means and leading to shifts in our attitude, our performance, and how we pursue and perceive partnerships.

So, what is transition?

I contend that the transition is actually what needs to be eliminated, that it's an interim space where people are "afloat," so to speak. I would like to make that space, where people are out of our hands and not into somebody else's hands, as short as possible.

The transition is actually what needs to be eliminated: It's an interim space where people are "afloat."

Given that, what changes in our attitudes and our practice do we need to have?

First and foremost, we have to accept and embrace that we're doing more than preparing people to get GED® certificates or learn English. In the letter that I wrote for the VAACE Conference, I said, 'We're all in this work together because we feel called to serve others.' Well, if adult learners are the population we're going to serve, we're not doing all we can if we aren't talking to them, preparing them, and trying to give them all of the skills they need to go on to something else. All of the predictions say you are not going to have a very good job in 10 years if you don't have some college, some sort of certification. So if we want to serve the people in our programs, we have to push them to think about something beyond the GED. That's the attitude change.

From the practice standpoint, I think the creativity of the field will generate a lot of ideas. Priorities include:

- More opportunities for integrated education and training,
- More opportunities for people to access dual enrollment through adult education, and
- More focus on finding ways to contextualize or to integrate the professional soft skills and the

hard skills that are related to the workplace into our GED and ABE instruction.

We've always said we meet people where they are and try to make adult learning valuable to them by putting it in their context. That's true, but the next step is going to be curricula, actual instructional materials and models, that are fully integrated into specific areas. I think PluggedIn could really lead the shift of adult

education in Virginia. The work of the transitions specialists and the future work of the adult career coaches will also be something to pay close attention to.

At the state level, two teams are bringing together representatives from the community college system, economic development,

the state council of higher education, and the Department of Labor — those folks who are tied into WIA in one way or another and who know that, while successful with the students we serve individually, as a whole we're not churning out as many people as we need to churn out and they're not as prepared as they need to be.

The Career Pathways group worked to come up with the strategic plan that came out in 2008. Career Pathways will be part of the focus of the Governor's Forum on Aligning the Agendas for Business, Economic Development, and Education in October. I think that forum will be very pleasing to us, because folks like the governor, the secretary of education, and the governor's senior workforce advisor will be confronting issues that we have struggled with: flexible and innovative service delivery models, providing wraparound support services, and increasing the number of integrated programs available. I'm excited to see business, education, and the administration focused on these issues.

The Policy to Performance group is an adult education-driven team specifically focused on how we get undereducated, low skilled adults into these pipelines and career clusters.

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Transitioning English Language Learners

by Anestine Hector-Mason

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) awarded the American Institutes for Research (AIR) the Transitioning English Language Learners (TELL) project on July 17, 2008. A key objective of the project was to conduct a descriptive study to describe the state of practice in assisting adult English language learners (ELLs) to improve their reading and writing skills to advance through high school equivalency programs or GED[®], ABE, and ASE programs, which

serve as gateways to community colleges and other training and education programs. Prior to the study, the project conducted an environmental scan of the research related to transitioning ELLs. The purpose of this article

is to provide a snapshot of some of the findings from both activities.

Review of Literature. The project conducted an environmental scan, which involved a critical review of literature.¹ The review of literature showed a serious lack of research on transitioning ELLs, although there is some relevant research from other contexts (e.g., K-12 and College ESL) that may be transferrable to the adult ELL context.

Descriptive Study. The descriptive study involved data collection from 10 programs in seven states (Florida, Texas, California, Georgia, North Carolina, Colorado, and California).

Two transition processes emerged from an analysis of the information programs sent:

1. Distinct Transition: The program has a well-defined transition class (or set of classes) that is physically situated and that is instructionally² and programmatically³ designed for the purposes of preparing distinct ESL student cohorts for ABE, ASE, or GED classes.
2. Indistinct Transition: The program does not have a transition class as described above, but has varied programmatic and instructional practices intended to promote transitioning, or the program has a regular increasing sequence of classes that prepare students for upward academic mobility with no defined moment at which transitions between ESL and ABE/ASE/GED occur.

In general, many programs had multiple transition pathways that offered students multiple transition destination points or multiple options for transitioning.

Findings.⁴ The study identified many programmatic and instructional practices used with transitioning ELLs, as well as varied beliefs about specific instructional areas. The following section provides a snapshot of these practices and beliefs.

Overall, preliminary findings

show that among teachers, administrators, and students, reading and writing are considered the most crucial skills for academic success. In particular, academic reading and writing (which focuses not

only on vocabulary and sentence development but also on the composition of paragraphs and essays) are crucial to student success and transition to higher academic destinations such as ABE, ASE, GED, and postsecondary education.

Also, although the study focused primarily on practices in reading and writing, the data showed that adult ELLs believe that mathematics is crucial to their academic success and would like more instruction (beyond definition of numbers and mathematical symbols) in mathematics. In terms of instructional practices, programs and teachers engage in a number of strategies to support student success.

Many programs create strategic partnerships with other agencies or organizations to enhance student opportunities to move beyond ESL. For example, if transitioning students are interested in nursing, the school might develop relationships with a local hospital to begin to introduce students to concepts in that area. These efforts can include student-centered networking in which program staff attend events for the specific purpose of developing external relationships to help student transition (e.g., program staff attend job fairs and community events where they encourage local companies and organizations to offer employment opportunities, job training, and mentoring to

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ESOL CASAS to TABE Transitions: A Cautionary Tale

by Adam Nathanson

About mid-way through the last school year, my adult ESOL high-intermediate-and-above night class came to consensus on a particular goal that they wanted to add to their student learning plans: they wanted to enroll in GED® classes. As a

critical step in meeting that goal, we decided that we would try an official TABE 9/10 pre-test in June. On their CASAS Reading post-tests, most of them had already begun to score at Advanced and Adult Secondary levels (testers can score as little as 50% of the answers correct and still reach these designations). The CASAS Skill Level Descriptors scale indicated that this was an opportune time to consider transitioning learners to mainstream ABE classes. Further, program administrators who know the ins and outs of reporting will tell you that for a program to retain learners at this stage, they really must be moved over to ABE. We made sure that for each learner, the collective goal seemed relatively SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reasonable, and Timely).

Practicing with old TABE 7/8s, we began to identify their ABE EFLs and grade equivalents so that they could transfer to GED and Pre-GED classes over the summer. The outcome disheartened us all. TABE is calibrated with a much lower threshold with regard to proportion of incorrect answers than CASAS. The highest EFL scores on TABE need to hit 80% of questions correctly on the D level. Students who qualified as ESOL Completers (or at least close to it) according to the National Reporting System consistently scored at ABE Beginning Basic in Reading. My pep speeches about their command of English reading comprehension for “life and work” skills as measured with CASAS Reading bore little relevance to the type of English reading proficiency needed for TABE at almost any level. They had been taken to the height of success in our little ESOL world, only to be dumped at the bottom of the ABE heap, and I was partially responsible. Remember, too, that NRS defaults to TABE scores if a learner is enrolled in ESOL and ABE classes in your program simultaneously. You should close out students as ESOL completers before entering them as ABE students.

We started working out of the Achieving TABE Success in Reading Level E workbook and reader. A profound lack of vocabulary manifested itself. And learners fixated on proper nouns, unable to distinguish them in order to move on to search passages for main ideas, recall information, or make inferences. Though we spent a month

They had been taken to the height of success ... only to be dumped at the bottom of the ABE heap.

making a valiant effort to improve their scores from the preliminary 7/8 results, on the day of the real pre-test, TABE 9/10 was equally unkind. I had to send my community of learners off for the summer trying to re-instill their pre-TABE experience optimism as they headed out the door.

Reflecting on the way the year’s events took place, I resolved to do several things differently in the future to avoid such let downs. I don’t tell students that their high CASAS Reading scores imply GED-level TABE scores. I have softened the abrupt switch from one type of reading to another, too. I now integrate the more literary and academic style of readings found on TABE throughout the class curriculum along with the *Stand Out* and *Ready to Go* type of CASAS-correlated life skills reading content. My sense is that other adult literacy practitioners with one foot in the ESOL world and the other in ABE have had similar experiences. How did/do you handle these super-important transition scenarios while utilizing the field’s agreed-upon instruments? 🍷

Adam Nathanson works as an instructor for Henrico County and Richmond City adult education programs.

Editor’s Note: If you would like to respond to Adam’s closing question, feel free to address a letter to the Progress editor at hmajor@vcu.edu.

Transitions in Virginia (continued from page 3)

OAEL has a memorandum of understanding with the community college system to fund two transition specialists, who are on the ground now. Their job is to recruit people who either didn't complete the GED Tests or completed but need some points to pass and, while getting them into classes and through the GED part, simultaneously to work directly with them to provide career counseling, help them navigate the financial aid and community college systems, and really provide what Cynthia Zafft refers to in her article as "college knowledge."

The community colleges themselves are looking at introducing adult career coaches. We're hoping to take what we learn from the transitions specialist pilot and develop a training and a set of core competencies that adult career coaches will need to have.

But that's a small scope of services. We hear about other services (child care and transportation) all the time. And, due to a wide variety of federal and state laws and regulations, there are some things that the dollars just can't pay for. Those are the issues that, because Virginia is such a diverse state, the local programs need to work on solving. We'll provide

as much help as we can from the state level, but it really is incumbent on the locals to work with their partners to provide solutions for these competing life priorities that get in the way of education.

Q: I hear that partnerships are a central component in tackling transitions. How do you get started in building partnerships?

Well, everyone involved has to get something out of it. I think that a lot of our partners in the WIA system don't know or don't recognize what it is that they get out of partnering with us.

For the community colleges, the answer is a recruitment pipeline, but necessarily they're going to have some expectations about the quality of the product. We know that if someone scores a minimum on the GED Tests, they're probably not going to possess the math, reading, and writing skills that they need to be successful at the community college level. We need to be thinking about how we truly prepare folks to meet a goal of going to the community college.

I think we also need to look at a variety of transitional opportunities that we haven't focused on in the past.

Transitioning English Language Learners

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their students). These efforts can also include systemic volunteerism, programmatic efforts to coordinate the background and experience of volunteers with student and classroom needs (e.g., a volunteer coordinator matches teachers with volunteer classroom aides).

Partnerships on behalf of students are not only external; there are internal partnerships that occur, especially through interdisciplinary networking (for transition programs located in a community college) or through transition coordination where full-time counselors, including transition coordinators, help students with goal setting and provide them with referrals to other services to support their transition.

Like programmatic strategies, instructional strategies are also vast and varied. The data showed that programs worked to create a sense of community among transition students,

including creating a community of learners, which is a group of learners who are connected to each other (by their teachers) in a meaningful way that helps them to support each other's learning development. Although this can be considered a classroom management strategy, the relationships among the learners can extend beyond the classroom to where students call each other if they need help with something or for class-related information. This is also an intentional effort to create learning communities during classroom activities.

Efforts to create a sense of community in the classroom also reflected the use of assessments. Some programs promoted assessment-driven classroom communities in which they strategically grouped students based on assessment results. The ability to do this is based, of course, on teacher knowledge and skills in how to use data

- **Registered apprenticeships:** Not only are these fantastic because people are getting job skills training, getting paid, and have a clear career path with certifications, but I think that they're going to be a big focus of this administration.
- **The military:** Hopefully very soon, my office is going to start providing updates about what the different branches are doing, because their requirements fluctuate over time. If I understand it correctly, right now you can't get into any of the services with just a basic GED certificate. If we have people in our classes who are getting a GED because they think they're going to go straight to the Army or the Marines, we need to be on top of things to let them know that's not an option right now, but certainly the military is an absolutely viable option for transitioning.
- **Technical centers:** A lot of school systems have technical schools; maybe they aren't as daunting as going to community college right off the bat, and they offer highly regarded technical certifications in a wide variety of fields from automotive maintenance to HVAC to licensed practical nurse.

Q: How does the current economy figure into the expectations of our partners?

The folks at the Economic Development

Office have made it really clear that if you want to pursue things right now that are going to get people jobs in the future, focus on health care, technology, and advanced manufacturing.

Right now, when the economy is slow, a lot of educational entities and businesses are figuring out what they are going to do next. We need to be pushing our noses into those conversations, letting them know what we can provide and finding out what we need to shift or tweak in order to fit in with their plans. Because if we're not making use of the crisis, we're going to get left out in the cold.

Q: What message about transitions do you want *Progress* readers to take away?

My number one message is that everybody, from the program manager to the teacher to the volunteer, needs to have the expectation that when they're working with someone – whether an ESOL learner, an ABE learner, or somebody who's ready to take the GED Tests – a part of everything we do is getting that person ready for what's next. It's not simply the next agency's responsibility. ■

OAEL Director Randy Stamper spoke with Hillary Major on October 18, 2010.

to inform instructional change and, to some extent, programmatic systematicity in giving teachers access to student assessment data.

Such sense of community is also encouraged through a teacher swapping technique to help students become acclimated to the practices of the destination point (ABE, GED, ASE) or to avail students who have transitioned of opportunities for more English language development. For example, a teacher in the GED program, which includes transitioned ELLs, swaps with the teacher in the transition class or with the teacher in the highest ESL class. As such, the GED teacher exposes the ESL students to the practices and instructional styles of the GED class, and the ESL teacher works closely with the transitioned ELLs in the GED class who need more focused English language support.

All of these actions are designed to support student emotional preparedness and to help reduce student anxiety about transitioning or about being successful. One program director noted that program[s] need to provide students with concrete opportunities to help them have a

mindset that transition is a real option.

Overall, the study identified numerous promising practices that programs use to support adult ELL transition and development of academic English skills. The study's final report provides a more comprehensive view of the findings and will be available at the end of 2010. ■

Anestine Hector-Mason, PhD, is a Senior Research Analyst at the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C.

Endnotes

1. See http://www.air.org/files/TELL_Annotated_Bibliography-1-22-09.pdf.
2. Refers to curriculum and teaching practices.
3. Refers to systemic procedures or activities specifically designed for transitioning, including scheduling, funding, professional development, and teacher training.
4. Final findings for the study will be released at the end of 2010.

TransiTions models:

	Maine College Transition Program	PluggedIn VA	I-BEST
Website	Maine College Transition Program	PluggedIn VA	I-Best
Type of transition	Adult education or high school to postsecondary	Program-dependent: adult education to community college or workforce	Adult education to post-secondary and vocational programs
Industry-Specific?	No	Yes	Yes
Skills Taught	Basic, academic, college readiness, career planning	GED, Microsoft / digital literacy, project-specific workforce, soft, 21st century	ESOL, industry-specific, soft
Completion Incentives	None	Project-dependent; may include workplace interview, Microsoft certificate(s), internships, college credits	Credits earned transfer directly into certificate programs.
Supports Provided	Partners with postsecondary institutions to provide assistance with application, financial aid application, placement testing; counseling; mentoring; unspecified support services	Program-dependent: PluggedIn is a framework for postsecondary and workforce transitions; specific PluggedIn projects may add specific support outside of instruction.	Both content area and ESOL instruction: both content and basic skills instructors must be present in the classroom for at least half of the total time of instruction.
Duration	12-18 months	6 months	Program-dependent, but one to two community college quarters seems to be the standard
Dual enrollment?	No	Yes	Yes
Partners	Adult education programs; postsecondary institutions; Career Centers; Maine Educational Opportunity Centers; Maine Centers for Women, Work, and Community; other local agencies	Adult education programs; local community colleges; local businesses; community partners	Technical and ESL instructors collaborate to work on curricula that integrate basic skills competencies with those of the technical program.
Location(s)	Maine	Virginia; there is also a PluggedIn Kentucky program.	Washington

a maTRix of Programs

Breaking Through	Shifting Gears	Colorado Success UNlimited (SUN)
Breaking Through	Shifting Gears	Colorado Success UNlimited
Adult education and high school to postsecondary	Adult education and developmental education to postsecondary and workforce in key industry sectors: manufacturing, health care, and transportation/distribution/logistics	Adult education (GED [®] passers) to college and certificate and degree programs
No	Yes	No
Academic, college readiness, basic	Program-dependent; emphasis on basic, English language acquisition, academic, college/career readiness	College readiness, career exploration
None	Program-dependent: Shifting Gears focuses on state policy systems change incorporating four strategies: using data; pursuing policy change; engaging the field; and strategic communications (stakeholder support).	College credit
Peer cohorts, tailored introductory courses (Study Skills, Career Exploration, and College Survival), advisors, additional Breaking Through staff at colleges	Program-dependent: The Shifting Gears states are supporting local innovation with grants to test promising educational and workforce strategies and, at the same time, re-engineering state policies on adult education, workforce development and postsecondary education.	A navigator whose duties include one-on-one case management, college process assistance, career exploration and planning, financial aid assistance, motivation and retention, academic advising, supervision of student ambassadors, and college persistence support
Ongoing support through college	Program-dependent	8-weeks; minimum 110 contact hours
Yes	Program-dependent	To be eligible, 18-64-year-olds must hold a high school or GED credential; participants earn college credit.
Adult education programs; 26 community and technical colleges that provide additional support to low-level students; Jobs for the Future; the National Council for Workforce Education	Each state has a team composed of officials representing workforce development, adult education, and community colleges. In addition, employers, advocates for low-income individuals, and local workforce and education practitioners are part of the effort to advance new policies.	Colorado Department of Education, Adult Education and Family Literacy Division; Colorado Community College System Foundation
Multi-state, including Illinois, North Carolina, Michigan, Oregon, and Colorado	Multi-state, including Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio	Seven community colleges in Colorado

Green Collar Jobs

by Rebecca Scott

It may seem a little odd for an article on green jobs to be coming to you from the coalfields of Virginia. Eleven months ago we could not have predicted that our program would be spending so much time learning about emerging energy technologies and this thing called "sustainability." What a difference partnership makes!

Last November, the grant writer from our local community college called with an interesting question. Would our program be interested in joining with other partners in a Department of Labor Pathways Out of Poverty application to train adults for green jobs? Donna Stanley, Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Mountain Empire Community College, was familiar with the PluggedIn model. PluggedIn is an intensive dual enrollment program, created in Virginia, in which adults earn their GED[®] credential, gain 21st century workplace skills, and earn college credits for entry-level jobs in certain fields. Adult education programs and community colleges form partnerships to deliver instruction.

Stanley wanted to see if PluggedIn, which had been used for IT jobs, could be adapted to train adults for jobs in home energy retrofitting. Two months of meetings and successful grant writing later, the PluggedIn Construction & Weatherization Program was created.

A similar scenario could soon happen to you. At the federal level, substantial multi-year funding, weighted to reward partnerships, has recently been announced by the U.S. Department of Energy to train the workforce for green energy jobs. Here in Virginia, Governor McDonnell's Commission on Economic Development and Job Creation in its final report released in October proposed to maximize the investment in clean energy research and energy education.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is frequently quoted as saying, "We need to educate our way to a better economy." In her opening comments at the Sustainability Education Summit in Washington, D.C., in September, Under Secretary of Education Martha Kanter modified this to say that "we need to educate our way to a green economy." She proceeded to announce \$2 billion in upcoming federal



funding to be made available over the next four years to train and retrain workers for emerging green jobs. Every state will have a minimum of \$2.5 million every year for the next four years to fund innovative practices. Regarding the competitive nature of the awards, Kanter emphasized that partnerships would be key for successful applicants.

We need to educate our way to a green economy.

A little over a year ago, the White House Middle Class Task Force led by Vice President Joe Biden and the Council on Environmental Quality released a report called Recovery Through Retrofit to expand the home energy retrofit market. According to the report, "home retrofits can potentially help people earn money, as home retrofit workers, while also helping them save money, by lowering their utility bills. By encouraging nationwide weatherization of homes, workers of all skill levels will be trained, engaged, and will participate in ramping up a national home retrofit market."

In the last year, the Biden group and the U.S. Department of Energy have been working with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colorado, to develop training standards for retrofit workers, including entry-level

weatherization installers, crew chiefs, energy auditors, and monitors. As the report stated, all skill levels will be trained. To help with this effort, the PluggedIn Construction and Weatherization program was invited in July to participate in curriculum and accreditation discussions to make sure that adult education learners could access green jobs in home energy conservation. If all skill levels will be trained, adult educators must be involved in the effort.

Adult education is quickly becoming more than where adults go to get their GED certificate or learn English. Our students need jobs that will sustain a family. Employment today requires more than a high school diploma, more than a GED credential. Training partnerships with local colleges, community action agencies, and Workforce Investment Boards can help you create job opportunities in high-demand fields for your students. You can count on lots of agency meetings, plenty of staff development to prepare your staff, and hours spent weaving together funds to support instruction.

Our experience with PluggedIn is limited; our two Construction and Weatherization cohorts in Scott and Wise counties started October 25. From what we have seen and what we are learning about emerging workplace trends, however, integrating basic skills, vocational, and college-level training will serve our students well.

If your program is interested in learning more about working with other training providers to prepare workers for upcoming weatherization jobs, there are ample resources to draw upon. ❖

Rebecca Scott is program manager of Lee, Scott, Wise, and Norton Regional Adult Education.

Resources

PluggedIn VA is a curriculum framework providing adult learners with a contextualized General Educational Development (GED) program integrated with technical training for entry-level jobs in targeted industries.

Weatherization FAQs in Virginia

For quick information on who is eligible for weatherization services.

Weatherization Services Providers in Virginia For a listing of local providers of weatherization.

National Renewable Energy Laboratory

For information about the work being done by this Golden, Colorado, facility of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) on renewable energy and energy efficiency research, development, and deployment.

Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program Technical

Assistance Center provides weatherization practitioners and other energy conservation professionals with information related to the Weatherization Assistance Program.

Sustainability Education and Economic Development

is a leadership initiative, resource center, and online sharing environment for community colleges to ramp up programs to educate America's green workforce.

New River Center for Energy Research and Training

, Christiansburg, Virginia, provides training in state-of-the-art residential energy conservation techniques and home performance testing.

Virginia's Weatherization Training Center

, Lynchburg, Virginia, facility provides home energy auditing and weatherization training. Contact Charlie Carter, Training Center Director, at (434) 832-7215.

College Readiness (continued from front page)

- Does not have a high school diploma (completed high school with a GED® or other high school completion certificate or did not finish high school).

The impact of these characteristics has been studied and, as you would imagine, the more of these characteristics students have, the less likely they are to complete a postsecondary education. Most learners in adult education have several of these characteristics, but recent studies find that preparation and support can make a difference in adult persistence and success in postsecondary education (Zafft, Kallenbach, and Spohn, 2006).

Like career development, academic skills, such as note-taking, can be practiced at any level of adult education.

The National College Transition Network (NCTN) is an organization dedicated to helping adult educators prepare their students for postsecondary education. The NCTN uses a four-part model of college readiness for adults. It includes career readiness, “college knowledge,” academic readiness, and personal readiness.

Preparation for postsecondary education for adults begins with career readiness. Many learners come to adult education because they are searching for a way to move beyond entry level jobs into careers. To be successful, adults need to clearly understand what a career pathway requires in terms of courses, credentials, and the availability of jobs in their area. In fact, career development can be infused throughout your program, from beginning levels of adult education through completion of a GED and English language study. The *Integrating Career Awareness into the ABE and ESOL Classroom* curriculum guide (Oesch and Bower, 2010) is available on our website with downloadable lesson plans and worksheets for a variety of career activities. Your local college Career Services Office and/or One-Stop Career Center can also help.

“College knowledge” is a term coined by David Conley (2009) and our second readiness area. It includes knowledge about key college

processes, such as applying for admission and financial aid. It also includes more hidden knowledge, such as understanding the academic culture; how to interact with college faculty and administrators; and the importance of using support services, like tutoring. Invite the experts to your classroom. College advisors can schedule visits to your classroom to discuss these issues, but also consider a “field trip” to a local college (see *College for a Day* in resources listed below). Begin by speaking the language of college with your students: syllabus, academic calendar, semester.

While preparation for college should go well beyond academics, academic preparation is very, very important. For most adult learners this will mean more basic algebra, longer reading and writing assignments, and homework. Like career development, academic skills, such as note-taking, can be practiced at any level of adult education. There are several websites that specialize in these skills, such as Study Guides and Strategies at www.studygs.net and the Purdue University OWL (Online Writing Lab) at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>. In addition, college requires working at a level of detail and precision that is new to most students.

An important part of academic preparation is becoming knowledgeable about the college placement tests, such as the COMPASS. Most colleges post sample questions on their websites. Keep in mind that these tests are typically done on computer. While the computer skills needed to take the test are minimal, it’s important to

Stress reduction exercises and direct instruction on the use of a day planner are key personal skills for transitioning adults.

practice to reduce anxiety. For students that rely upon going back and forth through a test, they need to know each question must be answered before they can go on.

Last is personal readiness — perhaps the most important readiness area. Although there are individuals who have continued their education despite personal or family illness, homelessness, and other hardships, most students need to have

a stable living and earning arrangement while they are in school so they can focus intensely on their studies. Recent research has demonstrated that high levels of stress have a profoundly negative impact on learning. Stress reduction exercises and direct instruction on the use of a day planner and decision-making protocols are key personal skills for adults transitioning into postsecondary education. Helping students connect with someone at the college who can help in time of need is critical.

You probably attend to many of these readiness issues in your work with students right now. Make a list of what you are already doing in each area. See if there are gaps. Then move forward with a plan. Begin by adding one strategy or one activity to address a learning need you identify and assess its impact on student readiness. I think you'll be surprised how much you learn, too. ■

Cynthia Zafft is founding director, and current senior advisor, of the National College Transition Network (NCTN).

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Promising Practices, such as *College for a Day*, are available at <http://www.collegetransition.org/promising/practice.html>

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3. The terms and conditions will display. Click the

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4. Click on "Course Catalog."
5. The Course Catalog search will display. Click "Search" without filling in any search fields.
6. Select the course *For First Time Registrants Only - Select This One.* Click on either the course title or "Register."
7. Click on the green folder icon to "Request Enrollment."
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Subscription course (see back page). ERO will email confirmation of your profile submission and let you know when your course profile and *Progress* subscription have been approved.

Looking Back to Move Forward: A Reflection on My First Year in Adult Education

by Mark Angle

On July 1, 2009, I became the Regional Program Manager for an area encompassing 2,613 square miles and six school divisions.

Although an experienced K-12 school administrator, I had zero experience with adult education. In fact, when I was first approached about the position, my response was something like, **"We do adult education?"** Somehow I had been a K-12 educator for fifteen years and had never realized that public school divisions are required to provide adult education services!

I am pleased to report that a year into it I couldn't be happier! I have met many wonderful colleagues from all over Virginia — from classrooms in my own region to offices at VDOE and VALRC and many stops in between — who are always gracious and willing to help the "new kid on the block." That help has come in the form of encouragement and support as well as through the sharing of materials and resources. Although I believe there is something special about everyone who chooses education as a profession, there seems to be something extra special about those who choose to work with adult learners. In that spirit of sharing, I offer these words of advice to our new program managers for 2010-11 who are just beginning their journey.

Marketing and Outreach

Unlike K-12 where there is a client base required to participate regardless of their motivation or the program's quality, adult learners have options! They can choose from a variety of programs or none at all. Adult educators and program managers must become skilled at marketing and outreach. This is an area where I will continue to strive for growth since it is not something I had ever practiced until now. As adult educators we must learn to market our "product" in a way that makes what we have to offer appealing to folks for whom education hasn't always been a positive experience. We must figure out creative ways to "get the word out" through outreach that meets our learners where they are and gives them a reason to respond to the message we are sending. As I've read previous issues of

Progress, explored other programs' websites, and networked with colleagues around the state, I've been amazed by how many opportunities we offer to adults throughout Virginia. We have an amazing diversity among our programs and we will all benefit as we become more skilled with marketing those opportunities to the adults who will most benefit from them.

Motivation and Quality

Adult educators must be equal parts life-coach and instructor. To some degree this is also true for K-12 educators, but I believe it is even more important for adult educators since our learners aren't required by compulsory attendance to return for the next class. Figuring out what motivates each learner presents a serious challenge; but I learned through goal-setting training that, when done deliberately and purposefully, the process of setting learner goals can provide the instructor and program with some solid clues and insights for motivating the learner toward persistence... a must if we are going to meet our program performance goals.

Motivation alone, however, is not enough to keep adults returning to class. The instruction must be aligned to the learner's goals and must tangibly move them toward goal attainment. The instruction must be of sufficient intensity and paced appropriately. It must be thoughtfully planned and engaging for the learners. Unlike K-12 educators who are evaluated on occasion by their principals, adult educators are evaluated at every class session by their learners. If learners keep coming back for more, things must be on the right track. But when learners choose to stop out, the instructor must ask himself/herself some tough questions. While lack of persistence doesn't always indicate a problem with the quality of the instruction, it is a good place to begin a conversation with oneself on the cost/benefit ratio for learners. While our programs are often "free" in terms of money, they do carry a cost of time, energy, and effort. For learners to persist, the benefit to them must outweigh those costs ... and not just in the long-term, but at every step of the process.

Data and People

Over the course of the year, I have learned that evaluating adult education takes both numbers and words. I've spent a great deal of time mining NRS data and trying to get to the "meaning" behind the numbers there and on the Program Performance Report Card. But numbers alone don't tell the whole story. For that, one must listen to words ... like the many I heard while attending GED graduations throughout my region. Learners shared with captivated audiences stories of difficult lives — of getting caught up with the wrong crowd, of having babies while they themselves were still children, of leaving school to care for a sick parent or child, of going to work to support a family. But the focus of these stories was never one of "woe is me." Instead, they were always used as an opportunity for learners to say "thank you" to the adult educator who believed in them, to the GED Examiner who greeted them warmly at the Testing Center, or to learning center staff who never gave up on them. These stories are a beautiful expression of the work we do to provide second chances to people who don't always feel they deserve them.

Perhaps my favorite line came from a young man who said, "You can sit around and complain about your life all you want ... but you need to realize while you are sitting around complaining, there are people around you changing theirs." What a powerful life lesson for all of us!

Reflection

I look back with the realization that I've barely scratched the surface of all I need to learn about adult education. But I look forward with enthusiasm and confidence — as you will a year from now — knowing that as adult educators we are in the business of second chances, of mending broken dreams. By becoming more skilled at marketing and outreach, hiring and supporting teachers who are masters of both motivation and instruction, and judging our programs using both numbers and stories, we can cultivate thriving programs that offer all of our citizens as many chances as they need to accomplish their goals.

Wedoadulted? Oh yes...and so much more! :)

Mark Angle is the Regional Program Manager of ACE (Adult Continuing Education) of Central Virginia, which includes Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell, Lynchburg, and Nelson.

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Meet Virginia's Transitions Specialists



Debbie Casselli

**Area Served: Northern Virginia —
Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax,
Prince William County**

Before becoming a Transitions Specialist, Debbie worked for Prince William County Public Schools Adult Education as a Fast Track GED instructor, SAIL (Supportive Adult Intensive Learning) coordinator and instructor, National External Diploma Program advisor and assessor, retention specialist, and teacher mentor.



Marlyn Pierce

**Area Served: Southeastern Virginia —
Cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk,
Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach**

Before becoming a Transitions Specialist, Marlyn worked full-time as an Accounting Technician at the Coast Guard Finance Center in Chesapeake. From 2007-2010, Marlyn worked in the evening as the GED LAGEDA for Chesapeake Public Schools Adult and Continuing Education.

Progress Goes Digital: Don't let this issue be your last!

2011 will mark one of the biggest changes in the history of the *Progress* newsletter: *Progress* is going digital. In an era of tight budgets and widespread Internet access, it didn't make sense to keep spending thousands of dollars on the printing and mailing of each issue.

For more than twenty years, *Progress* has brought the field a mix of current research, practical strategies for managing classrooms and programs, and news about professional development opportunities and statewide events. As we make the transition to a digital

format, we want to be sure that *Progress* keeps bringing you, Virginia's adult educators, relevant and reliable information that will support you in the important work you do. You will be able to access future issues of *Progress* in three ways:

1. Visit the Publications area of the Resource Center website, www.valrc.org.
2. Subscribe to the VAELN listserv. You'll get announcements about new issues of *Progress*, along with other adult education news.
3. Sign up for the *Progress* mailing list in ERO. You'll get an email when a new issue comes out (and when you update your ERO profile,

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