

## Health Program is a Good Fit for Adult Education

By Susan Erno

There are a fair number of opportunities to enhance adult literacy programs through grants, pilot projects, and local and state initiatives. As a busy administrator, I look carefully at these potential funding sources before deciding which to go after.

The HEAL: BCC project was immediately appealing because it was based on sound research and was sponsored by World Education, an organization known for its quality work. Also, a valued staff member had recently been diagnosed with breast cancer, so this disease became very personal. Here are the questions we considered before making our decision:

**Will it enhance the overall program?** HEAL: BCC provides field-tested health education curriculum

and support for teachers. These resources stay with the program. In addition, teachers get the chance to work together to plan, implement, and evaluate the curriculum. Finally, teachers will learn valuable skills and are compensated for their time.

**Will it benefit the student population?** The correlation between education level and access to medical services is very strong. The less education an individual has, the less likely she or he is to seek medical care, particularly preventive services. We were fairly certain that students would benefit from the emphasis on wellness in the HEAL:BCC curriculum.

**Do we have the capacity and sufficient resources, including time?** We have a center-based  
[Cont. on page 9...](#)

## A Vision for 2006

By Dr. Yvonne Thayer

Since the mid-1980's we've all been exposed to "the vision thing." In fact, some of us are burned out on vision statements that are not realistic or, worse, show no real vision. Preparing for the new millennium created expectations that ranged from HAL the computer, to computer meltdown, none of which were accurate or helpful. So do we need another vision? How does a vision help? Can a vision for adult education truly help us do our jobs better?

Yes, we need a vision. We can't improve our system of teaching and learning if we don't know where we are aiming. We are a part of a complex system of services that extends beyond our local programs. Our system has parts that are established, such as basic literacy, ABE and jail programs, and parts that are changing, such as GED and ESL programs. Change comes about when we need to adjust our system or start doing something new to improve our services for adults. Change without a vision can be problematic. Change without a vision can harm that which is

[Cont. on page 15...](#)



## CONTENTS

Professional Development in Your Pajamas: Adult Learning Online	pg. 3
Book Review: <i>Methods that Matter</i>	pg. 3
Mount Rogers Regional Program Celebrates its 10th Anniversary	pg. 5
Health Education and Adult Literacy	pg. 6
Factors in Tutor Retention	pg. 11
The Listening/ Pronunciation Connection	pg. 12
Real World Applications Focus of New GED	pg. 13

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## Dear Readers

*Progress* has a long tradition as Virginia's newsletter for adult education and literacy. The Adult Learning Resource Center is privileged to continue this tradition by publishing adult education news, views, trends, research, and practical ideas.

Read *Progress* to share in others' experiences and explore new territories. This edition will take you to Beijing, China to see how the Eastern Shore Community College's Family Literacy program won international recognition and to the Mount Rogers Regional Program to celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Get a second chance to attend VAILL-ESL by enjoying the humor and insights of Pat Bowyer's account of the plenary session, and try out virtual learning through Cheryl Fuentes' experience of taking the *Adult Learner* online course. Visit a workshop among the mountains in SW Virginia where teachers learned how everyday materials can become learning resources for GED students.

*Progress* will present different points of view on a topic. This issue highlights health education through the perspectives of the administrators, teachers and learners who participated in the HEAL project. In her classic, *Many Literacies: Modules for Training Adult Beginning Readers and Tutors* (1990), Marilyn Gillespie explains that to be truly literate, "Learners must connect literacy to its meaning in their everyday lives." These articles show the process a manager uses to decide whether to participate in a project, ways teachers incorporate health education content in their classes, and how the content connects with learners and their lives.

*Progress* works to keep us connected. This edition was prepared in the fall, which, for many, is the back-to-school time of year. Here is a roundup of what "back to school" means for three Virginia programs. In Hampton, program manager and teacher Debbie Bergtholdt knows that everyone has a lot to learn to prepare for GED 2002, especially in the area of using the calculator and teaching critical thinking skills. For Debby Cargill, Lead ESOL Teacher in Prince William County, newly introduced centralized student registration brings both challenges and benefits for teachers and learners. Collaboration is the theme in Henrico County where teacher Jim Andre` reports that his program is using *Workplace Essential Skills* as the foundation of a six-week course for TANF (Temporary Aid for Needy Families) clients.

Challenges and successes, program changes, or new partners: what is happening in your area? You can be sure that your colleagues around the state confront many of the same issues you are dealing with and, like you, are interested in promising approaches and solutions. Help *Progress* stay in touch by contacting us with your ideas, letters, articles, and story leads.

I thank Ronna Spacone, Editor; Joyce Krech, Assistant Editor; Don Finn and his production team at the Resource Center; and the writers and contributors for their hard work and enthusiasm in launching this venture. We hope that *Progress* will spark fresh thinking, make new connections, and assist you in your work.

Sincerely,



Susan Joyner, Director  
Adult Learning Resource Center

# Professional Development in Your Pajamas: Adult Learning Online

By Cheryl Fuentes

If you have any experience as a teacher, then you've probably used computers as an instructional resource in your classroom, as part of a lesson, or to search the web for teaching tips or lesson plans. But have you ever had the student experience of an online course?

When the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center announced the Adult Learner Online class last spring, I decided it was finally time to take the plunge and see what it was all about. Many questions went through my mind. "Are you crazy?" "You really don't know very much about computers." "How will you ever find time to fit this into an already hectic schedule?" "You're a trainer who values learner-centered instruction, interaction, and peer learning; how can an on-line course promote such exchanges?" And finally, "I've been in Adult ESL for almost 10 years—is there anything new out there that I should know?"

Even with these doubts, I decided to give it a try. I thought this would be a good way to get the information without having to really show up for it—or at least I could show up in my pajamas, no make-up, at any hour of the day, with my two-year-old son Victor in tow. And what a wonderful, interactive, resourceful class it was! The technology was no big deal as we had lots of support. One of the first things I did was print out the Participant Guide which promised to solve any problem. Kate Silc was the technology facilitator and was readily available to hold my hand during any tricky tech stuff. (There wasn't much!) We learned how to develop a web page and to post completed assignments in personal folders. Finding time to participate in the class was seldom an issue. I could log onto the class from any computer (home, work, the library, etc.), and could access it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If I got behind on assignments, I was always able to go back and review discussion items or peer work and still contribute to discussions—unlike a "real" class where you miss the discussion if you're absent.

Jane Swing, the course facilitator, encouraged us to share our own stories as they related to course assignments. This was a wonderful way to learn about real situations from real teachers in real classrooms throughout Virginia. Each assignment linked us to excellent reading resources, including some of the most up-to-date research and agendas in the field. In addition, new and useful websites were a part of almost every assignment.

The only disappointment I had with the course was that some participants never "showed up" or "dropped out" before the course ended. Overall, it was a great experience and much easier (tech and time wise) to participate than I ever imagined. Give it a try!

*For more information about Adult Learner Online or ESL Basics Online, contact the Resource Center at (800) 237-0178 or [vdesk@vcu.edu](mailto:vdesk@vcu.edu).*

**"I've been in Adult ESL for almost 10 years — is there anything new out there that I should know?"**

Cheryl Fuentes is a full-time mom of Victor and works part-time as an ESL Coordinator with the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP). She also conducts ESL training workshops throughout Virginia for the Resource Center. 

## **Methods that Matter: Six Structures for Best Practice Classrooms**

(Harvey Daniels and Marilyn Bizar  
Stenhouse Publishers, 1998, 260 pg. VALRC  
call number: LB1027.D24 1998)

### **A book review by Lisa Youngers**

*Methods that Matter* presents specific, detailed examples of six methods of instruction defined as "Best Practices." Each chapter begins with a description of the method, its history, and its important elements. Teacher narratives, including detailed lesson or curriculum plans, and post-lesson reflections on the unit are included. Since each lesson or unit specifically details the procedure and how it worked, teachers can easily adapt the material to suit their needs. For example, the unit on silent sustained reading includes classroom rules, procedures, and supplies. The chapter on reflective assessment is especially relevant

to adult education. This unit provides simple guidelines to encourage learners to think about and take responsibility for their own learning. Many of the ideas are simple and easily integrated. For instance, a quick way to model goal setting is to begin each class by stating the goals of the session.

Another useful idea is to include the use of exit slips that are completed at the end of each class. Students are asked to write down their reflections on the class, both positive and negative. This provides the teacher with some feedback and direction for the next session.

Although no single methods book can ever provide sufficient ideas and strategies for a teacher, Daniels and Bizar have written a credible and useful volume for teachers of all levels.

Lisa A. Youngers teaches ABE/GED classes for Williamsburg-James City Schools. 

## ***Dooley Takes Literacy Know-How to Beijing for UNESCO Confab***

**By Nancy Drury Duncan**

MELFA—An Eastern Shore Community College professor took a locally developed literacy program to China to share with educators from around the world.

Maureen Dooley, professor of adult education at the college, was invited to speak at a UNESCO international conference on lifelong learning at Beijing Academy in Beijing. Educators from more than 40 countries attended the conference, she said.

Dooley gave a presentation on Shore People Advancing Readiness for Kindergarten (SPARK), a family-based program that combines technology and nature to bolster family literacy.

“The SPARK program was the only family literacy program chosen to present at this conference,” Dooley said. “It was a very great honor to be included, and I was thrilled by the enthusiastic reception the SPARK program received. I am also very excited that in the fall, not only will SPARK continue at Tyson Foods, where it started, but will now be expanded to include three Accomack County primary schools.” This fall, SPARK will be offered as part of the Reading In Excellence Act in

Accomack County schools. Dooley said there is also a chance for SPARK to expand globally because UNESCO has “some interest in replicating the project in Peru,” she said.

The SPARK program has helped alleviate problems on the Eastern Shore. Approximately 31 percent of the 32,800 adults in Accomack County function at basic literacy levels, and 21 percent of all families and 51 percent of the female-headed households have incomes below the poverty level.

“Extraordinary efforts are required to elevate expectations, generate interest and secure participation of the target population to break the cycle of illiteracy,” said Dooley.

The program is based on several interconnected activities. Family fun days are spent doing nature-based activities such as exploring marsh life and digging for crabs. Activity packets are distributed to parents to use at home with their children to instill an appreciation of nature while teaching pre-reading skills. The packets include original rhymes and stories.

The books are designed to inspire children to read and also teach them to appreciate natural beauty. Shapes, numbers and visual discrimination are used to help prepare children for kindergarten. The books feature photographs of local children of diverse backgrounds and ethnicity. “Children in Accomack County primary schools will have a chance to appear in the next SPARK book, said Dooley. “Thinking locally and acting globally has new meaning for me since this trip.”

Courtesy of the Eastern Shore News, Wednesday, August 8, 2001. 



**UNESCO official Adama Ouane poses with Maureen Dooley.**



# Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program Celebrates its 10th Anniversary

## *An Interview with Deborah Lowe Duty, Regional Program Manager*

Since its inception 10 years ago, the Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program has served over 10,000 adult learners in rural southwest Virginia. With its regional office in Abingdon, the program is a service of the public school system and meets the different needs of this region with program offerings that exemplify the many facets of adult education today. In addition to adult basic education and basic job skills classes, the program includes ESL, family literacy, and on-site programs for customers of the Departments of Social Services, Corrections, Housing, and other agencies. Customized on-site workplace basic skills classes for employees and associates are geared to the mission of each business and the individual learning needs of the participants.

Deborah Lowe Duty has been Program Manager for the project from its start. Comparing her past employment experience in manufacturing and healthcare with her work in adult education, she explained that “MBWA” (management by walking around) has always worked for her. “When the alarm went off, I was up and on the hospital or plant floors, doughnuts in hand, to visit with employees and express interest in them and in their jobs, their concerns, and their successes.” Now, as Regional Program Manager with seven very rural school divisions, Deborah finds it somewhat impossible to “manage by walking around.” Therefore, an essential component of her program is the regional lead teacher. The teachers in those positions are caring, extremely perceptive, sensitive, and skilled. They are also loyal to the requirements of the regional program, to the Program Manager’s expectations, to the policies of their respective school divisions, to the concerns and successes of the teachers in their area, and, most specifically, to teacher and student needs. Little turnover in that position (one in ten years) is a tribute to the effectiveness of this group.

The keys to Mount Rogers’ success are building local and regional support, strong communication, and a

participatory approach to managing inevitable change. A qualified and committed team of instructors and support staff back the program. Deborah believes in the value of staff development at all levels and in research-based, responsive curricula. She says that regional adult education programs must, “possess an ability to change rapidly and remain flexible while keeping in mind the constraints of part-time instructional staff. They must celebrate the successes of the program and of students and remain in tune with the rapidly changing economic trends and needs of the area.”

The program could not have achieved its goals without the work and support of many contributors, including:

- School Division Superintendents
- The fiscal agent, Washington County Public Schools
- Mount Rogers Regional Advisory Board Members
- The Adult Education Program Specialist, Lead Teachers, Instructional Staff, and Office Staff
- Local literacy organizations including:
  - The Highlands Educational Literacy Program in Abingdon, the SCALE program in Smyth County, and the One-on-One Literacy group serving Wythe and Grayson Counties
- The Regional Literacy Coordinating Committee
- Business, industry, and agency partners
- The adult learners in the Mount Rogers Region who put forth all the extra effort to pursue lifelong learning

All the members of the Mount Rogers adult education family are to be commended for the success of this regional effort. In the words of Deborah Lowe Duty, “YOU DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.” Congratulations on ten very successful years and best wishes for many more! 🎉



### Exploring the ties between health and literacy: Using cancer as a content area


*What happens when breast and cervical cancer issues provide the content around which reading, writing, speaking, and math skills are learned and practiced?*

*What happens when adult learning centers are the location of in-depth breast and cervical cancer health education programs?*

HEAL:BCC stands for Health Education and Adult Literacy: Breast and Cervical Cancer. It is a project of World Education in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HEAL:BCC is a model for introducing health content in adult literacy classrooms and collaborating with local health providers. The HEAL:BCC curriculum (materials and classroom activities) is designed to help adult learners better understand health information, navigate the health care system, advocate for themselves, and help family members and friends understand issues of breast and cervical cancer and access needed services.

Earlier this year, World Education and a group of 16 adult learning centers in the eastern United States completed a collaboration to implement and evaluate the

HEAL:BCC model. The programs participating in Virginia were Brunswick County Even Start, Fairfax County Public Schools Adult and Community Education, and Charlottesville City Schools Adult Education.

In this issue of *Progress*, practitioners and students from Charlottesville City and Fairfax County describe their use of the HEAL:BCC process and materials. 

### THE HEAL CURRICULUM

The HEAL:BCC curriculum is divided into four units: Action for Health; Learning about Cancer; Breast and Cervical Cancer; and Taking Action. It is supported by an extensive arsenal of resources: over 70 pages in a ready-to-copy Student Journal, a student booklet: Passport to Health; a special dictionary; and numerous support books, posters, videos, websites, phone numbers, and other resource suggestions.

The materials are currently being revised based on feedback from the implementation projects. Teachers and programs will be able to order the curriculum directly from World Education when it is ready for distribution later this year. For more information, please contact Sabrina Kurtz-Rossi, Project Director at [skurtz@worlded.org](mailto:skurtz@worlded.org) or visit the HEAL:BCC website at: <http://www.worlded.org/us/health/heal>

## The Health & Literacy Special Collection <http://www.worlded.org/us/health/lincs>

*What is it?* The Health & Literacy Special Collection is a one-stop gateway to health information and resources for adult education practitioners. The site can direct you to free or low-cost materials or allow you to download them directly. From this site, you can find:

- Health curricula and teaching activities
- Guides for incorporating health into literacy education
- Health brochures in plain English, or languages other than English
- Information about the link between literacy and health status
- Links to organizations dedicated to health and literacy education



*Where is it from?* The site is maintained by World Education, Inc., and is part of the LINCS program of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). The LINCS program is a national effort to provide Web-based access to information for adult literacy practitioners. *The Health & Literacy Special Collection* is one of ten collections of resources relating to specific content areas within literacy education.

# HEAL Teaching: Three Experiences

By Lois Wyatt, Tom Bello and  
Debra Tuler

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## Lois Wyatt

The HEAL:BCC curriculum opened numerous doors for our program. It opened a topic we would otherwise have avoided, even in a health unit. It provided information that mammograms and Pap tests are available regardless of one's ability to pay. Otherwise modest, quiet students opened up. An older Muslim woman was compelled to tell the class of her own experience discovering a lump by self-exam 10 years ago. The curriculum opened an unusual intra-center sharing when two teachers arranged to visit our classes and give candid descriptions of their personal experiences with breast cancer. Both the information and the stories from the curriculum illustrated how different the shapes, discoveries, and treatments of breast cancer can be. The project opened communication among classes when our students became teachers in our culminating health fair outreach project. Organizing the fair created connections with health care personnel and resources interested in reaching our immigrant population. This well-honed curriculum package opened so many doors.

Lois Wyatt has been a teacher in the Fairfax County Public Schools Adult Education program for ten years. She has an ESL Masters Degree from George Mason University.

## Tom Bello

The HEAL:BCC curriculum is learner-focused and encourages personal reactions from the students. Students should feel empowered to go into their own homes and communities to talk about the importance of good health and cancer prevention; of regular check-ups, pap tests and early detection of any medical problems; and of proper treatment of cancer or any other diseases.

As part of the curriculum, students and teachers at Willston Multicultural Center in Falls Church planned a

Health Fair for the first day of spring 2001. Over 300 students attended this event and were supplied with information about insurance for low-income people, osteoporosis, heart disease, and breast and cervical cancer. Students taught students how to make necklaces with beads that were the same size as possible breast lumps. Students showed other students the health videos and translated and explained when needed.

I encourage anyone wishing to include more health instruction in the adult education/ESL curriculum to visit the rich and varied resources available to you in these materials.

Tom Bello is a full-time contract adult ESL teacher for Fairfax County Public Schools. He started teaching as a volunteer in 1979 and currently teaches the High Advanced Level at the Willston Multicultural Center in Falls Church, Virginia.

## Debra Tuler

For me, the most valuable aspect of HEAL:BCC is that—in addition to its focus on learning specific health content information and developing reading, writing, listening comprehension, and speaking skills—the curriculum emphasizes problem posing, problem solving, and taking action. By taking action, I mean doing something outside the classroom, whether collecting information related to the topic, sharing information learned with others, or making changes in one's life as a result of the information learned.

For example, in the lesson on Cancer Facts and Myths, the community follow-up activity is for students to visit clinics, doctors' offices, or hospitals to pick up pamphlets on breast and cervical cancer. My students actually collected information on a whole range of illnesses and health issues that interested them. We reviewed these in class and created a health information folder that can be accessed by others. For many students, it was the first time they had entered a health care building in the United States. The activity offered a non-threatening way for them to go in and feel comfortable.

Another example of taking action is reflecting on our healthy and unhealthy behaviors and considering what

changes we each can realistically make. One of the problem posing/ problem solving techniques we used from the curriculum is the use of codes (see sidebar). I especially like using the pictures before or instead of reading the stories, because then students have to articulate the problem rather than being given the problem.

## **Charlottesville teachers and learners with their HEAL community wall.**



I found that the same picture can yield many different interpretations, making for livelier discussion and reflection. In Lesson 3, Stella's Story, my students wrote their own stories based on the pictures before we read the one provided in the curriculum. This resulted in a lot of rich material for discussion. The questions provided in the lesson about Stella's story encouraged students to think about the obstacles they face in taking care of themselves and how they might realistically be able to change their own behaviors to lead a healthier life. I appreciated that the lesson did not provide a list of "shoulds and should nots", but allowed students to think about what they really can and cannot do.

A final example of taking action is that a primary component of the curriculum is a group project whereby students share their learning with others. At every turn, the curriculum encourages teachers and learners to go beyond the classroom and use their learning in their communities and families, to teach others, and to take control of their own health as much as possible. In these ways, the curriculum models and demonstrates teaching/learning techniques that can be applied regardless of the content. I will be able to use many of the suggested activities (e.g. codes, cluster diagrams, community walls, and the action approach) with future classes.

Debra Tuler is the ESL Specialist and an ESL instructor with the Charlottesville Adult Education Program. She has more than 10 years experience working with adult English language learners. ■■

## **What is a code?**

**A code is usually in the form of a written dialogue, story, or graphic. An effective code should be a familiar situation that represents the many sides of a problem, with no solution. The problem should not be overwhelming, but offer possibilities for small actions for change. The purpose of a code is to promote critical thinking and action about important issues in people's lives.**

Source: Elsa Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein.  
ESL for Action. Reading, MA:  
Addison-Wesley, 1987





## HEAL: A Learner's Perspective

In Charlottesville, one family literacy class and two ESL classes participated in the HEAL:BCC project. The students trained to become leaders for their families and communities by studying (1) preventative health maintenance; (2) definitions and known causes of breast and cervical cancer; (3) recommended schedules for regular screenings and checkups; and (4) the benefits of early detection.

Students discussed the materials and asked and answered questions of each other. They also wrote about the project and were published in the Charlottesville HEAL:BCC newsletter which is located at: <http://monticello.avenue.org/adulted/heal/healbcc.html>.

Here is a representative sample of their writing.

## The Importance of Cancer Screening

By Niruntree Sakulkoo

I lived in a small town in Thailand. I learned to take care of my health before and heard the word “cancer,” but I never learned where cancer came from or about screening. When I came to the United States and studied about health and cancer in ESL class, I received knowledge about many things I never knew before.

I think many people in my town don't know about cancer screening, so it is important to learn about it. In my town, when we know someone has cancer, the person dies because it is too late to cure them. We go to the doctor only when we feel sick. Very few people check for cancer or have checkups every year because they don't know how screening can help provide protection and early detection. Now I can tell and teach my family and friends about the importance of breast and cervical cancer early detection and screening. 📊

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE....

program with space for the team meetings, health wall, and boxes of project materials. We have the student population. A new session began in January, around the time HEAL:BCC was scheduled to begin. The challenge would be for teachers to find time to meet around their schedules.

**“The challenge would be for teachers to find time to meet around their schedules.”**

### Is there strong interest among staff members?

Originally five teachers expressed a strong interest in the project. For various reasons, three teachers have become the core HEAL:BCC project. They are enthusiastic and supportive of each other. This project works well in no small way because we have a conscientious project manager who maintains communication between team members, program administration, and World Education.

**Is the application process manageable and are the odds for acceptance in our favor?** The application was quite simple. HEAL:BCC seemed to be a good fit for our program. Since they were interested in sites in Virginia, we definitely had a good chance.

In January 2001, Charlottesville City Schools Adult Education Program was delighted to become one of the HEAL:BCC sites. We hope to share what we learn with the whole staff.

Susan Erno is a regional instructional specialist for Planning District 10 and coordinator for the Charlottesville City Schools' Adult Education Program. She has 14 years experience in the field of adult education from volunteer tutor and teacher—Adult Basic Education, GED, and Workplace classes to teacher trainer, curriculum developer, and researcher.

*First published in the Spring 2001 HEAL: BCC Newsletter. Courtesy of the HEAL Project and World Education, Inc. Reprinted with permission of the author.*

## INTERESTED IN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE WORKPLACE?

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### **SCHEDULE:**

#### **WORKPLACE INSTRUCTION:**

Roanoke, VA; March 8, 2002

#### **WORKPLACE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT:**

Richmond, VA, November 16, 2001 **and in** Staunton, VA; April 19, 2002

#### **WORKPLACE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:**

Charlottesville, VA; December 13, 2001 **and in** Martinsville, VA; February 8, 2002

For more information, contact Ruth Figueroa at [ref9k@sprintmail.com](mailto:ref9k@sprintmail.com) or (434) 971-7544.

WORKFORCE IMPROVEMENT NETWORK is a partnership of James Madison University, The Virginia Literacy Foundation, and Virginia Department of Education. The Network works to encourage and support the development and expansion of customized foundational basic skill instruction for Virginia's workforce. Visit the Network's website at <http://cep.jmu.edu/workforce>.



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- Run for office
- Create a mini-grant project and reap \$\$ rewards
- Evaluate our profession and our role as professionals

**contact Susan Erno, VAACE president, at [erno@esinet.net](mailto:erno@esinet.net) or (434) 245-2825**

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# Factors in Tutor Retention

By Victoire Gerkens Sanborn

More than eight out of 10 people volunteer because they feel compassion for those in need. Yet many literacy tutors drop out after volunteering for only eleven months. What are the important factors that motivate long-term tutors to remain in adult education and literacy programs? Answers may be found in the five top reasons that volunteers have cited.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Desire to help others.

If helping others is the primary catalyst for volunteering, then poor student progress and frequent absenteeism will stop the desire. Some tutors believe good will and motivation are more important in teaching than lesson preparation.<sup>2</sup> This practice may lead to slow, uneven improvement, increasing tutor frustration. Helping students achieve short- and long-term goals are as crucial to tutor success as a learner's.

**2. Clearly defined responsibilities.** Proper volunteer orientation and solid initial training should include program expectations and objectives, and realistic predictions of adult learner progress. If tutors are unclear about the reasons for accountability, they may give higher priority to their own goals than the program's goals. Training, therefore, should focus as equally on the systems for volunteer work as on the volunteers. Tutors who are unable to meet a program's criteria for tutoring should be offered other volunteer jobs, since dissatisfaction can lower program morale.

**3. Interesting work.** "Asking upper level tutors to [help with] lower level tutor training generates excitement and motivation for all tutors and staff."<sup>3</sup> Use experienced peer volunteers to mentor tutors during the first crucial weeks after their training. Treat volunteer tutors the same as paid staff regarding training, input, and evaluations. Reward highly motivated tutors with training that improves job skills; reimbursement for conference travel; advancement to paid positions; increased responsibilities;<sup>4</sup> and flexible scheduling when feasible. Ask empowering questions<sup>5</sup> such as, "How would you design a lesson around this subject?" Listen actively.

**4. Competent supervisors.** Many tutors "perceive that their program coordinators have received little more training than they, which downplays [in their minds] the necessity for advanced training and support or supervision."<sup>6</sup> Literacy programs must make staff development a priority. Arming volunteers with knowledge about the field of adult education, including trends, statistics, research, teacher resources, literacy web sites, and educational opportunities for students will benefit both them and the program.

## 5. Guidance from supervisors.

Giving tutors program feedback and keeping them regularly informed decreases their sense of isolation, and streamlining reporting requirements influences their retention.<sup>7</sup> Encourage tutors to seek specialists' advice.

Provide frequent in-services, focus groups, and opportunities to share research and ideas. For long-term tutors, the social aspect of volunteering becomes increasingly influential in their decision to remain.<sup>8</sup> Contact, therefore, should be personal, frequent, and consistent.

Good volunteer managers focus attention on these critical periods: 1) The first six months, when the greatest loss of volunteers occurs; 2) anniversaries, such as evaluation periods or when projects are completed; and 3) the end of an agreed term of participation, when volunteers are reconsidering their tutoring commitment.<sup>9</sup> Volunteer leaders must learn to be proactive in managing tutors. Above all, they need to welcome their volunteers with open arms and find ways to reward them that are meaningful.

### Recommended Reading:

"Best Demonstrated Practices for Tutor Retention," Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc, <http://www.literacyvolunteers.org/student/nsab/tutorretention.html>, based on a survey conducted in 1998 by the National Student Advisory Board (NSAB), September, 2001

Victoire Gerkens Sanborn works for the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center and the Virginia Literacy Foundation as a Literacy Support Coordinator, supplying technical and program development support to community-based literacy organizations.

Footnotes cont. on page 14...

**"A program that says 'welcome' in every way, over the phone, in person, or in the mail, invites a volunteer to be a part. Volunteers who feel they belong return."**  
*Sarah Elliston, Volunteer Management*

# The Listening/Pronunciation Connection

Summary of the Plenary Address  
given by Linda Grant  
at VAILL-ESL 2001

By Pat Bowyer

Have you ever misheard the words from a popular song and happily sung along in blissful ignorance, singing, for example, “The girl with colitis goes by” instead of “The girl with kaleidoscope eyes” from “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” by the Beatles? If you have, you are not alone. Most native listeners of English have done so. In fact, these errors occur so frequently that an entire daily calendar of humorous mishearings of popular songs has been produced with examples such as, “There’s a bathroom on the right” instead of “There’s a bad moon on the rise” from Credence Clearwater Revival and Maria Muldauer’s lyric “Midnight at the Oasis” transformed to “Midnight after you’re wasted.”

In her plenary address at VAILL-ESL this summer, Linda Grant, author of *Well-Said*, (Heinle and Heinle, 2001), suggested that awareness of such mishearings can raise an ESL teacher’s sensitivity to problems the non-native listener faces everyday. Ordinary English speech is peppered with intentionally blurred, obscured, and reduced sounds and phrases. Time devoted to pronunciation not only helps students speak more clearly but also listen more effectively. Ms. Grant outlined how listening and pronunciation are mutually supportive and which high priority pronunciation concepts are essential for effective speaking and listening.


In order to be able to reproduce a sound, a person must first be able to differentiate that sound from others. Infants have the ability to perceive and produce a universal inventory of sounds from all languages. By about 10–12 months of age, that ability diminishes as the infant begins to specialize in the sounds and patterns that carry meaning in the native language of that baby’s culture. Second language learners perceive the sounds and patterns of a new language through the filter of the first language system. As a result, a Spanish speaker may pronounce the English *lacy* because Spanish doesn’t regard the voiceless /s/ and the voiced /z/ as distinct sounds. Second language learners need to be trained to hear these differences; that is why so much of pronunciation instruction in the early stages focuses on raising awareness. Finely tuned listening skills enhance pronunciation skills.

In a similar manner, attending to pronunciation skills enhances listening ability. According to Ms. Grant, most ESL listening materials emphasize “improving the top-down skills like predicting, guessing, listening for the gist, and ignoring irrelevant details.” While acknowledging that these skills are important, she suggests that more attention needs to be given to the “bottom-up” skills of pronunciation that mark authentic speech, especially the melodic features. The three basic pronunciation concepts vital to this process are: 1) stress and rhythm, 2) linking, and 3) focus or prominence.

Unlike many other languages, the rhythm of the English language is created by the contrast in syllable lengths. Knowing which syllable to stress and which not to stress is equally important; for example, if the word “tumor” receives equal stress on each syllable, the listener may hear “two more.” When non-native listeners complain that English is spoken too fast, they may be having trouble processing the rhythm of the language. If they are assigning each syllable equal importance, they are missing a very important clue and working too hard to get to the meaning of the sentence.

Likewise, non-native listeners need to learn how and when linking occurs in English. When they begin to comprehend that a phrase that sounds like “Takideezy” means “Take it easy,” they realize that it is not necessary to hear each distinct separate word and can begin to comprehend whole chunks of language at a time. And, finally, ESL students who understand the use of prominence or focus to emphasize the important word or phrase in each sentence will become both better speakers and listeners of English. The same sentence uttered with emphasis on different words can change the focus or meaning of the sentence.

In short, to support our students in becoming effective communicators, we need to help them “decode the stream of speech” by becoming aware of the rhythm, linking, and prominence features used in authentic speech. In Ms. Grant’s words, “As speakers, our students will learn what the listener needs to understand the message. As listeners, they will be better prepared to face the music of English.”

Pat Bowyer is a Resource Teacher and Family Literacy Coordinator for Adult ESOL in Fairfax County, Virginia. She has taught ESOL to students aged 3 to 83 for over 20 years. This past year she was assistant coordinator of VAILL-ESL. 



# Real World Applications Focus of New GED

By Marci Gore

What do a pack of M&Ms, a coffee can, and a shoebox have in common? Would you believe they can each be a tool for learning? Unconventional tools maybe, but effective tools definitely, according to a group of adult educators from southwest Virginia.

GED teachers from the area were recently treated to an intensive two-day workshop at the Cove Ridge Educational Center at Natural Tunnel State Park in Scott County. The workshop allowed over 20 teachers the opportunity to learn about the upcoming changes in the new GED Test, while enjoying beautiful scenery.

“Our local state park has made a commitment to support education with the creation of a state-of-the-art education center,” stated Program Manager Rebecca Scott. Funded in part from coal mining penalties, the park has become a classroom for science, writing, math, reading, and social studies. “Park staff recently developed wonderful SOL-related activities. We went a step further and developed GED-related park activities.”

The workshop leaders focused on incorporating real-world applications in the GED classroom and teaching and using the new calculators. Dr. Anita Prince, Curriculum and Instruction Specialist with the Virginia Department of Education, said that perhaps one of the biggest changes on the test would be the use of calculators. “[Teachers] need to become more familiar with the calculator and be willing to ask one another for help and support.”

Educators received information on some of the differences that adult learners will encounter once the new GED is implemented. These changes may present some challenges in the classroom.

“Once the new GED is implemented, [the biggest challenge facing teachers] will be to continually motivate students and tell them they can pass the GED and [to help students] overcome any perceptions they may have that the test is now too hard for them to pass,” Prince said.

Judy Samples, a teacher from Wise County, agrees. “I think the biggest obstacle to overcome will be the public’s

perception that it’s too late, that now that the test has changed, they won’t stand a chance.” Samples added that after attending several teleconferences and workshops, including this one, she believes concerns such as these will be unfounded. “I don’t believe that the test will prove to be a significantly more difficult challenge than it is today. Some students, particularly those who do well processing visual information, might

actually find the test suits their personal learning style better than the old test.”

Trainers at the workshop spent quite a bit of time discussing real-world applications in the classroom, which Prince said she feels will give adult learners a sense of relief. “They will now be using learning tools in their classrooms that are of interest to them and have meaning for them,” she said.

Workshop participants saw that everyday items from around their own homes can be used as instruments of learning and can put a new spin on teaching as well. Prior to the start of the workshop, they were asked to bring in items from their homes that could be used to teach one of the GED subject areas. Everything from cookbooks to empty toilet tissue holders to cartoons from local newspapers to candy was used as an example. Strategies for utilizing these items in the classroom varied from teacher to teacher.

A pack of M&Ms was distributed at the end of the first day’s session and teachers were asked to think of a lesson using the colored candies. The next day, participants shared ideas that included statistical type problems, geography, and grammar, to name just a few.




**Teresa Sprinkle, an adult education teacher from Pennington Gap.**

On the last day of the workshop, teachers became the students during an exercise that took advantage of the park's chair lift, museum, and train observation deck. Three separate team-based activities involving lessons in geography, geometry, and language arts gave the teachers an idea of what it's like to be a student learning a new subject and the thought process it takes to get a desired result.

Wise County teacher Kate Boyer said the events during the workshop showed her "learning can be fun no matter the subject or the chemistry of the class." Bill Vermillion, a GED teacher from Scott County, said he feels the same. "Anything that encourages active participation on the part of the learner improves understanding and long term memory of a concept; collaborating with other students to interpret a contour map and solve 'real-world' problems [shows what] they may face in the work place."

Most teachers said they came away from the workshop feeling more confident about the new test and their current teaching styles. Boyer says she feels GED teachers across the state need to remember "teach is the key verb" when it comes to the new test. "Leading your students to discover and learn will help spark that creative thinking flame that will be necessary on the new test," she said. "I've been teaching GED students for five years and I was just starting to feel like I knew the beast they were up against. Change can be good and I think it was necessary to keep up the respect for the GED."

Vermillion said that thanks to the workshop he feels a sense of optimism about the new test. "When the dust settles, I don't believe we will see that the new GED test took a giant leap to a more difficult level, but rather, a modest leap to a different level."

Marci Gore is a graduate of Virginia Tech with a B.A. in English. She works at the Regional Adult Education Program as the Distance Learning Coordinator and also does public relations work for the program. Prior to her work with adult education, she worked as a staff writer for the Kingsport Times-News in Kingsport, Tennessee. 

**GED Helpline in Virginia**  
**1-800-283-0746**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11....

<sup>1</sup>Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All the Resources of the Community, Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1996, p 120

<sup>2</sup>Working Paper #3, Behaviour and Beliefs of Volunteer Literacy Tutors, Catherine Hambly, MA, McGill University, 1998, "Tutor Behaviour" and Statement 3, downloaded 9-13-01, [www.nald.ca?PROVINCE/QUE/litcent/Publication\\_Products/wkpaper3/page3.htm](http://www.nald.ca?PROVINCE/QUE/litcent/Publication_Products/wkpaper3/page3.htm)

<sup>3</sup>CRLA Tutor Certification, College Reading and Learning Association, [www.crla.net](http://www.crla.net), August, 01

<sup>4</sup>McCurley & Lynch, p120

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p 78

<sup>6</sup>Hambly, "Statement 2"

<sup>7</sup>Fostering Volunteer Programs in the Public Sector: Planning, Initiatives, and Managing Volunteer Activities, Jeffrey Brudney, Jossey-Bass, 1990, p 163

<sup>8</sup>Brudney, p 162

<sup>9</sup>McCurley & Lynch, p121-122

## GED 2002 Resources

[http://www.acenet.edu/calecged2002\\_resources\\_A.html](http://www.acenet.edu/calecged2002_resources_A.html)

The GED Testing Service web site is probably the most comprehensive source for information about the new test. Here you can view and download fact sheets, marketing materials, and posters that announce the coming of the GED 2002.

### [www.pbs.org/literacy](http://www.pbs.org/literacy)

The PBS Literacy/Link web site has information about GED Connection, a new series from PBS that combines video, workbooks, and the Internet to teach GED skills. Online classes and a practice test will be available in October 2001.

### **GED 2002: Making the Transition**

(VID LB3060.33 .G45 M35 2000)

### **GED 2002: Everything You Need to Know**

(VID LB3060.33 .G45 E94 2000)

The two videotapes, which you can borrow from the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, are copies of the PBS Literacy/Link and GED Testing Service videoconference. They are interesting and helpful because GEDTS folks not only talk about the difference in the new test but they also field real questions in real time from instructors and practitioners from across the country.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE...

working well. When change is needed (and for most systems change is needed periodically) it should be driven by a vision that clearly articulates outcomes.

The vision is the end point of what we want for our system, our programs, and our learners. To reach the vision—to see our dream become real—we must take incremental steps that move us from where we are to where we need to be. Some steps are very small and others seem mammoth. Some of us can take bigger steps than others, but the important thing is to start moving toward the place we want to be.

My vision for our adult education system has several components. First, based on the work of our state task force and the commitment made by the Board of Education, I envision an adult education system that places family literacy high on our priority list. We will use family literacy to reach many adults who are presently not in our system by connecting adult education to the education of sons, daughters, grandsons, or granddaughters. We can use family literacy to broaden our ESL services, so families new to Virginia can view education in this country as something they do together. With the support of the Rural Virginia Prosperity Commission, we will increase our programs in the workplace and extend them to include after-school programs for children. Whether we are teaching the most basic of literacy skills or preparing adult learners for the GED, we will remember the *Equipped for the Future* description of the adult learner: family member, worker, and citizen. Within five years, we should see family literacy programs operating in each jurisdiction of the Commonwealth.

I envision our services using technology to help learners access information quickly and process it efficiently. Technology will become an important tool for our teachers as they learn to use new and inexpensive software to plan and deliver instruction. Technology is also going to facilitate learning across the state by enabling on-line instructional support. We will be able to offer groups of students in locations across the state the opportunity to interact with teachers and students in other locations using videoconferencing technology. We will continue to develop classroom resources that will be web-based and available to any practitioner or learner via the Internet.

Our partners will grow as our programs and goals grow. Corporate partners, like Verizon, will help us access resources and create new opportunities for adult education. Our partners will continue to include state agencies; health providers, educators, and associations; workforce developers and business leaders; and all levels of the education community. Adult education will not remain isolated and unknown. Policy makers will know us and understand our work.


As our programs grow and our performance improves, and as we tackle the challenges of growing services for second language speakers and providing health literacy as a component of our work, Virginia will become known as one of the strongest

states in adult education. By 2006—just five years—we can take our place as a state that provides comprehensive programs at the highest level. By 2006, we can be recognized as a system that continuously improves to be able to deliver services based on what adult learners need.

*How do we get there?* This is the question you should be asking yourself. It is also the question that groups of you should discuss in staff development. *What do we need to do to improve?* We have been asking this question at the state level for a year. We are gathering information on programs we fund to ensure that we are putting resources in the places that need them the most. Have you asked that question locally?

In five years, how many family literacy programs will you have? How many GED classes will you offer? How many workplace programs will you start? How many learning disabled adults will receive accommodations? How many ESL students will you serve? How many low-level learners will make significant progress? How many learners will earn a GED or high school diploma? How many students will go to post-secondary education? How many learners will get a better job?

In five years, where will we be?

Yvonne Thayer is director of the Office of Adult Education and Literacy for the Virginia Department of Education. She is a career educator, having taught first grade through adult education. She has worked with local, state, and national programs. Her doctorate is in adult education from Columbia University. 

**“By 2006, we can be recognized as a system that continuously improves to deliver services based on what adult learners need.”**



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## Calendar of Events

### STATE

**Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE) Annual Conference** April 3-5, 2002  
Omni Hotel and Conference Center, Charlottesville  
Contact: Susan Erno (434) 245-2825 [erno@esinet.net](mailto:erno@esinet.net)

**The Literacy Fair of Virginia**  
May 16, 2002 Southside Virginia Community College, Keysville  
Contact: Shelia Harper (800) 200-7549  
[shelia.harper@sv.vccs.edu](mailto:shelia.harper@sv.vccs.edu)

**S.W. VAILL** July 24-26, 2002  
Radford University  
Contact: Jane Swing (540) 831-6207 [jswing@radford.edu](mailto:jswing@radford.edu)

**S.E. VAILL** July 29-31, 2002  
Christopher Newport University  
Contact: Wayne Virag/Janette Coles (804) 524-5377 [wvirag@vsu.edu](mailto:wvirag@vsu.edu)

**VAILL ESL** July 31-August 2, 2002  
Marymount University  
Contact: Pat Bowyer (703) 714-5560  
[pbowyer@fcps.edu](mailto:pbowyer@fcps.edu)

### NATIONAL

**6th Annual Workplace Learning Conference** December 2-4, 2001  
Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Chicago, Illinois  
Contact: Institute for Work & the Economy (608) 224-2655  
[dmanly@workplace-learning.net](mailto:dmanly@workplace-learning.net)  
<http://www.workplace-learning.net/>

**11th Annual National Conference on Family Literacy** March 3-5, 2002  
Albuquerque Convention Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico  
Contact: National Center for Family Literacy, (502) 584-1133  
<http://www.famlit.org/conference/conf2002.html>

**Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. Annual Conference** April 9-13 2002  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
Contact: TESOL (703) 836-0774  
[conventions@tesol.org](mailto:conventions@tesol.org)  
<http://www.tesol.org/conv/>

**Commission of Adult Basic Education Annual Conference**  
May 8-11, Charleston Area Convention Center, Charleston, South Carolina  
Contact: (803) 929-2571  
<http://www.COABE2002.org>

**Pro-Net 2000 National Professional Development Conference**  
February 21-22, 2002  
Contact: milluzzi@air.org  
<http://www.pro-net2000.org>