

## Research into Practice: What Happens When Art Works Are Introduced in the GED Classroom

By Mary Ellen Dreybus

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Now more than ever, the requirements of the GED test challenge teachers and students to bring higher level thinking skills into the classroom. Here's an idea that has worked for me and for the other adult education practitioners in Hampton City that you might want to try. It is a teaching strategy that takes just fifteen minutes of instruction time and has enhanced our classes in many ways.

This strategy and using it in adult education grew out of my long-time interest in teaching critical thinking skills. While reading articles on the subject, it occurred to me that my students needed more opportunities to talk freely and to express what they were thinking. I had long been aware that they were uncomfortable articulating their opinions in writing a persuasive essay or analyzing the theme of a poem. Also, my students had trouble with traditional academic vocabulary and felt negative about using such terms. I wondered what classroom activities would encourage my students to express their opinions, help them develop and practice necessary terminology, and encourage more critical thinking in class.

I had read several articles about the importance of teachers taking the time to listen to students' answers, to wait for answers, and to probe for further answers. Also, I had been a docent at our local art museum. It was so much fun helping people discuss and evaluate the art they were viewing. Having everyone's input added to a learning experience and I came to believe that group discussion was an effective way to teach. I wondered: Would the techniques I used as a docent to encourage critical thinking about art also work in my class? Could they be applied to GED test content and would the activities help increase my students' test taking abilities?

I pursued these questions through research that I conducted in my classroom. Over the course of several months and under the auspices of the 2000 Virginia Adult Education Research Network, I developed ten brief lessons around four classic paintings, designed activities to collect the information needed to answer my questions, decided what all the data meant, drew conclusions about the investigation, and shared my findings. What follows is an excerpt from my final report:

*Using works of art created an enriched and energized atmosphere in which students were comfortable arguing, asking each other questions, and volunteering new information. Attendance was consistent throughout the ten lessons allowing for lessons to build on each other and creating a momentum that culminated in the best set of essays I have ever had from a GED class.*

Carrying out a research project within a supportive group of colleagues turned out to be one of the best learning experiences I have ever had. It changed the way my students and I interact and the way they interact with each other. It gave me the freedom to break from the traditional GED content and to teach about thinking. The classroom innovations did not stop when my project ended.

Returning to work in the fall of 2000, my coordinator, Debbie Bergtholdt, asked to use my research ideas as a professional development plan for our adult education program.

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## Dear Reader:

*How do you read this newsletter? Are you a browser or an omnivore? If you are a browser, you skim through the pages looking for articles that make a connection for you: a high need topic, a familiar name, or an inviting picture. After you have surveyed what is on offer, you come back to select articles to read in more depth. If you start at the beginning and work through all the contents sequentially, you are more of an omnivore. As you proceed, you may find yourself highlighting text you don't want to forget or resources that you plan to pursue when you have more time. Both these strategies use ways to organize and prioritize the information you are taking in as you read.*

*In this "information age", browsers and omnivores alike are challenged to cope with the vast amount of material available in print and on the World Wide Web. To provide perspective, publications need to balance useful information and practical knowledge with a core of deeper insights and ideas. In their book "Understanding by Design," Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe present a model for prioritizing content choices in curriculum planning. At the center of their model are the "enduring understandings that reside at the heart of any discipline." Enduring understandings anchor the details to larger concepts, principles or processes. For example, in our lead article Mary Ellen Dreybus skillfully connects critical thinking with art. By working with real questions and taking time to uncover their own understandings about art, her class had become "art critics all summer." In this way, the critical analysis piece in the students' textbook became relevant after they had discovered these ideas for themselves.*

*Here are some questions that connect to ideas in this issue: What is the link between Japanese philosophy and program improvement? Can American physicians learn from what surprised a recent immigrant about her health care in this country? In what ways do graphical organizers help learners construct their own meaning? Of course, if you started reading the newsletter in the middle, you may have already found your answers before you read the questions!*

Sincerely,

## Research into Practice *From Page 1*

We purchased additional poster art – inexpensive and already mounted reproductions – from an arts and crafts store. I taught a model lesson, with my colleagues as the students, to illustrate some ways to allow adult learners to discuss art freely and develop higher order thinking. Here's how to begin:

- Present a painting to the group with no comment other than: *What do you see?*
- Give everyone at least 5 seconds wait-time to respond and comment.
- Follow up student comments with additional questions, for example: *What makes you say that? Does anyone see the same? Something different? Tell us more about what you are thinking?*

As students mention art vocabulary I write it on the board, so we can refer to it with another painting. By the end of a six-week period the class has usually amassed an extensive list: color, line, shape, texture, composition, portrait, landscape, still life, abstract, realistic, etc. With each new art piece, I consciously use these terms to ask questions: *Is this an abstract? Why do you think so, or not? How would you describe this artist's use of color?* Eventually, we compare art pieces by the same or different artists: *How would Picasso have painted this subject? Which painting is louder, quieter, disturbing, soothing?* I continually prod the students to give examples when they make generalities and to be specific in their use of language.

The GED 2002 exam includes more world history. Placing the artwork within its historic context is a fun way to work on timelines. I ask students: *What was happening in the world when this portrait was painted? Or, Who was alive at the time?* In discussing the lives and times of various artists we inevitably touch on their countries of origin and the major events that occurred when they lived, which frequently leads to our further comments or questions about varied political movements or historic periods.

The same questioning practices I use in the art discussions transfer to developing a thesis statement for an essay: *Clarify your argument in this essay. Where are your specific examples to prove your thesis?* I also use the art

classes to warm-up students for writing. For example, following a discussion of Leonardo da Vinci's famous portrait, try asking students to write a paragraph describing a woman they would like to meet from history or the one woman who has most influenced their lives.

To provide for reading comprehension, I sometimes copy an excerpt from an art critic's work or a biographical piece on an artist as a follow-up to discussing the art. We look in the text for statements that support or contradict our findings about the art or artist. I ask the students to make up questions that could be answered by the passage they read, and we quiz each other.

During last summer's program my teaching colleague, Karen Anderson, and I decided to combine two of our GED classes for the "art break", alternating who facilitated the discussion with sometimes as many as twenty-five students. Karen knew about a local showing of paintings and prints by Norman Rockwell. She brought in several of his war posters and we ended up



Mary Ellen and her students discuss why they think Kandinsky called his abstract painting "Improvisation with Horses".

comparing Rockwell's realistic painting style with Picasso's abstract depiction of war in Guernica. Then, in the commentary section of one of our GED textbooks, Karen found a critical analysis of an art piece. How relevant this lesson now appeared to our students. We'd been art critics all summer.

I hoped my fellow teachers would try the art classes and experience the same freedom I found to include class time for students to practice thinking while discussing art. Learning to use questions in a strategic way and becoming practiced facilitators takes time and work, but I think the skills are worth developing. My colleagues and I have found that taking a fifteen-minute creative break in class fits in well with GED subjects. Analytical skills need to be honed and the art discussions need to allow for practice. Bring art to class. It is an easy way to work on complex learning.

*Mary Ellen Dreybus works as a teacher and coordinator for the Hampton City Schools Adult Education Program.*

### Practitioner Research On The Web

Mary Ellen's initial research report was published in the "Virginia Adult Education Research Network Practitioner Research Briefs", 1999-2000 Report Series. The entire series is available online at: <http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/vaern.html>. Look for information about the opening of a new website currently being developed by the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center that will allow you to replicate the model of practitioner research program improvement in which Mary Ellen and colleagues engaged.

# An Overview of English Literacy/Civics Education and Civic Participation

By Lynda Terrill

Since 1999, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) has funded the English Literacy/Civics Education (EL/Civics) initiative. Authorized by Title II, section 243 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (20 U.S.C. 9253), the initiative has funded twelve national demonstration projects as well as activities in all states. According to OVAE:

*[EL/Civics] programs emphasize contextual instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and governments in order to help adult students acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members.*

This broadly framed initiative stands firmly in the tradition of adult immigrant education where English and civics have long been paired – from citizenship classes run by settlement houses and unions at the turn of the last century to the amnesty classes many of us remember from the 1980s.

According to *Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners* (Terrill, 2000), civics education is a broad term that includes:

- instruction on how to gain U.S. citizenship;
- instruction about U.S. history and culture, including lessons on

diversity and multiculturalism; and

- instruction and guidance on becoming active participants in their new communities.

In parts of Virginia as well as states such as New York, Florida, Texas, California, Minnesota, and Illinois, successful instruction in these elements has been going on since the fall of Saigon and before. However, for some communities, serving adult immigrant learners is a new phenomenon and teachers and programs want to know the best ways to assist immigrant learners.

One issue that newer teachers often wonder about is *how* (and maybe *why*) they should assist adult English language learners to be “active participants in their communities.” Like the rest of us living in the United States, immigrants’ civic participation varies over time to reflect changing interests, needs, and opportunities. Participation in the community includes activities like obtaining library cards and attending PTA meetings. For some adult immigrants, these types of involvement are more than they were able to participate in their native countries and may be all the civic engagement they need or want at any given time.

However, it is important to remember that civic participation can also include greater individual, group, or

class involvement. Although going out into the community is not always neat or controlled, it can be a potent tool for language learning as well as for succeeding in or even changing the community. For instance, when I taught at the Arlington Education and Employment Program, adult English language learners did everything from speak at county and school board meetings to volunteer at school and health clinics to interview community members and produce videos. Some learners sent President Clinton an email message expressing their views on funding for education. One learner wrote his congressman for help with an immigration issue – he got a response and some help.

How can a teacher know what level and kinds of civic participation are appropriate for her class? As always, listen to the needs, goals, and concerns of the class members. They will direct the language learning and the degree and types of civic participation. Know this country’s educational and social history and find your resources. There is a long and honorable history of learning/teaching for civic participation and for social change.

*Lynda Terrill is acquisitions coordinator at the National Center for ESL Literacy Education. She has nineteen years experience working with native and nonnative speakers of English.*

## Recommended Resources

- *NCLE Resource Collections: Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners*: Annotated list of materials on EL/Civics education and citizenship, with links to relevant resources for the classroom. [www.cal.org/nclere/REScivics.htm](http://www.cal.org/nclere/REScivics.htm)
- *OVAE EL/Civics Education Related Links*: Updates and information about the EL/Civics initiative, the national demonstration projects, civics education, immigration, and citizenship preparation. [www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/ELCIVICS/elcivlinks.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/ELCIVICS/elcivlinks.html)
- Auerbach, E. (1992). *Making meaning, making change: Participatory curriculum development for adult ESL literacy*. McHenry, IL and Washington, DC: Delta Systems and Center for Applied Linguistics. Teachers/students collaborate so that a curriculum is relevant to students’ experiences, and helps them confront the challenges they face as parents, workers and community members. [www.cal.org/nclere/books/meaning.htm](http://www.cal.org/nclere/books/meaning.htm)
- Martin, R. (with Domenzain, A.). (1999). *Sabemos y podemos: Learning for social action*. Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza. Explores language and literacy education as a means for social action. The curriculum includes lesson plans, classroom strategies, and advice for teachers to adapt student materials. [www.ncpie.org/NCPIEOrgResources/NationalCouncilLaRaza.html](http://www.ncpie.org/NCPIEOrgResources/NationalCouncilLaRaza.html)
- Nash, A. (1999) *Civic participation and community action sourcebook: A resource for adult educators*. Boston: New England Literacy Resource Center. Stories about civic participation address a range of issues from identifying a class project to advocating for adult education funding. Includes activities, an appendix of human rights and civics documents, and a bibliography. <http://easternlincs.worlded.org/docs/vera/index1.htm>



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# About the Foreign-Born Population in the U.S.

## Statistics for the Year 2000

### EDUCATION

- ESL programs are the fastest growing component of state-administered adult education programs. In 1997-98, 48% of enrollments were in ESL programs, compared to 33% in 1993-94. Of these 48% enrollees, 32% were in beginning ESL classes, 12% in intermediate, and 4% in advanced. (*U.S. Department of Education*)

Education Attainment Level	Foreign-Born	Native-Born
Less than High School Graduate	33%	13.4%
High School Graduate	25%	34.3%
Some College Education	16.2%	26.7%
Bachelor's Degree or More	25.8%	25.6%

- 18.7% of the European foreign-born were less than high school graduates; 16.2% of the Asian foreign-born; 5.1% of the African foreign-born; 50.4% of the Latin American foreign-born; 62.7% of the Central American foreign-born; 20.3% of the South American foreign-born; and 14.5% of the North American foreign-born. (*Schmidley*)

### POPULATION

- 10.4% of the U.S. population were foreign-born, compared to 7.9% in 1990. (*Schmidley*)

#### In terms of size of population: (in a rank of states)

- Virginia ranked 9th by population of foreign-born: total population, 6,842,000; and foreign-born population, 526,000.
- Virginia ranked 17th by percentage of population: the foreign-born in Virginia comprise 7.7% of the total population.
- Virginia ranked 9th by the increase in the number of foreign-born from 1990-2000, with a 214,000 increase (69%). California ranked the highest with an increase of 8,612,000 (44%). (*Camorata*)

#### In terms of place of birth:

- In the U.S., 51% of foreign-born were born in Latin America; 25.5% in Asia; 15.3% in Europe; 2.5% in Northern America; 5.7% in other areas. (*Schmidley*)
- In Virginia, 44% of foreign-born were born in Asia; 32% in Latin America; 15% in Europe; 2% in Northern America; 7% in other areas. (*U.S. Bureau of Census*)

### ETHNIC/RACIAL IDENTITY

- 45.2% of foreign-born were of Hispanic origin (of any race); 24.8% were White non-Hispanic; 23.6% were Asian and Pacific Islander; and 7.8% were Black. (*Schmidley*)

### CITIZENSHIP

- Of a total 28.4 million foreign-born in the U.S., 37% were naturalized citizens. (*Schmidley*)
- In Virginia, 43% of foreign-born were naturalized citizens. (*U.S. Bureau of Census*)

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# A Web and Community Connection: James Madison University

By Pamela Greenhalgh Brown

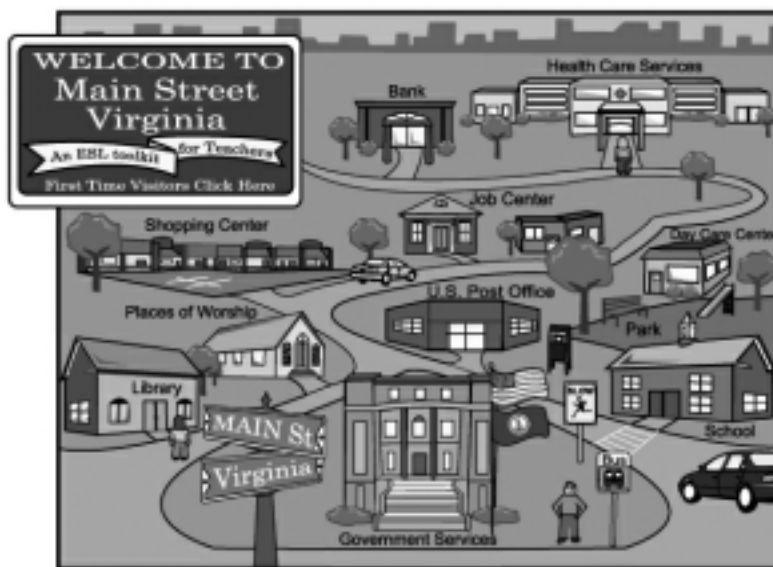
The English Literacy/Civics Project at James Madison University has created two websites designed to provide integrated English language and civics education. ESoL Main Street (<http://web.jmu.edu/ESoL>) is the result of several community partnerships, including ESOL students at the Dayton Learning Center in Dayton, Virginia. Now nearly a year old, the website focuses on the Harrisonburg and Rockingham County areas. Main Street Virginia (<http://web.jmu.edu/mainstva>), posted to the web late last spring, concentrates on the rest of the state.

“Our goal is to assist English language learners in mastering oral and written communications skills while learning about their community through the Main Street websites,” explained Bonnie Burt, project director. “Advanced ESOL students select a topic they want to know more about – such as where to learn English or how to become a citizen – then research and write a brief story. We then post these student-written stories to one of the websites.”

Through the hands-on activity of becoming web authors, an advanced ESOL student has the opportunity to practice his or her English speaking and writing skills by developing questions to ask about their topic, setting up interviews, asking the questions and listening to the answers, then organizing that information into a Main Street story.

## The Pilot Test

Helene Pettus, lead ESL teacher at Dayton, was so excited about the prospect of using ESoL Main Street in her classroom, she volunteered to work with a small group of advanced students



during the fall of 2001. “I had several students who had completed classes at Dayton Learning Center but wanted more practice with English,” Pettus said. “I thought this would be a perfect project for them to work on.”

So began nearly three months of researching and writing. The students made use of the project’s community partnerships themselves. They wrote stories about Dayton Learning Center and Skyline Literacy Coalition and took pictures at both places to illustrate what they wrote. (In subsequent stories on local government, students did the research on the Internet but arranged with officials to take pictures to illustrate their stories.)

Pettus worked with the students to develop questions for the interviews, set up appointments for the interviews and to take pictures, and to write their stories. By mid-October, their stories were set to go. “It took longer than I anticipated,” Pettus said. “Transportation was an occasional issue, and the students needed extra help in deciding what

questions they needed to ask.” As a result, she developed a lesson plan for teachers to use in their classrooms on how to write questions.

Initially, the website was intended for use by advanced ESOL students only. “As the project took shape,” Burt said, “I realized that they were as much teacher tools as student tools and could be used at any level. That meant we needed many more Main Street stories for the sites to be successful as lesson enhancements. As a result, the project’s writer/researcher also writes stories for the two Main Street websites in order to have variety and substance to the websites, with the intention that students will update or augment those stories in the future.”

Once the story is posted, any level of English language learner can use it. For example, teachers or tutors can use the “Words to Know” list at the Bank to teach financial vocabulary to beginner level students. The list includes words such as ATM, overdraft, bounced check, deposit, and withdrawal, along

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# When the Community is the World: Fairfax County Public Schools

By David Red

Fairfax County Public School's Office of Adult and Community Education received an English Literacy/Civics grant from the Virginia Department of Education in March 2001 to serve non-native English students who enroll in high intermediate to advanced English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), high school completion, GED, and external diploma programs. With the grant, a team of developers created curriculum modules in four different topic areas: government, consumerism, health literacy, and technology (an introductory module).

The philosophy underlying the curriculum is that learners need to express their own aspirations and desires, work with their classroom community, learn about the broader community in which they live, learn to do research on issues of importance, and engage in problem-solving individually and collectively. The material is thus an open-ended conceptual framework rather than a fixed curriculum. Instructors receive an easy-to-use format that can be used and adapted to build a solid learning foundation from which the learners can then take a more active and responsible role in their own learning process.

The curriculum developers were experienced teachers from ESOL and ABE programs. They worked together to create lessons that would serve a variety of needs. Some sample titles of lessons:

- Creating a Personal Budget
- How Do I Pay for Health Care for My Family and Me?
- Examining Rights and Responsibilities as Members of the Community
- Evaluating Information on the Internet.

The lessons follow similar formats. They begin with a word bank, which contains suggested vocabulary items, and introductory activities, which are often whole-class discussions around problems related to the topic. These activities initiate the community aspect of the curriculum. Individuals in the class learn what they have in common with their fellow class members.

Most of the units then have the students go to the Internet to find answers to questions raised in the unit and to their own questions. This aspect of the curriculum alerts learners to the greater community, whether it is local, regional or global. They may find out what the population demographics of the local area are, or they may visit a national medical website to find out how the nation deals with communicable diseases.

No matter what the activity, the goal is to recognize that individuals are a part of a community at all levels. When the students find that they share common problems or issues, they can reach out to the community for more information or for help. For instance, they can visit a library to find out what Internet and other services are available. They can visit a fire station to find out about emergency care, or they can have someone from Fire and Rescue visit them. They can set up a health fair and invite community providers in to share information.

No matter what activity the participants engage in, they are encouraged to reflect upon their activities to consider their usefulness and their applicability. The learners are also asked to write an action plan for their future goals related to the topic. Students might go to the library over the weekend to further

research a topic that had interested them in class, or they might join others in the community fighting an issue. A concrete example of community action occurred this spring when the adult education budget allotment from the school board was on the cut list. Students in the EL/Civics-based classes found out about the proposed cuts and asked what they could do to prevent them. They learned they could send emails and write letters to the school board members and many of them did. They also attended the school board meeting the evening that adult education was the topic. The student voices were heard and the cuts were rescinded. These students learned first hand that community involvement is both a right and responsibility of Americans who want to change their future.

Learning how to be an effective member of the community is the goal of the EL/Civics curriculum developed by Fairfax County Public Schools. The curriculum encourages students to make decisions in the classroom and in their lives so they can have a voice. The use of technology itself has given many students confidence that they can participate in their adopted community as jobholders, parents, and citizens. When students are able to become more involved in their communities, then we in Fairfax County feel our curriculum is accomplishing its goals.

*David Red is the Adult ESOL Coordinator for Fairfax County Public Schools. He is also the Project Director for the FCPS EL/Civics grant.*

The FCPS EL/Civics curriculum will be published on the VA Adult Learning Resource Center's website later this fall.

# A Healthful Approach: Charlottesville Public Schools

By **Debbie Tuler**

I am an ESL teacher, and for me, civic participation means being involved in the community, being able to access community resources, and giving voice to ideas and opinions. English literacy and civics education means providing opportunities for students' civic participation along with helping them develop the language skills necessary to use their voices and gain access to the community organizations and functions they need. The Charlottesville Adult ESL Program supports students' civic participation in a number of ways, but here I will focus on the health component of our 2002 EL/Civics grant project.

As part of our project, we developed and piloted a 10-week health curriculum in four classes, with beginning to advanced level students. Our students include newly arrived refugees, settled immigrants, visitors, and those affiliated in some way with the University of Virginia (UVA). They range from having no or limited literacy skills to being highly educated in their native languages and countries. The goals of the health curriculum are:

- to increase participants' knowledge of and ability to navigate the health care system;
- to enable students to be advocates for their own health and promoters of health for their family and community;
- to promote mutual information sharing among health care providers in Charlottesville and our ESL students.

We believe that limited English speakers will have access to the best possible health care and health care providers can give the best possible care when there is mutual information sharing; when they listen and learn from each other about health and health care related experiences,

practices, and perspectives.

In an effort to meet the goals of our curriculum, we connected with Dr. Fern Hauck of the Department of Family Medicine at the UVA Medical Center. The Department sponsors weekly Grand Rounds, or educational seminars, for health care practitioners in the community. We arranged with Dr. Hauck to hold a panel presentation entitled Health Care Experiences from a Multi-Cultural

Perspective. The program consisted of three student presentations: "Comparisons of Health Care Systems Around the World," "A Comparison of Japanese and U.S. Health Care Systems," and "Successes and Challenges in Navigating the U.S. Health Care System," followed by a Q&A period between the students and health care providers.

Sixty-four people attended the May 10th event. Half of the group was health care providers; half was ESL students and instructors. In their evaluations, participants indicated the program was 'useful' or 'very useful' and they would like to attend additional such presentations and information sharing sessions. Comments from the health care professionals regarding what had been most memorable included:

- "Hearing the ESL students' voices."
- "The vignettes [that compared health care systems around the world] were sad and funny. I also learned a lot and was struck by the uniqueness of the differences."

- "The interchange of opinions between physicians and ESL students."

- "I was very interested to hear the Japanese woman speak about what 'surprised' her. This tells about her expectations of medical care and is very helpful."

The Q & A period gave our teaching staff ideas for further developing the EL/civics health curriculum. For instance, one

student's question, "Why does a person have to wait so long to get a doctor's appointment when we've been told not to go to the emergency room?" opened up a rich discussion that pointed out several new and critical areas around which we need to plan and implement instructional activities. Everyone involved gained new teaching resources through the two ways we devised to hold onto both the day's events and the students' stories.

- First, the text from the presentations and other student writings from the health curriculum have been published in the Charlottesville Adult ESL Health Journal. The Journal will be added to the resources in our health curriculum and disseminated to the students and staff in the Charlottesville Adult Education program and health care providers in the Health Department and UVA Medical Center.

**" It was the first time I have seen physicians on the edges of their seats listening to the stories of limited English speakers. "**



- Second, the meeting was video-taped. I envision being able to use the video with future classes to generate discussion and practice listening comprehension skills. Dr. Hauck visualizes using it as a resource to help train the residents and faculty in issues related to medical care for people from different cultures, as part of a new curriculum she is planning.

Our collaboration with the UVA Family Medicine Department continues! Under the direction of Dr. Hauck, the department will be opening a new refugee and immigrant clinic to better serve the needs of limited English speakers, and we have been asked to assist her. In fact, she had originally envisioned a

health clinic to serve refugees but, after hearing our students speak, Dr. Hauck realized the Charlottesville area is home to a more broadly based ESL population that they should be serving. Additionally, one physician communicated in writing to Dr. Hauck, "If the Refugee and Immigrant Clinic is established, perhaps a 'get to know us' document or session could be offered to address how care is delivered and what patients can expect." We have a meeting scheduled with Dr. Hauck, Peggy Paviour from the Health Department, and student representatives to discuss further action steps.

I have been involved with several health projects in ESL classes over the years, but this has been the most exciting. It was inspiring to see ESL students speak in front of native English speak-

ers, to see lay people speak in front of professionals. It takes a lot of courage to do this. Moreover, it was the first time I have seen physicians on the edges of their seats listening to the stories of limited English speakers. This was clearly not a one-shot workshop or isolated event. Rather, it was the beginning of an ongoing dialogue and a relationship that will provide our students with further opportunities to get involved in the community and get others involved. It was exciting to see the medical establishment being more responsive to the culturally diverse population it serves.

*Debbie Tuler is an ESL Specialist with the Charlottesville Adult ESL Program. She has over ten years experience working in the field of adult literacy and education.*

## **Would it be Too Much to Meet Us Half Way?**

### **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

Dear Editor:

We are a group of Hispanics that are studying to learn English as we would like to feel that we are part of this community.

There are many of us living here and certainly there will be more each day. In addition, we welcome thousands of migrants every summer who come to help us harvest the vegetables that we all consume. We contribute to the economy of the Eastern Shore, but we could contribute considerably more.

However, we feel that we are helped in many places with certain reluctance. Many times we avoid eating in certain restaurants or buying in certain stores because we are not treated well; we are ignored or made fun of or made to feel like strangers.

There are many examples, but we cannot mention them all here. One that is especially important for us, however, is the legal service. The Legal Aid Center in Belle Haven used to have a bilingual lawyer who made us feel welcomed. Unfortunately for us, now there is no one who can understand us.

We would simply like to ask the American community, and most especially those businesses, to try to be more understanding; to realize that this is all new to us; the customs are foreign; the language hard to learn. But here we are, coming to classes in our free time, trying to learn English. Would it be too much to ask to meet us half way? To give us a hand so that we can get established in this area and become productive members of the community? Would it be too much to ask of our American neighbors to perhaps try to learn a few words in Spanish?

Gracias,  
English as a Second Language Students  
Eastern Shore Community College, St. Peter's Church Class

*Progress Editor Note: This letter to the editor was written in Spanish by Alicia Johnson's students at the St. Peter's Church class of the Eastern Shore Community College and appeared in the May 15, 2002 issue of the new Spanish language weekly, LA VOZ LATINA. The class also translated the letter into English and it was published on the same date in the Eastern Shore Post op-ed page. The letter is reprinted in Progress with permission from the Eastern Shore Post.*

# Workforce Development Campus



WORKFORCE  
DEVELOPMENT  
CAMPUS

The Workforce Development Campus (WDC) is an online learning venue of James Madison University, developed in conjunction with the Workforce Improvement Network, and funded in part by Verizon.

WDC offers facilitated online learning opportunities to educators who are or who want to be involved in workforce education – anytime, anywhere. The WDC targets workforce professionals who may be adult educators in public programs, human resource development professionals in business and industry, or workplace-focused community college educators.

The virtual classrooms are small, group participation is encouraged, and

## Course Titles:

- *Introduction to Blackboard & to Workforce Education*
- *Marketing Workforce Education Programs*
- *Planning & Designing Workforce Programs*
- *Organizational Assessment in Workforce Education*
- *Curriculum Development in Workforce Education*
- *Instruction in Workforce Education Programs*
- *Program Evaluation in Workforce Education*

the facilitator is available for general and specific assistance. The WDC staff is familiar with the courses and the technology in order to provide personalized customer service during the business week, by phone or email, and electronically during the weekend. Student feedback is taken into consideration for future course offerings. WDC has developed its programs to provide certification in the following areas: Program Developer, Curriculum Designer, and Instructor.

For further information about course schedules, cost and registration, please contact Heidi Monger at: [mongerhx@jmu.edu](mailto:mongerhx@jmu.edu) or (540) 568-2930 and visit our website at: <http://wdc.jmu.edu>.

## A Web And Community Connection *From Page 6*

with their definitions and an audio clip to assist in pronunciation. “The audio clips came about as a suggestion from an ESL student,” Burt explained. “At an initial meeting, he noted that he and his classmates had difficulty with pronunciation and that audio clips would be beneficial to them.”

Instructors of intermediate students can link to “How to Write a Check” as a classroom modeling tool. Advanced students could research and write another money-related story, such as how to apply for a loan.

### On To Virginia

Part of the original grant and subsequent enhancement funding was to

disseminate the project statewide, Burt said. “We decided the best way to do this was to replicate ESoL Main Street for a statewide audience.”

Thus Main Street Virginia was born. The concept remains the same: to provide one-stop access to civics information that teaches English language skills at the same time. Currently, stories posted to the site are not location-specific to Harrisonburg and Rockingham County as they are on ESoL Main Street, but instead are more generic, such as what to do in an emergency, how to find day care, and how to write out a check.

Burt seeks continued input from ESOL students across the state. “We

encourage teachers and tutors to work with their students to write and submit stories for Main Street Virginia,” she said. “These stories can be on any community-related topic of interest to the student or that fits in with the curriculum.”

*Pamela G. Brown is the writer-researcher for ESoL Main Street and Main Street Virginia. She has over twenty years experience in journalism, public relations, and publications.*

Contact Pam for more information about writing and submitting student stories to Main Street Virginia: [Brownpg@jmu.edu](mailto:Brownpg@jmu.edu) or (540) 568-8797.

# How are We Doing? An Inquiry Guide for Adult Education Programs

**A Book Review by Victoire Gerkens Sanborn**

**“W**hat difference are we making? How do we know? How can we show it?” To answer these and similar questions, authors Beth Bingman, Associate Director of the Center for Literacy Studies and coordinator of the Center’s partnership with The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), and Olga Ebert, Research Associate, designed a well-paced, systematic inquiry guide for literacy programs.

Funders, from the federal and state level to private foundations, want literacy programs to report outcomes and demonstrate success. In other words, they want proof that their monies are well spent. Understanding how a program works, knowing its strengths and weaknesses, and learning from mistakes and successes, are essential to assessing program effectiveness, maintaining a high standard of quality, and making sound strategic plans. Such a process can take an enormous amount of effort and expertise. Today’s program managers and administrators must scramble to find enough time to run their organizations. How can they realistically be expected to develop and embark on a systematic plan for continuous improvement, or design a process to clarify program goals, examine current documentation procedures, and address the challenges of performance accountability and outcomes documentation at the program level as well?

*How Are We Doing?* offers a step-by-step, inquiry approach to program improvement for busy managers. The guide describes six sessions: 1) Examining Our Goals; 2) The Documentation Matrix; 3) Performance Accountability; 4) Inputs-to-Impacts; 5) Documenting Outcomes, Measuring Performance; and 6) Considering Next Steps. Included are detailed instructions for the facilitator and an appendix filled with reproducible documents for participants – forms, goal sheets, agendas, and

selected readings.

*How Are We Doing?* does not promise a quick-and-easy solution to program improvement. To implement this self-study approach, programs need to identify a facilitator. Preparation time for the facilitator can take one-and-one-half to two hours per session. Four to twelve participants need to agree to commit to the entire process and come prepared for every session. For the facilitator, the guide’s step-by-step format, with a realistic time frame and easy-to-follow instructions, leaves nothing to chance. Each section contains objectives, sample preparation exercises, and a list of activities (five to six per session). Participant handouts are grouped according to session, and can be reproduced as needed. These documents, once filled out, are used for planning the program’s continuous improvement work.

Would this inquiry approach work for a small community-based literacy program? To answer the question, The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center has invited several private literacy organizations to field test the guide and modify it according to their needs. Their findings will be published in a later issue of *Progress*.

On a final note, Mt. Rogers Regional Adult Education Program in Abingdon, Virginia played an impor-



tant role as one of three action research teams for developing this guide. Their research has resulted in a program resource that, if followed as intended, will help a program clarify its goals, examine its documentation processes, and embark on a realistic strategic plan – quite an impressive outcome for the investment of time!

*Victoire Gerkens Sanborn works for the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center and the Virginia Literacy Foundation as Literacy Support Coordinator. She has worked with literacy programs since 1988.*

## ***How Are We Doing? An Inquiry Guide for Adult Education Programs***

**by Beth Bingman with Olga Ebert  
NCSALL Teaching and Training Materials, 2001  
<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ncsall/teach>  
VALRC call number: LB 2822.82.B56 2001**

# Using Graphic Organizers

By **Gwen H. Smith**

**G**raphic organizers are a useful tool for fostering learning and thinking. Whether used in a classroom or staff development setting, graphic organizers allow learners and teachers to do one or more of the following: organize their thoughts, connect new information to prior knowledge, depict abstract concepts in a more concrete fashion, or represent connections between and among facts and concepts.

According to *Transformations: Kentucky's Curriculum Framework*, graphic organizers have the potential to be used in all stages of instruction:

Graphic organizers may be used before an instructional activity (e.g., reading, viewing a film) to activate prior knowledge, to provide a conceptual framework for integrating new information, and to encourage student prediction. During instruction, they can help students actively process and reorganize information. After instruction, they may be used to summarize learning, encourage elaboration, help organize ideas for writing, provide a structure for review, and assess the

degree of student understanding.

Graphic organizers are especially useful when working with adult learners. Allowing adults to construct their own meaning – whether through comparing and contrasting elements with a Venn diagram or by creating their own

graphic organizer to depict their understanding of a topic – promotes deeper understanding and moves learners from rote recall to higher-level thinking skills. Those learners preparing for the GED will benefit from using graphic organizers as a reinforcement of the many graphic representations within the

GED test. Using a graphic organizer before writing may help the learner organize her thoughts more clearly. The opportunity to apply learning to life can also happen through graphic organizers, such as with problem-solution tables, flow charts or how-to charts, and family trees.

When preparing to use a graphic organizer, keep in mind both the needs of the learners as well as the focus for instruction. Don't use a graphic organ-

izer just for the sake of using one – have a definite plan, and explain the purpose to learners. Model the use of graphic organizers and provide multiple opportunities for their use, as some learners will need guided practice before they feel comfortable with certain formats. If, after time, a learner continues to express difficulty, perhaps because of different learning preferences, provide an alternate form or encourage students to make their own organizers.

Since they exist in a variety of appearances and structures, graphic organizers can be tailored to the needs of your learners as well as your instructional goals. The next page presents several types of graphic organizers, which may be useful when working with adult learners.

*Gwen H. Smith is a specialist for literacy projects at the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy. Before coming to the DOE, Gwen worked with Fairfax County Public Schools as an English teacher, department chair, SOL Lead Teacher, and staff development trainer.*

For further information about graphic organizers contact Gwen H. Smith by e-mail at [gsmith1@mail.vak12ed.edu](mailto:gsmith1@mail.vak12ed.edu) or phone at 804-225-3997.

“  
... moves learners  
from rote recall  
to higher level  
thinking skills.”

## Resources

<http://www.kde.state.ky.us/oapd/curric/Publications/Transformations/graphicorgan.html#anchor32453771>  
(from *Transformations: Kentucky's Curriculum Framework*)

<http://www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-6293.html?s21#allsubject>

<http://www.smcp.s.k12.md.us/mbms/writing/graphorg.html>

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/edis771/notes/graphicorganizers/graphic/>

[http://www.teach-nology.com/web\\_tools/graphic\\_org/](http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/graphic_org/) (A graphic organizer generator)

<http://www.englishcompanion.com/Tools/notemaking.html>

<http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/toolsforthought.pdf>

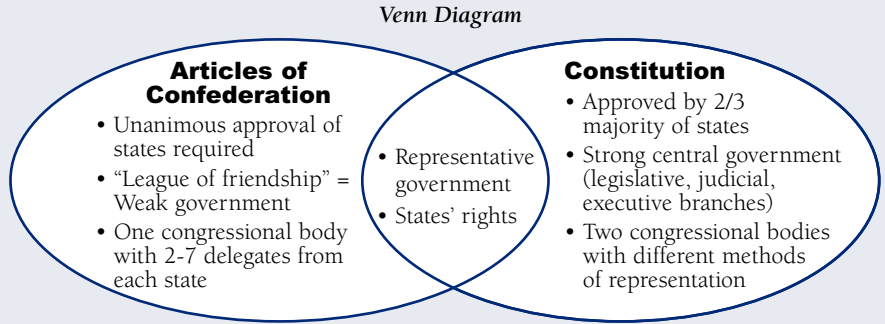
<http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/index.html>



## SAMPLE TYPES OF GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

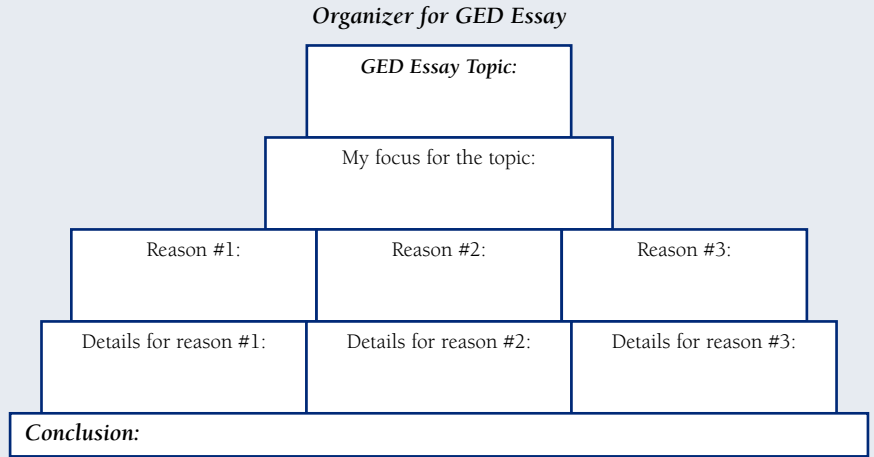
### Compare/Contrast Organizers

These formats include Venn diagrams, matrices, or tables and allow the learner to compare or contrast attributes between objects. Also, learners may draw on prior knowledge if comparing a new topic to one learned previously.



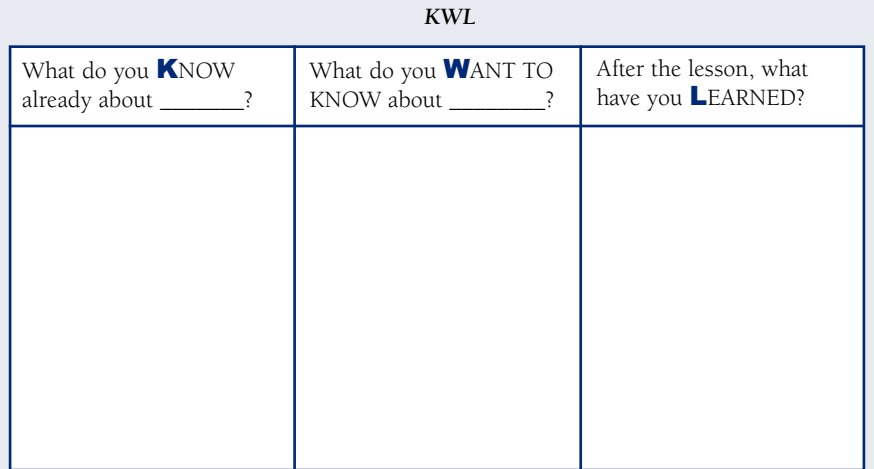
### Sequence Organizers

Flow charts, event chains, and time lines are examples of this type of organizer. They may be used to solve math problems, consider decisions and their consequences, depict stages of growth in an animal or piece of legislation, or plan a strategy for action.



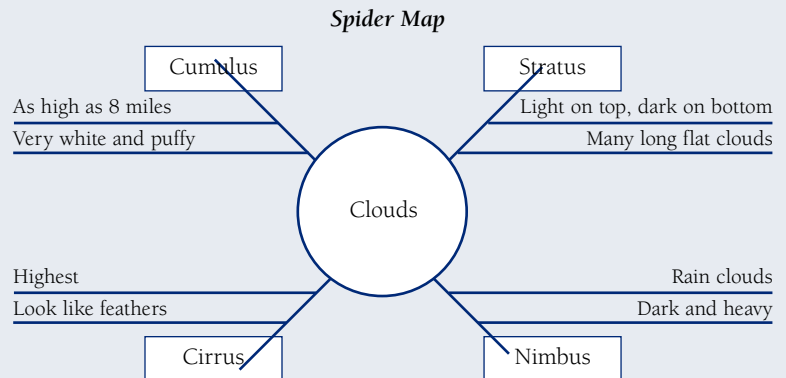
### KWL

Know/Want/Learned is an active thinking strategy that is often used before reading or learning new material. Each letter represents one column in a three-column chart: what do learners KNOW about a subject, what do they WANT to know or learn, and (as they read or after instruction) what they LEARNED. KWL may be used as a group or individual activity. Following the completion of the KWL chart, it may be helpful to engage learners in a reflection or summary activity. KWL is helpful during staff development to determine instructors’ experience with a topic.



### Mapping or webbing

Various formats – semantic maps, spider webs, concept maps – depict information either by relating items to a central theme or concept or by showing the hierarchy among concepts and specific details. Maps and webs may be used to assist in brainstorming prior to learning or to analyze and synthesize ideas during or after learning.



# Program Improvement: A Recipe for Success

By Anita Prince

What's cooking in adult education? With an abundance of accountability, program improvement is what's cooking. **Program improvement** is both process and product. It is the means by which we develop a plan and the system through which we can accomplish our goals in adult education. There are numerous resources we could consult for our recipe. I have borrowed from a more traditional recipe for "total quality improvement" to prepare this selection.

To begin, let's select and gather the necessary ingredients. We will need the following:

- A customer-centered orientation
- One compelling vision
- Active management participation
- Staff involvement
- Error-free work
- *Kaisen*
- Organizational culture change
- A structured approach

Fundamental to our recipe for program improvement is our **customer-centered orientation**. Inherent in this orientation is a belief that program improvement should ultimately benefit our customers; not only our learners, but other stakeholders as well. Improved results lead to improved customer satisfaction and long-term program success. This is really the main ingredient and it flavors everything!

Next, we need a **compelling vision**. A compelling vision is one that elicits willing participation because it is clearly articulated by respected leaders

and addresses the need for change, long- and short-term goals, benefits to stakeholders, and the importance of everyone's participation. It encourages a view of the future that builds on past and present strengths. Some visions are not easily separated from bitter roots, which can make them very unappealing. A compelling vision is selected for its overall appeal. It is the mature fruit of a carefully cultivated seed of an idea in a well-tended field. More than one, however, might overwhelm the recipe.

Program improvement efforts can't have lasting impact without **active management participation**. For adult education, that means participation by program administrators and managers at state, regional and local program levels. Participation goes beyond just being supportive. Management must set goals for improvement, review program operations with a critical eye toward quality, continuously monitor progress, eliminate barriers to improved performance, and participate on improvement teams. Since this is the active ingredient, nothing will happen without it no matter how much of the other ingredients you add or how vigorously you stir them.

**Staff involvement** includes all staff. Cooperation and teamwork are vital to program improvement. Improvement happens when the envi-



ronment invites and elicits opinions and advice, responds non-defensively to criticism, clarifies concerns, and supports and implements suggestions for change. This really gives the whole mix the desired consistency. Too little and the mix is hard to swallow. Too much and it is difficult to tell if the recipe is done.

**Error-free work** does not mean perfection. It does mean that errors are anticipated and are seen as an opportunity to find processes that can be improved. By tracing back to the "root" of a problem, or error, a point for improvement might be found. This special ingredient makes the recipe much better than just using "good enough." It makes the recipe more palatable to even the most discriminating taste and actually helps the recipe go further.

**Kaisen** is the Japanese term for a philosophy of continuous improvement that recognizes improvement as a process that it is never ending. While results – outcomes – remain important, the processes for achieving the results are of equal value. This ingredient will allow you to work with the recipe until it is just right at just the right time.

It also helps to keep the recipe fresh so you can prepare more program improvement later.

Achieving lasting program improvement requires fundamental changes in the way business is done.

**Organizational culture change** requires alignment of values, a clear philosophy about the nature of the work, administrative roles that are in concert with the values and philosophy, time, and patience. This is the catalyst that will allow the ingredients to combine. It also acts as a preservative without harmful side effects. This ingredient must be carefully mixed with the compelling vision to ensure a smooth consistency.

**A structured approach** is a con-

tainer for both a perspective about the work of adult education and a procedural way of doing the work. It includes an organizational structure that facilitates a focus on quality, such as a quality council or steering committee, quality improvement teams at each organizational level, and project teams to target specific improvements. Management must define the process for quality improvement and develop an infrastructure that everyone understands and can use. Select one that is easy to work with and can easily hold all the ingredients.

The desired result is the enhanced value and quality of our adult education programs. Take care to include all of the ingredients. Otherwise, the likely

result is an unhelpful mix leading to an “un-tasty” batch of disappointment. What is essential is the integrity of the original ingredients we select, the proportions we choose, the care we use in combining them, and the diligence with which we oversee the process.

Program improvement is healthful and nourishing fare. It is good year round and can be used to serve a few or many. Outcome measures are the recipe taste test.

*Anita Prince is a specialist for curriculum and instruction at the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy. Her doctorate is in adult education from Virginia Commonwealth University.*

## Resources

- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Using case examples, Fullan explores how to create positive, lasting change through the use of five core competencies: attending to a broader moral purpose, keeping on top of the change process, cultivating relationships, sharing knowledge, and setting a vision and a context for creating organizational coherence.
- Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. The author of the bestseller *Emotional Intelligence* joins two noted researchers to explore the neuro-scientific links between a leader's emotional set and organizational success, or failure. The authors build a compelling case for a process that can be learned and will produce leaders who build emotionally intelligent organizations.
- Heider, J. (1986). *The Tao of leadership: Leadership strategies for a new age*. New York: Bantam Books. A new-age classic on what every leader needs to consider, this readable piece of wisdom is based on Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*.
- Imai, M. ((1985). *Kaizen: The key to Japan's competitive success*. New York: Random House. Imai's introduction of the Japanese concept of kaizen is a must read for a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning and potential of continuous improvement.
- Peters, T. (1987). *Thriving on chaos: Handbook for a management revolution*. New York: Harper & Row. Peters' handbook for what he describes as a “world turned upside down” is organized around five areas of management for proactive performance. He presents ten prescriptions for quality revolution in each of the first four.
- Peters, T.J., & Waterman, Jr., R.H. (1982). *In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies*. New York: Harper & Row. This seminal work discusses eight basic principles of management that are readily transferable to a range of organizations. The book is ripe with examples and anecdotes from some of America's top-run companies of the time.
- Weisbord, M.R. (1987). *Productive workplaces: Organizing and managing for dignity, meaning, and community*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. An interesting mix of theory and practice that also contains some helpful history on how some of the theories and practices evolved. Weisbord provides a case study and guidelines for making practical use of theories.



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## Virginia has a new GED help-line: 1-877-37-MY-GED

## Calendar of Events

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

### State

***Eighth Annual Educational Technology Leadership and Planning Conference: Putting The Pieces Together***

December 3 – 5, 2002

Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center  
Roanoke, Virginia

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Technology/conference/home.html>

***2003 Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education Annual Conference***

March 13 – 15, 2003

Hilton Alexandria Mark Center  
Alexandria, Virginia

Contact: Jane Swing  
(540) 831-6207

[jswing@radford.edu](mailto:jswing@radford.edu)

***Virginia Festival of the Book***

March 20 – 24, 2003

Charlottesville, Virginia  
Contact: (434) 924-6890

[www.vabook.org](http://www.vabook.org)  
[vabook@virginia.edu](mailto:vabook@virginia.edu)

### National

***Health Literacy Month: Promoting Understandable Health Information Around the World***

October 1 – 31, 2002

Contact:

<http://www.healthliteracymonth.com/>

***Implementing a Family Literacy Program: Staff Training***

October 14 – 18, 2002

Louisville, Kentucky

Contact: Renee Harley

(502) 584-1133

<http://www.familit.org/training/training.html>  
[rharley@familt.org](mailto:rharley@familt.org)

***Even Start Conference 2002***

November 1 – 6, 2002

Omni Shoreham Hotel

Washington, DC

Contact: <http://www.evenstart.org/>

***American Association for Adult and Continuing Education***

November 19 – 24, 2002

Hyatt Regency St. Louis at Union Station  
St. Louis, Missouri

Contact: AAACE

(301) 918-1913

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

***Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.***

***Annual Conference***

March 25 – 29, 2003

Baltimore, Maryland

Contact: (703) 836-0774

<http://www.tesol.org>

[conventions@tesol.org](mailto:conventions@tesol.org)

***Commission on Adult Basic Education National Conference 2003***

April 26 – 30, 2003

Portland Convention Center

Portland, Oregon

Contact: <http://206.82.75.28/index.html>