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Understanding Accommodations For The GED

by **Bob MacGillivray**

Every GED candidate in Virginia deserves the opportunity to succeed on the GED Tests. For some to succeed, they will need to study harder and come to class more. Others have already worked long and hard and just need some form of accommodation. This doesn't mean giving them an unfair advantage over others. It just means providing them with the means to reach their potential.

GED Testing Service permits accommodations "at the request of the candidate and with the permission of the Chief Examiner and GED Administrator" for individuals who cannot be tested fairly under standard administration of the regular print GED Tests. In accordance with GED Testing Service guidelines, candidates may be permitted to use a nonstandard edition of the GED or the standardized test administration procedures may be modified.

“The role of the teacher concerning accommodations and GED testing is critical.”

Three nonstandard editions of the GED Tests are available: the Braille edition, the audiocassette edition, and the large print edition (the latter requires no formal request/approval process). Modifications of standardized test administration procedures include:

- Extended time
- Supervised breaks
- Private room
- Interpreter
- Scribe
- Calculator/talking calculator

The GED Administrator or designee must approve these accommodations in advance of the test. The candidate must submit a formal request on the appropriate GED Testing Service form: SA 001 for requests pertaining to physical and/or emotional disabilities or L-15 for requests pertaining to learning disabilities or attention deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity. Documentation from qualified

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Dear Reader:

Lifelong learning is a prevailing theme in this issue of Progress. Through adult education, adults of any age can accomplish their individual goals. This issue publishes the writing of two adult learners. Dorothy Carol Profitt's poem reflects a sense of self-awakening that is such an important part of taking responsibility for learning. Irene Imbriaco writes about the learning experience of putting herself in another learner's shoes. This newsletter values contributions from students. Please encourage your learners to submit their writing to the editor.

In our state, lifelong learning has gained public support. This year, the governor declared the week of February 25th to be Lifelong Learning Week, affirming that lifelong learning is essential for the growth and success of every citizen. Many programs observed the week by holding open houses, and organizing class visits to the legislature. Lifelong learning is also practiced year-round in the classroom. Teachers and tutors foster lifelong learning by making tools available for students to continue to learn outside the classroom. Assistive technology and other accommodation strategies can open doors for some students. Two articles in this issue address this topic: New readers discover a strategy for independent learning in the Quicktionary Reading Pen study. Bob MacGillivray's article alerts teachers to accommodations that can help GED test-takers.

Lifelong learning also means acquiring new perspectives and attitudes to take through life. Lisa de Britain describes how students discovered a new perspective on American culture. Susan Utt chronicles the development of a job-readiness class that helps participants find self-confidence and develop valuable skills as workers and learners. MaryAnn Florez makes reflective questioning part of her professional learning and involves adult ESOL learners in using the same approach.

Sustain your professional development over the summer. Read the Workforce Improvement Network's WIN News on their website at <http://cep.jmu.edu/workforce>. Receive the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center's monthly Update resource bulletin by subscribing to the VAELN electronic discussion list. Subscription information is on the Resource Center's homepage at www.vcu.edu/aelweb/. And attend VAILL – "the opportunity to learn, unlearn, and relearn." See you there!

Looking Forward To VAILL

by **Marci Gore**

Pat Bowyer describes it as “the bargain of the century.” And, no, it’s not that terrific looking silk suit marked down half price at the mall. Surprisingly enough, it’s VAILL (Virginia Adult Institute for Lifelong Learning) she’s talking about!

At \$10 per person for an extensive three-day institute, complete with good food and entertainment, coordinators of the Virginia Adult Institutes for Lifelong Learning say anyone involved in adult education and literacy simply cannot afford to miss the development opportunities VAILL has to offer.

The Department of Education has funded VAILL for more than 10 years. There will be three VAILLs held across the state this summer.

Southwest Virginia’s VAILL will be July 24 – 26 at Radford University in Radford. Its theme is “Modeling Quality Now and Beyond.” The south-

eastern portion of the state will hold its conference July 29 – 31 at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, using the theme “United for Success.” And the ESL (English as a Second Language) VAILL in Northern Virginia will be July 31 – August 2 at Marymount University in Fairfax, boasting the theme “Civics, Communities and Cultures.”

Bowyer, who coordinates the ESL VAILL, said attending this event is a great way for new, first-year ESL teachers to learn more about their profession. “They’ll have opportunities to meet many colleagues and network,” she said. Networking and sharing ideas seem to be key components of any successful VAILL, wherever it is held. In addition to in-depth sessions, workshops, mini-sessions, focus and discussion groups, participants of VAILLs are encouraged to

spend time with their colleagues and share thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

Wayne Virag, who coordinates Southeast VAILL, says the sessions offered there actively involve participants. “By sharing their experiences, they are able to learn about tested practices that work.” Dale Temple helps coordinate Southeast VAILL. “VAILL is an opportunity for tutors, volunteers, instructors, and adult education managers to meet and network with one another



VAILL workshop in progress.

Smithsonian Institution’s museums. A new offering of Southwest VAILL this year will be counterpart discussion groups for those who may be working in similar settings or with similar clients, such as social services, the jails, or the PBS LiteracyLink Workplace

Essential Skills series.

Southeast VAILL will offer sessions on health literacy and on using recent discoveries in brain research to understand how people learn. Dr. Yvonne Thayer, Director of Adult Education and Literacy for Virginia, will be keynote speaker at SE VAILL. Each VAILL also provides the opportunity to view

books and other educational material at publishing companies’ book exhibits.

Swing says you come away from a VAILL feeling a part of the larger adult education world and Bowyer says it leaves educators “energized” and eager to return to the classroom and implement what they learned. So, if you’ve never been to a VAILL before and you’re still on the fence about attending, consider how Dale Temple sums it up – “VAILL offers the opportunity to learn, unlearn, and relearn. There is something for everyone.” ■

Marci McConnell Gore is coordinator of the Distance Learning Program for the Regional Adult Education Program of Lee, Scott and Wise Counties and the City of Norton. She also does public relations work for the program.

“**VAILL offers the opportunity to learn, unlearn, and relearn. There is something for everyone.**”

while also acquiring the latest knowledge through an array of workshops and in-depth sessions.”

Southwest VAILL’s coordinator, Jane Swing, agrees and says getting to spend time with peers in a casual, relaxed atmosphere can offer a whole new way of thinking for those already involved in adult education. “We have expert presenters, but our peers can provide us with a wealth of information and resources,” Swing said. “Everything’s not the same everywhere. (VAILL) provides an opportunity to see what other programs do and to have conversations you don’t get to have in the regular work setting.”

Each VAILL offers its own intriguing possibilities. ESL VAILL will have representatives on hand from the Sackler Museum, one of the

One Stop Job Readiness Class: A Cooperative Effort

by Susan Utt

Sometimes needs and resources come together at just the right moment. When a local training facility closed in Frederick County, there was a need for job readiness instruction in the community. When the Winchester/Frederick County Employment Network met, there was a willingness to pool resources and share expertise to meet local needs. When a new multi-media learning system designed to help adults improve basic workplace skills was introduced to adult education, there was a ready-made curriculum for needed instruction. When all of these elements came together, a powerful new resource became available for the unemployed and under-employed adults in the Northern Shenandoah Valley.

Pilot Program

The One-Stop Job Readiness class began at the Virginia Employment Commission in Winchester on April 9, 2001. A steering committee composed of representatives from adult education, social services, rehabilitative services, the regional jail, and the employment commission worked to coordinate the needs and services of the program and to develop the class schedule. The three-week course met five days a week from 9:00 to Noon.

On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays the class concentrated on using the multi-media learning system, PBS LiteracyLink Workplace Essential Skills. A Northern Shenandoah Valley Adult Education teacher used the video programs and the workbooks to guide discussion and instruction. The online component served to reinforce the classroom activities and allowed the

students to continue their learning after class had ended. An emphasis was placed on resume writing, job applications, and interviewing techniques. The students learned how to market themselves. They had opportunities to practice their job-seeking skills and explore or develop career paths.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays members of the professional community (representing more than ten agencies) facilitated classes. This large base of local support was critical. It brought a wealth of background information to

- A representative from the Consumer Credit Council presented budgeting information and consumer credit counseling.
- Staff from the VA Employment Commission explained in-office and online services. Students explored resources to guide them to their particular job interest.
- Members of the Employment Network facilitated and video-taped mock job interviews.
- Representatives from various non-profit agencies held a panel discussion about local employment resources.

Lessons Learned

The One-Stop Job Readiness class has been a work-in-progress since its inception and continues to be modified in response to learner evaluations and lessons learned from practice. The class is

now offered over a two-week block of time meeting five days a week for four hours each day, tailored to appeal to a larger number of participants and fit better with the reality of job-hunting schedules and demands. The organization and coordination of the program has also gone through changes and now rests with a fewer number of individuals than originally planned.

The Northern Shenandoah Valley continues to experience a low unemployment rate and most job seekers do not have to look long before finding employment. Consequently, each time the class is offered it becomes more difficult to generate a class enrollment. However, the job turnover rate remains high among entry-level positions, and a goal of the Job Readiness class is to help clients develop job-keeping skills as well as job-seeking skills.

Some classes and activities were

“Multiple agencies felt ownership of the class and wanted to see it succeed...”

the program, provided a bridge to the community, and expanded the student referral base. Multiple agencies felt ownership of the class and wanted to see it succeed; this was the driving force behind the initial success of the program. The Tuesday/Thursday schedule included these facilitators and activities:

- An employment specialist from TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) administered the Workplace TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education).
- A caseworker from the Department of Social Services demonstrated computers to write a letter of introduction.
- A job services counselor from the regional jail taught communication skills necessary for employment success.

modified or eliminated when a significant number of students reported that the information being discussed did not impact their lives and that their time in class could be better spent. The TABE assessment is no longer administered because the class addresses vocational needs and it was decided that such an academic assessment was inappropriate.

With the abbreviated schedule, the number of agencies involved has decreased but their support remains strong, and the class evaluations reflect a solid curriculum and definite needs being met.

One student wrote, "The workshop was great. In the beginning of the

class I didn't feel like I had confidence in myself. By the end of class [the teacher] had made me feel confident and job ready!"

Another wrote, "This really improved my resume/interview skills and also gave me more self-confidence as I job search."

A dedicated and highly qualified teacher, a well developed curriculum, a collaborative effort, and a rich resource base of information and experience has made the One-Stop Job Readiness class a powerful resource for the Northern Shenandoah Valley. Although there have been setbacks along the way, there

is a continued commitment by many professionals to assure that this program will succeed. With a commitment to serve the unemployed and under-employed adults in the region, the One-Stop Job Readiness class will continue to evolve and offer job-related education and resources to the community. ■■

Susan O. Utt is the Regional Instructional Specialist for Planning District 7 (Winchester and Frederick, Clarke, Warren and Shenandoah Counties). She is a member of the Winchester / Frederick County Employment Network and heads the steering committee for the One-Stop Job Readiness class. She has eighteen years experience in the field of adult education.

Today Is A Gift

by Dorothy Carol Proffitt

Each morning in the Spottsylvania Bridge to the Future class, Kitti Mann presents a quotation for her students to respond to in their writing notebooks. On February 5, the quotation was: "Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift; that's why we call it the present." Dorothy Carol Proffitt wrote this poem in response:

*Yesterday is history.
It is in the past.
I must always move forward,
And be positive at last.

I will learn from my mistakes,
But will not dwell on them.
For if I do not learn,
They're bound to repeat again.

Tomorrow is a mystery,
And some mystery is good.
I will not let this worry me
As I normally would.*

*I will roll with all life's punches,
And take it all in stride.
Follow all my hunches
That I feel inside.

Today is a gift
That I accept graciously.
I will think of today as a present,
That was given just to me.*

Helping Scott Hebert

by Irene Imbriaco

I have been taking a class at the Eastern Shore Community College Adult Learning Center to better myself. It took me too much time to get here, though I thought for many years that I needed help in basic skills. I was insecure when I first started school. I didn't know how I could help myself let alone help someone else to reach his goal. Maybe if I'd read an article like this, I would have gotten here sooner.

Different people come to the community college for different reasons: to get a GED, study for a driver's license or college entrance exams, write a resume, prepare for work, and try hands on computer skills. A goal for me was to improve my computer skills.

A young man named Scott Hebert came to The Adult Learning Center to study for his Virginia Commercial Driver's License (CDL). He

came faithfully twice a week. He would take out the manual and get right to it. I could see that Scott had a strong determination to possess a CDL, but some days he had difficulty concentrating and understanding the terms in the text. He would get frustrated. He was starting to put himself down and losing some of his confidence. I went to him and said, "Why beat yourself up?" I told him that I had my CDL and, if he needed help, I would be willing to help him in any way I could. We started to study the driver's manual together, every time he came to class. We talked about each part until he understood the meaning. I was learning too. I was learning to see things through someone else's eyes.

I could put myself in his shoes. I had problems when I tried to get my CDL some twenty years earlier. I had

to take the test twice before I was issued a permit to drive a bus. I would study the parts in the manual and then visit someone with a truck to look under the hood to see what the book had diagrammed. I would write the questions from the text several times to learn them. It was hard but I did it and still hold my CDL today.

Scott went to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles for his CDL exam and failed it. He came back to inform us that he didn't pass the test. The teachers as well as the students at the Learning Center support one another. We were disappointed for Scott but encouraged him not to give

“ I was learning too. I was learning to see things through someone else's eyes. ”

up on himself and his dream. Some suggested he treat his first try like a pre-test. We said, "Stick it out a little longer. You have three quarters of the test memorized and soon you can take the test over and pass it." I told him how I had to take the test twice before I was issued a permit to drive a bus. I wasn't sure if we were getting through to Scott and if he would be back in class or not. I hoped he would listen to us and keep trying.

The next day I spoke to Mrs. Maureen Dooley, an instructor, and told her what I was thinking. I believed that Scott had an anxiety attack trying to make the transition from reading the questions in the book to taking the test on a computer. Mrs. Dooley suggested that I look on the Internet for a computer program that she could purchase for the Adult Learning Center to help

Scott and other students prepare for the CDL test. I thought that would be great. This was the first computer search I ever did.

While I was doing the research, another instructor, Mrs. Michele Whittaker, stopped into class and asked me what was so intriguing on the computer screen. I brought her up to date on Scott and told her what I was looking for. Mrs. Whittaker said, "Give me some time to think about it. I may be able to make a computerized pre-test from the questions in the manual." I told her I would like that very much and if she could have it for the next day that would be great! Scott was coming in then and it would be a surprise. I was just joking, for I knew what a busy schedule she had.

But we have some really special people in the Learning Center who are always looking out for our good. In class the next morning, Mrs. Whitaker sent me a note with instructions to a program she had made up on one of the computers. Boy, was

I surprised! She even came into class that morning to help get us started. Scott was very pleased with the program. He studied on the computer, and the next time he took the CDL test he passed it. We are all very happy for him. It is a good feeling, knowing you have helped someone else reach his goal. The best part is it gave me a chance to pay back all the kindness that has been showered on me at the center. Scott taught me a new way to study. It was a win-win situation for everyone. ■

Irene Imbriaco is a student in the Adult Learning Center at Eastern Shore Community College. She is always willing to assist her fellow students in achieving their goals.

Editor's note: This article first appeared in its original form in the *Eastern Shore News*, Nov. 24, 2001.

The Practical Guide To Facilitation: A Self-Study Resource

A Book Review by Susan Holt

The goal of this book is to improve the reader's small group facilitation skills. The examples are set in the workplace but the concepts are transferable to many different contexts. The book is a consumable product with question and answer sections that encourage self-analysis of your own facilitation skills and understanding of the material.

The workbook is designed around fitness metaphors and each chapter consists of three sections:

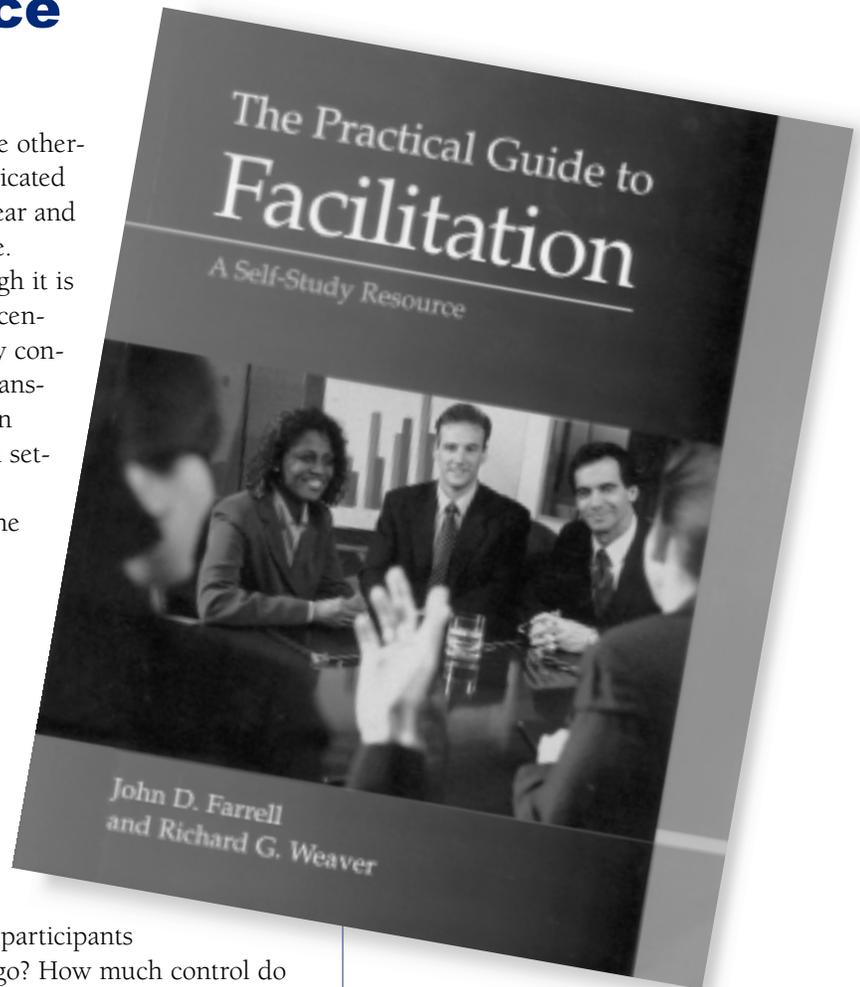
- A "Warm-up" that introduces and details what's coming.
- A number of "Facilitation Workouts," including a summary of the content for you to complete, and "Exercises," consisting of questions with answer blanks for recording responses and observations, as well as ways to try out the material in your own classroom or workplace situations.
- A "Cool-Down" to assess mastery of the material and create an action plan with which to apply it.

The content should be covered sequentially, as it begins with what a facilitator's role is, then moves on to how to focus on the task of a group, how to assess strengths and weaknesses, deal with conflict in a group, help the group solve problems and make decisions, and how to listen and help the group facilitate change and find closure.

I believe this book is well written and professional. It is thorough and draws on much experience and success in facilitative methods. Its self-study format provides ample opportunity for you to learn, apply, and assess your knowledge as you progress through the material. Diagrams, acronyms, and

charts make otherwise complicated material clear and manageable.

Although it is workplace-centered, many concepts are transferable to an educational setting. For instance, one chart helps you define your own values to determine what kind of facilitator you will be. How much can you let the participants (students) go? How much control do you naturally want to take? Acronyms such as "TARGET" (Truth, Accountability, Respect, Growth, Empowerment, and Trust) can be used to increase the effectiveness of any small group in any administration or classroom. I recommend this book if you are seriously interested in developing your ability and perspective on the facilitation process and your ability to help small groups be more effective in their tasks. ■■



Susan T. Holt has 12 years experience in adult education and literacy, with an emphasis on the instruction, curriculum development, and management of workplace education programs. She is Instructional Specialist for the Workforce Investment Network and adjunct faculty at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College.

The Practical Guide to Facilitation: A Self-Study Resource

**by John D. Farrell and Richard G. Weaver
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Reflective Questioning And Discussion: Tools For Evaluation

by *MaryAnn Cunningham Florez*

Aristotle once said that the unexamined life is not worth living. I take that to heart in my personal life (usually late at night with a pint of caramel fudge ripple in hand) but I also work to make reflection and questioning a part of my professional life. In my role as a teacher creating responsive evolving instruction, I regularly incorporated reflective questioning and discussion to check in with learners and have them check in with themselves. It's been more difficult to carry this out as the administrator of a small community-based volunteer ESL program. However, I have tried to incorporate reflection in one important way: in the data gathering that I do when I evaluate our program.

At the end of every three-month session, I visit each class in our program and spend about thirty minutes asking learners to reflect on the work they and their teachers have been doing. I develop questions; they consider them individually; and then we discuss them as a group. With beginning level classes, I do this in Spanish (100% of our beginning learners are native Spanish speakers); with advanced classes, we do it in English. It is always an engaging and enlightening process for me, one that constantly reminds me that reflection is not a foreign concept to adult learners, even if they may not have all the language they need to discuss it in English or if at times they need some assistance keeping the process on track.

A great thing about reflection is that is infectious. Working through reflective questioning and discussions with the learners spurs me to reflect not only on our program, but also on the process I use to gather data. I have now held four or five reflective conversations with learners; I recently sat down to look over my accumulated notes and thoughts and realized that I have learned a few helpful points about reflecting with learners.

One of the things that I realized almost immediately is the value of giv-

I have done a great deal of tinkering with the questions I use to guide the reflections. For example, I used to include a direct question on teachers and what they were doing in the classroom. Some learners, perhaps not wanting to appear critical of their teachers, did not respond. Others bluntly stated their opinions. Both responses quickly derailed the reflective process. When I started replacing the original question with questions that steered learner responses toward aspects of the class (e.g., activities or texts) and toward description rather than judgment, I seemed to get richer data – and less complaining.

A big part of successful reflection is knowing when personal expectations and preferences are coloring actions and reactions. That can be difficult.

When I started asking questions that elicited learners' expectations and preferences at the beginning of the reflective process, it drew out information that often helped them (and me) clarify points and prompt new understanding of strong statements made later.

I know that adult learners come to the classroom with knowledge and experiences, and their learning usually involves incorporation of new information into existing structures. Therefore, rather than simply asking them what they thought of their classes, I started asking them to compare them to classes they had attended in the past. Helping them establish point of references and asking them to relate their current experiences to previous ones seemed to facilitate new reflection.

Initially, I was "all over the map" in terms of focusing my questions and expectations of learners' responses. In my enthusiasm, I sometimes offered them the proverbial blank sheet and said, "Write something." I began to think about the responses I hoped to

“**Perhaps the most important realization for me has been the need to make reflection a regular activity.**”

ing learners an opportunity to gather their thoughts before they start reflecting. As an administrator, I may walk into a classroom and “steal” a small amount of time for my information gathering. However, as the program's de facto substitute, I occasionally have two-hour blocks of time in which to work with the learners. In these cases, I have the opportunity to build in warm-up activities. When students have a chance to reassemble their memories and reactions to the time period in question and I have time to create a framework for the reflective questions, the process becomes much more efficient.

get and whether or not learners would have the ready information, perspective, and time to make them. That helped me move away from generalized or potentially all-encompassing questions (“What do you need to study for your life?”) and direct learners’ attention to specific issues or actions that were happening in their classrooms. I could then take the information they provided and draw out broader implications.

Perhaps the most important realization for me has been the need to make reflection a regular activity. This is where I have been most frustrated as an administrator with limited time and access to the learners. Reflection is by nature a regular, ongoing process. I am happy with the opportunities I have to reflect with learners and I value the information they give me. However, I know that if the learners become familiar with the process, comfortable with each other, and have a more manageable period of time with which to work, the information they provide multiplies in value. That’s

why I hope that not only administrators but also teachers will consider some of the lessons that I’ve learned as they construct their own reflective activities. ■■

MaryAnn Cunningham Florez is assistant director of the National Center for ESL Literacy Education and volunteer administrator of St. Anthony’s Adult ESL Program in Falls Church. She has worked in the field of ESL as a teacher, staff developer, and materials writer for over 10 years.

Reflective Questioning And Discussion: Tools For Evaluation

Teachers will want to schedule the following process on a regular basis, for example, once a week or at the end of a content unit or session. Allow approximately an hour for this activity. As teachers and learners familiarize themselves with the process over time, it should become more efficient and produce better quality data.

Administrators will want to think carefully about when and how often to schedule this activity to meet data gathering needs and the realities of time. Allow approximately an hour with some flexibility.

Step I. To begin, provide an activity for learners to focus their attention on the time period in question and to gather their thoughts. For example:

- Ask learners to place post-it notes in their books on the five or six pages that were most important to them during the period in question.
- Have pairs or groups create quizzes that highlight the most important content they covered.
- Have a small or whole group brainstorm session on what they studied.
- Prompt learners to write briefly on what they learned.

Step II. After learners have had an opportunity to prepare, use the following questions to draw out more information:

1. Have you studied English before? How were those classes similar to ours? How were they different?
2. When you started what did you think English class would be like? What did you think you would learn and be able to do when you finished? Is that what your English class has been like? What has been different?
3. Which topics are you studying that are really valuable to your life? Which aren’t? Name two situations in your life for which you need more English.
4. Describe an activity when you felt excited or disconnected. Describe an activity when you felt excited, like you were learning.
5. If you could change one thing in class, what would it be? What one thing would you not want to change?

The Quicktionary Reading Pen: A Tool For Struggling Readers?

by Susan McShane

The following is a summary of "Assistive Technology for Adults with Reading Challenges: The Quicktionary Reading Pen Option," written by Dr. Paul Gerber. The full text is available on the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center website at: www.vcu.edu/aelweb/word/qpen.doc.

Assistive technology provides a variety of tools for adults with learning difficulties. In recent years, adult educators have considered ways to compensate for these difficulties both in the classroom and in the real world and are beginning to see technology as one approach to improving instruction and bypassing skill deficiencies. But, aside from calculators, much of the technology has been computer-based and is therefore convenient only for a limited range of tasks. The Quicktionary Reading Pen (QRP) is a highly portable tool that is relatively new on the scene.

A group of adult learners and their tutors at the Richmond READ Center tried out the QRP for several months last year to see how it might be used as an aid for struggling readers. Dr. Paul Gerber of Virginia Commonwealth University conducted the study as part of the Learning Disabilities Training and Dissemination project, funded through the Resource Center by Laubach Literacy Action and Literacy Volunteers of America with a grant from the National Institute for Literacy.

This study aimed to discover how adults might use this device to improve decoding skills and reading comprehension. The Pen is a battery powered, handheld tool about the size of a man's razor (five inches and three ounces). It can scan a printed word and then "say" the word using a computer-synthesized human-like voice and a built-in speaker or earphone. The scanned word is also displayed in a small LCD window. Additional features allow the user to display the syllables of

the word, hear it spelled aloud, and access dictionary-style definitions.

The participants in the study were adults with reading disabilities (some with suspected learning disabilities) and their volunteer tutors from the READ Center. Six learner-tutor pairs were selected. After training in the use of the QRP, the learners used the Pen in their weekly tutoring sessions and at home if they chose. They were interviewed individually by phone after they had used the QRP for six or seven weeks.

Results of the study were mixed.

The QRP was found to be very useful for some adult learners, but others did not find it helpful at all. The learners used it mainly for spelling and finding definitions of words they didn't know. Those who took it home used it to read a variety of everyday materials, including short stories, newspapers, mail, and bills. One learner used it to read a simplified book on the writings of Socrates and Plato. Some learners mentioned that it prevented frustration when they encountered words they didn't know while reading. One said, "When I'm alone I can read more, and I don't need someone else to read with me."

Yet a general sense of frustration is also evident in their comments. The learners found the QRP didn't pick up small or very large fonts; they had to try several times before correctly scanning a word; they found the Pen's response time too slow; they had trouble understanding the computer-generated voice and/or difficulty understanding the definitions. However, most of the learners said the Pen was easy to use.

Tutors corroborated the student experiences. They too thought the most helpful features of the pen were its use for spelling and its dictionary definitions. It was also cited as being "helpful when no one else was there and it

could be used as a last resort." Half of the tutors said the QRP made the learners more independent readers. The others conveyed their feelings of frustration over problems in scanning words and words that scanned incorrectly (e.g. "added" became "odder").

These results, according to Dr. Gerber, are not unexpected. While noting that the QRP is not for everyone, he says, "This conclusion seems universal when studying the fit between individuals with learning challenges and a specific piece of assistive technological equipment. In some cases in this study the QRP was nearly perfect in compensating for reading deficiencies. It was a vehicle for confidence and independence... In other cases the QRP was a source of great frustration and ultimately led to discarding the equipment."



The Pen is a battery powered, handheld tool about the size of a man's razor .

Dr. Gerber also notes that users of the current generation of the QRP may experience fewer problems because of the increased processing speed. "That is the optimism imbedded in assistive technology. It is also the hope of those who have learning challenges."

Note: The developer of the QRP is WIZCOM Technologies. The second generation, Quicktionary Pen II, is now available. ■■

Susan McShane is a Staff Development Coordinator at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. She has 20 years experience in adult education and managed the Resource Center's Learning Disabilities Training and Dissemination project.

Understanding Accommodations For The GED

From Page 1

certifying professionals or from certifying advocates who have reviewed and recorded essential information should accompany the requests. The documentation should include a diagnosis using DSM-IV or HCFA numerical codes, a statement or test results attesting to the cognitive potential of the candidate, a statement or test results showing how the disability affects the candidate's academic achievement, and a statement or test results showing how the requested accommodation(s) meets the needs of the identified disability.

Some accommodations are allowed without requiring candidates to submit documentation that supports a disabling condition. These include, but are not limited to:

- Colored and clear transparent overlays with highlighter
- Graph paper
- Temporary adhesive notes
- Large print version of GED Tests
- Straightedge
- Magnifying glass or magnifying page
- Ear plugs

These accommodations in no way affect how the test is administered. If a student uses any of these accommodations at any other time in their preparation for the Tests, then he/she should be encouraged to use them during the test administration. It is advisable to communicate the request with the GED examiner in advance to ensure the availability of the accommodation materials.

More people in Virginia requested accommodations on the Tests of General Educational Development

(GED) in 2001 than ever before. There was a 96% increase in the number of requests from 2000 to 2001. Unfortunately, in spite of this dramatic increase, this still represents only slightly more than 1% of the 24,511 individuals who tested in 2001.

The role of the teacher concerning accommodations and GED testing is critical. As "front-line staff," adult

“The role of the teacher concerning accommodations and GED testing is critical.”

education teachers can help students identify the need for accommodations and the kinds of accommodations that will provide the most benefit. The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center has materials and will provide training to assist teachers in this process. If the accommodation that the student needs requires formal approval by the state GED administrator, teachers may need to assist students in assembling and preparing the necessary documentation. Getting the right documentation is frequently challenging and is often frustrating to students. Finally, teachers play an important role in helping students learn how to use any accommodation effectively. If students are not familiar with how to use a particular accommodation, it may hinder the student's effort instead of help. For example, if a student has not used an audiocassette version of the Official

GED Practice Test, the student will find the audiocassette version of the "real" GED test cumbersome and likely will not use it.

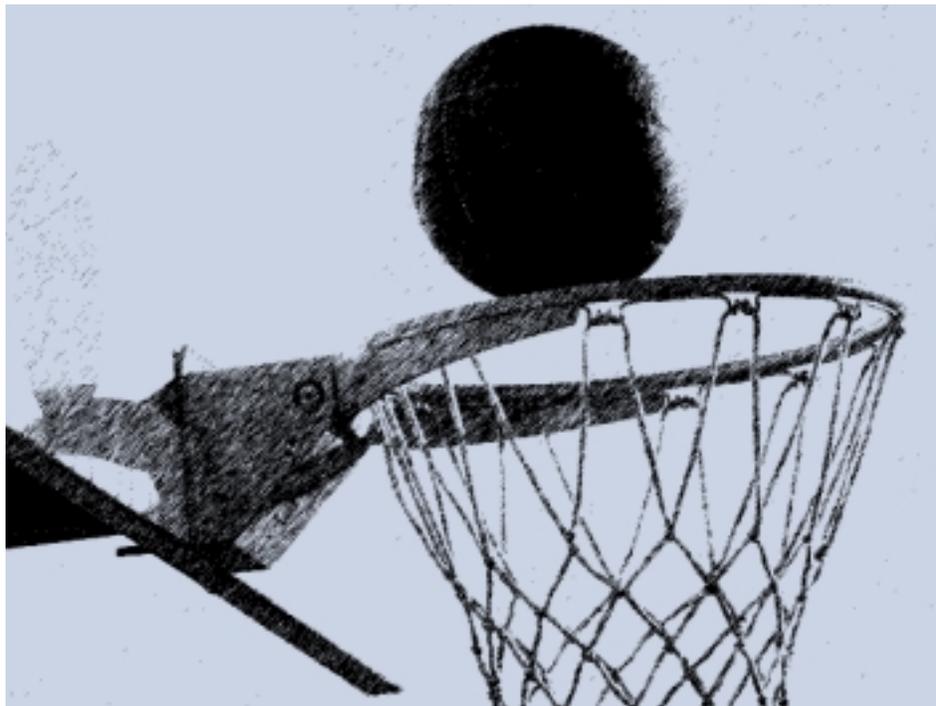
Providing GED candidates accommodations is an effort to "level the playing field," not to give anyone an unfair advantage. If an individual needs corrective lenses to read the tests, would anyone deny that individual the right to wear glasses? Should an individual who is blind be denied the opportunity to take the GED Tests, or should that individual be provided with an alternate form, e.g. audiocassette version or Braille edition? Some accommodations require appropriate documentation; others require only common sense. Teachers who are knowledgeable about both types of accommodations can make a big difference. ■

Bob MacGillivray has been an educator since 1976. He started as a special education teacher working with emotionally disturbed and learning disabled students in middle and high school in Michigan. He has been involved in adult education since 1984 as a teacher, counselor, and administrator in Michigan, Wyoming, and Utah. He is currently the adult secondary specialist and GED administrator at the Virginia Department of Education.

For further information or any questions about accommodations and GED testing contact Bob MacGillivray, GED administrator, Virginia Department of Education at (804) 371-2333 or email at rmacgill@mail.vak12ed.edu.

Different Rules For Different Games: Applying A Framework For Understanding Poverty

by Lisa de Britain



Public schools in America are firmly based on middle class values, activities, and expectations that are often elusive or poorly articulated to students from outside this class system. Students living in poverty may have an entirely different and equally subtle code for life, and when the two value systems meet in a classroom, they collide. As a result, students – and teachers – are often unsuccessful in negotiating their way through the reality of a situation.

Dr. Ruby Payne, in her book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, explains that each social/economic class – poor,

middle, or wealthy – has its own, often unspoken or hidden, set of rules,

“Just as they played with one set of rules, equipment, and goals in basketball and another in football, so too there are separate sets of behaviors and values for school and for the street.”

behaviors, and expectations that insure its members' survival within their

worlds. She presents data and draws comparisons across social classes in fourteen areas, including issues of possessions, money, personality, worldview, time, language, and family structures. The issue, according to Dr. Payne, is not whether one system of values is better than another. Rather, it is a question of which set of skills is most effective and appropriate in a particular situation.

Dr. Payne suggests that educators provide direct instruction in problem solving, critical thinking, and coping strategies. Educators working with students who live in poverty need to directly teach middle class rules, skill sets, and value systems. Clearly discounting the notion of supplanting one value system with another, Dr. Payne challenges educators to help students identify and then choose which skill sets are most effective in school and which are more useful outside of the classroom. These are interventions and tools that can permanently change students' success in school and far beyond.

The validity of Dr. Payne's framework struck me immediately because I remember my days of teaching indigent children in Houston's inner city. I knew first hand that what she pro-

posed cut to the heart of the disconnection between middle class educational expectations and those children's personal experiences. It would have been a simple thing to explain to my young students that just as they played with one set of rules, equipment, and goals in basketball and another for football, so too there are separate sets of behaviors and values for school and for the street. They could

easily have understood that. I firmly believe that our time together would

have been calmer and more effective if I had developed the concept of parallel social structures rather than validating and/or repudiating the skill set they needed to survive on the streets but which repeatedly failed them in the classroom.

Applying the Framework to ESL Instruction

I've come to realize that the Framework for Understanding Poverty is also useful in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. In the past 10 years, I have dealt with hundreds of ESL students who have faithfully learned the rules of vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, and grammar. Still they are often misunderstood or are left confused by their interactions with Americans. They stand with one foot in their new world and one in the old.

In discourse and writing, for example, Americans favor sequential, hierarchical thought patterns moving swiftly to a conclusion. Other cultures may prefer long, often circuitous, discussions full of ancient courtesies and background. To them, our communication system seems blunt and rude. To us, theirs seems unnecessarily arcane. One is not better than another. But one does do the job of communicating with Americans more effectively.

Again, the missing piece to this understanding has been the lack of direct teaching of the middle-class American value systems that underlay our educational and business worlds. As teachers, we focus on the words to say, sometimes forgetting to explain the larger context – how Americans are likely to perceive what is said. For immigrants and refugees, these classroom subtleties are perplexing:

- When is group work team-playing or helping and when is it cheating? What is the role of the instructor? What are the responsibilities of students?

- What does critical thinking, problem solving, and independent study mean for students whose previous education has been largely by rote?
- How does a student from family-based, cooperative social structures learn self-reliance and independence?
- Must our students abandon their own values to become American?

Applying Dr. Payne's model, ESL students need not abandon their own values or their own culture. One set of logic and the values it supports is not necessarily better than another. We simply need to teach the rules and expectations... and dreams... of American society.

A work-world example speaks to this problem. I was struck by a discussion I had with several immigrant live-in, child-care providers. They were angry about what they saw as cold and uncaring parenting that put unnecessary pressure on children. They were mystified by the dream of American parents for their children to grow up, get jobs, and move out. I explained that to be successful adults, our children must learn independence, that in America we see self-sufficiency as a

good thing. My students did not necessarily agree, but for the first time they understood that their employers were caring parents even if they expected their children to clean up after themselves, to help with the housework, or to get after school jobs. It became easier for them to understand the communication between parents and children and to meet their job requirements.

Educators can help their students enormously by directly teaching the organizational and language skills expected of successful middle class students. My adult ESL students want to know what is expected of them in the real world. "What do real Americans think?" "Why do real Americans do this or that?" By anticipating these kinds of questions and teaching students how to adapt their communication to ease interactions, we can apply Dr. Payne's model and give clearer definition to our roles as ESL educators. ■■

Lisa de Britain is currently applying Ruby Payne's concepts of direct instruction of cultural values in her professional roles as Coordinator for the Northern Virginia Regional Literacy Support Center and the Northern Virginia Community College ESL Center, Loudoun Campus.

Ruby Payne understands poverty as "the extent to which an individual does without resources" and believes that as educators we can influence some of the "non-financial resources" that make such a large difference in students' lives. Her first book, A Framework for Understanding Poverty, includes scenarios, metaphor stories, learning structures, coping strategies, and a self review process to challenge your current views about poverty and wealth. Contact aha! Process, Inc. (formerly RFT Publishing Co.) at (800) 424-9484 or <http://ahaprocess.com/> for more information about Dr. Payne's research, publications, and teacher education and training activities.

Learning Disabilities Are In Focus At The Resource Center

Training is an important part of the systemic change effort required to improve real-world outcomes for adults with learning disabilities (LD). The workshops below comprise the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center's complete Bridges to Practice-based training series designed for teachers, volunteer tutors, trainers, program managers, and other agency partners. Through consultation with Resource Center staff, Program Managers may create an ongoing sequential plan for local training by choosing and combining selections from the list below, which is taken from the Resource Center's Professional Development Planning Guide for 2001-2002.

What's Already in Place

Shorter Workshop Modules

First Steps

- **NEW:** *An Introduction to Learning Disabilities for Basic Tutor Training* 30-minute modules for pre-service training
- *Understanding Learning Disabilities* Introductory in-service workshop for teachers and tutors

Next Steps

- *Goal Setting and Instructional Planning for LD Adults*
- *LD-Appropriate Instruction: Principles and Frameworks*
- *Strategies and Resources for Teaching Adults with Special Learning Needs*
- **NEW:** *Adaptations and Accommodations for Adults With Special Learning Needs*

Longer Workshops

- *Planning Instruction for Adults With Learning Disabilities*
A six-hour workshop combining content from several of the workshops above
- *Bridges to Practice: Improving Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities*
A twelve-hour training for teachers, program managers and community agency partners

What's New in LD Training

Two new offerings round out the LD training from the Resource Center. They were developed as part of Virginia's Learning Disabilities Training and Dissemination project, funded through Laubach Literacy Action and Literacy Volunteers of America with a grant from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). They are based on the training materials, *Bridges to Practice: A Research-based Guide for Literacy Practitioners Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities*, also developed with NIFL funding.

- *An Introduction to Learning Disabilities for Basic Tutor Training* is a curriculum written by Mary Lynch, one of Virginia's *Bridges to Practice* trainers. The 30-minute modules are a resource for program managers and trainers who want to add a short awareness activity to initial tutor training. They complement the other *Bridges* workshops, which may be scheduled as in-service events. The Resource Center provides background information and all the necessary curriculum materials in an informal train-the-trainer format for managers and trainers.
- *Adaptations and Accommodations for Adults With Special Learning Needs* is a two- to three-hour workshop for teachers, tutors, and program managers who have had prior LD training and/or experience. The goal of the workshop is to help practitioners understand and creatively use appropriate adaptations and accommodations to help adults with learning



Andrew Stowe with CareerConnect and Susan McShane with the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center prepare for an LD Workshop.

disabilities (or LD characteristics) meet their learning needs and achieve their real-life goals.

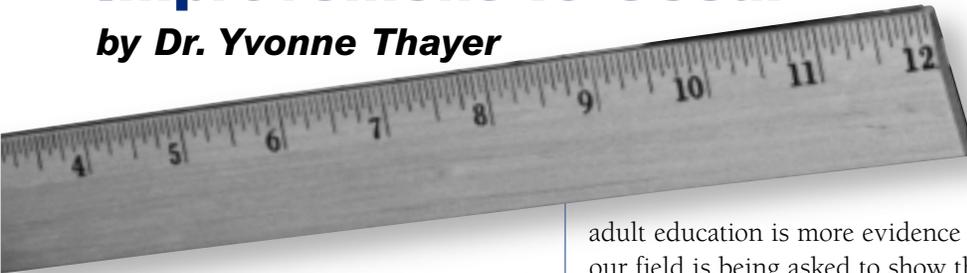
The workshop includes:

- An introduction to the framework for individualized planning of accommodations;
- A collection of materials, strategies, and devices from the LD Adaptations and Accommodations Kit;
- Hands-on practice with the kit items to encourage teacher creativity. ■

For assistance in providing training locally consult the Professional Development Planning Guide at <http://www.vcu.edu/aelweb/> click "Publications" and contact the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center at (800) 237-0178.

You've Got To Measure What You're Doing For Improvement To Occur

by Dr. Yvonne Thayer



We use measurement all the time. When you're feeling badly, you take your body temperature to determine if you are above or below 98.6. You use that information to set a course of action to feel better. When it is cold outside, you check the temperature to decide whether or not to cover the plants. You use the daily stock reports to measure the growth of your investments. You look at voting records to help decide who should be placed in office. We use data all the time. Except we commonly don't use it enough for program improvement.

In some businesses, customers demand information that shows organizational success. Whether it is a product or a service, the customer wants to know that he is getting his dollar's worth. In our adult education world, we have not had that kind of accountability. Our student customers have not asked us to prove we are doing a good job, probably because they are not paying tuition (or paying minimally) for classes. But our customers who are policy makers are beginning to ask for evidence that our work is helping to increase literacy and helping to develop the workforce. The National Reporting System (NRS) is one part of the effort to demonstrate effectiveness with the federal funds we receive. The current call by the Bush administration for scientific research in

adult education is more evidence that our field is being asked to show that we know what "best practice" is and that we use it to insure the best instructional program for our adult learners.

You are collecting a lot of data. You use it to complete students' individual planning documents, you report it on the NRS, and you get feedback from GED performance. You know a lot about what learners want and what

“**We tend to measure that which is important to us so we should use it.**”

you provide for them. What you have to be able to do is organize the information in a way that makes it easy to study and use. You have to create a measurement system. We tend to measure that which is important to us, so we should use it to improve and perpetuate our system.

Where do we begin when implementing a measurement system? As in any assessment process, the persons responsible for the assessment must answer certain questions before the system can be designed effectively. There are several questions that should be answered before the process of measurement can be developed.

What are the identified measurable goals of the program? What do we want to measure? If you cannot articu-

late this easily you really need to take a look at your program.

What data are currently available? Think about everything that you are collecting for the NRS, but also think about other information you have. For example, how many employers have asked you for classes that you were unable to provide?

What data do we need? If you are trying to convince the Workforce Investment Board that you need funds, what must you show them?

Is it possible to collect the data that we need but do not have?

What data collection process do we have or will we put in place? The Department of Education (DOE) is currently designing a new data collection and reporting Web-based system for you that will replace EdVantage Pro, which we expect to be operational next year. That takes care of the NRS,

but what do you need for other reporting?

Do we have a system to analyze the data to make it useful for program planning and decision-making?

Do we have a process in place for sharing the data with all of our customers?

If you haven't analyzed the 2000-01 data you forwarded to DOE, begin now. Make some graphs that compare this year's performance with last year's performance, and benchmark how you are doing against the goals for the state. When you receive the GED testing report for 2001, look at the pass rate for your testing center and compare it to others in Virginia. You can't get better if you don't know how you are doing. You won't get better if you don't measure what you are doing. ■■

Dr. Yvonne Thayer is director of the Office of Adult Education and Literacy for the Virginia Department of Education.

PROGRESS

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Calendar of Events

To view the Resource Center's complete calendar of events, go to: <http://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/vaelc/events/calendar.asp>

State

SW VAILL: Modeling Quality Now & Beyond

July 24 – 26

Radford University

Contact: Jane Swing

(540) 831-6207

jswing@radford.edu

SE VAILL: United for Success

July 29 – 31

Christopher Newport University

Contact: Wayne Virag/Janette Coles

(804) 524-5377

wvirag@vsu.edu

VAILL ESL: Civics, Communities and Cultures

July 31 – August 2

Marymount University

Contact: Pat Bowyer

(703) 714-5560

pbowyer@fcps.edu

National

2002 Laubach Literacy Action Biennial Conference

May 28 – June 1

Town and Country Resort and

Convention Center

San Diego, California

Contact: (315) 422-9121 ext.352

info@laubach.org

2002 International Symposium on Technology and Society

June 6 – 8

Sheraton Capital Center

Raleigh, North Carolina

Contact:

<http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/herkert/istas02.html>

Multilingual and Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Dyslexia: 2002 International Conference

June 27 – 29

Omni Shoreham Hotel

Washington, DC

Contact: International Dyslexia

Association

(410) 296-0232

info@interdys.org

Designing Accountability and Assessment Systems for Managing Continuous Improvement

July 15, 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Live Webcast

Contact: The National Dissemination

Center for Career and Technical

Education

(800) 678-6011

<http://www.nccte.org/> or ndccte@osu.org

Family Literacy Summer Institute

July 24-26

National Center for Family Literacy

Louisville, Kentucky

Contact: www.family

lit.org/training/learning.html/ or

rharley@famlit.org