



## **Preface**

The GED high school equivalency exam has been available to adults for nearly 60 years. Yet, according to the 2000 Census, an estimated 1,000,000 adults in Virginia have neither completed high school nor taken the GED. They are at a disadvantage in our fast-paced, information-driven age, where formal learning and schooling are more important than ever. Helping those adults achieve success on the GED remains, as it has been for many years, a central tenet of adult education in Virginia and across America. The implementation of GED 2002 presents a unique opportunity for adult educators to help adults achieve their goal of attaining a GED. Now seems an appropriate time to examine current needs, practices and state of the art for preparing adults to pass the GED. We must take a fresh look not only at the subject matter, but also at the way it is taught.

We have examined the GED, its content, its structure, both old and new, and the skills embedded in the test. In addition, we have reviewed many current teaching methodologies. Our review has led us to propose *GED as Project: Pathways to Passing the GED* as a means of achieving effective results with adults pursuing their GED. As the name implies, the overarching principle of *GED as Project* is the value of project-based learning in adult education. We propose that the GED test itself can be a powerful project for those adults who choose to pursue it.

In Volume 1: Introduction, we describe our concept of the *GED as Project*, articulating the role of the instructor, the role of the individual, both as test taker and as learner, and the role of instructional materials in the classroom. We outline for instructors the necessary practices for using this approach. Central to *GED as Project* are the Inquiry Activities, designed to stimulate interest and discovery by the learner, facilitated by the instructor. Grouped together by the theme

and/or skills to be explored, Inquiry Activities form the basis of Learning Projects. We define Learning Project and Inquiry Activity, provide a template or guide to use in developing Inquiry Activities, and provide sample Inquiry Activities for two Learning Projects: “GED and You” and “GED and You Revisited.” In addition, we provide an annotated list of references for use with GED 2002.

In Volume 2: Math, we use items from an Official GED Practice Test to develop the Inquiry Activities that, grouped together, form the Math Learning Projects. Also included in this volume is a Learning Project called “GED Math and You,” which has been designed as a companion to GED and You in Volume 1.

In Volume 3: Language Arts, Reading we again use an Official GED Practice Test to develop the Inquiry Activities that form the Language Arts, Reading Learning Projects. “GED Language Arts Reading and You” is included in this volume, offering the opportunity to explore this content area as well.

Volume 4: Language Arts, Writing uses the Official GED Practice Test to provide the subject material for essays and to develop revision techniques necessary for strong performance in the GED Language Arts, Writing test. The Scoring Guide is included in this volume to inform the learners on how the essays will be evaluated. “GED Language Arts Writing and You” is also included in this volume.

Through the learning approach advocated by *GED as Project*, the adult who seeks help in achieving the GED is regarded in two distinct ways: as test taker and learner. Using *GED as Project* allows instructors to facilitate the adult in the skill of taking tests, as well as the skill of learning. One helps the adults to pass a credentialing test; the other equips him or her both for life-long learning and competing in today’s world – a win/win for all adults pursuing their GED.



## Foreword

*GED as Project: Pathways to Passing the GED* has been developed through the hard work, dedication, and vision of many adult education professionals. Funded by the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, the Project was conducted by Virginia's Workforce Improvement Network (WIN), a partnership between James Madison University and the Virginia Literacy Foundation.

The first phase of this project included the development of the problem-based approach as presented in *GED as Project*, and the Math Learning Projects found in Volume 2. Phase two of the project includes the Language Arts, Reading and Writing, Volumes 3 and 4. Science and Social Studies will be published in the summer of 2004. Go to the *GED as Project* website at <http://www.jmu.edu/gedproject> to see the most current information about this project. Videos that illustrate how to use the *GED as Project* approach in the classroom are available to Virginia teachers through the Adult Learning Resource Center.

The project team members are as follows:

- Dr. Diane Foucar-Szocki - Research/Principal Investigator
- Barbara E. Gibson - Project Management
- Marcia Phillips - Lead Specialist
- Edmund Vitale, Jr. - Curriculum
- Susan Holt - Instruction
- John Anderson - Editorial Assistant
- John Vaughan - Technology Specialist

We are deeply appreciative of the consultants who guided and supported this phase of our work. Their commitment to the vision of *GED as Project* inspired the team to higher levels than we had imagined possible. Consultants for this phase of the project were:

- Dr. Tamara L. Jetton, Associate Professor of Reading, James Madison University
- John M. Reier, Language Arts Consultant and author of *McGraw-Hill's GED Language Arts, Reading*
- Dr. Kenn Barron, Assistant Professor of Psychology, James Madison University.

Field Testing of *GED as Project* was conducted with three adult education programs across Virginia. The instructors and administrators who participated in the field test not only used the materials we provided, they also made suggestions for

varying approaches. They provided important insights and ideas to the project team. The adult learners who agreed to participate in the field test also contributed significantly to *GED as Project* by allowing us to collect samples of their work, sharing their thoughts and ideas while in the classroom, and giving valuable input during site visits. The field test sites and participating adult educators are:

- Northern Shenandoah Adult Education - Janet Frye, Coordinator. Instructors: Bobbie Eller, Paula Gould, Tonya Miller
- Prince William County Public Schools, Adult Education - Susan Garlock, Coordinator. Instructors: Eileen Rakshys, Vickey Logan, Debbie Caselli
- Regional Adult Education, Planning District 9 - Phyllis Metzger, Coordinator. Instructors: Susan Fox, Carol Robertson, Clysta Walters

The following deserve special recognition for their contributions to specific areas of the project:

- Gwen Smith, Specialist for Literacy Projects, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Virginia Department of Education, who assisted in developing the concepts of both the Reading and Writing volumes, wrote the scripts for the videotapes accompanying *GED as Project*, and starred as Mrs. Harriman, the instructor.
- Jim Kennedy, consultant for the GED Testing Service for writing, and retired chairman of Montgomery County high school English Department, who guided us through the rationale of the development of the writing test and the scoring rubric.
- John Hodges, Production Manager, James Madison University, School of Media Arts and Design, who served as videographer for the project.

Finally, we wish to recognize Dr. Yvonne Thayer, Director of the Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Virginia Department of Education, for her commitment to the advancement of adult education practice and her dedication to the adults for whom the GED is a pathway to success as workers, parents, and citizens. Her desire for an articulated approach to teaching the new GED ultimately led to the development of *GED as Project*. We thank her for her leadership and her vision.