



## Preface



The GED high school equivalency exam has been available to adults for nearly 60 years. Yet, according to the 2000 Census, an estimated 700,000 adults in Virginia have not 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 the 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 this guide, 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 the *GED as Project* are the Inquiry Activities, designed to stimulate interest and discovery by the learner, facilitated by the instructor. Grouped together by theme and/or skills to be explored, Inquiry Activities form the basis of Learning Projects. In Volume 1, 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: “The GED and You” and “The GED and You Revisited.” In addition, we provide an annotated list of resources for use with GED 2002. Volume 2 contains Math Learning Projects. In subsequent years, we will provide Learning Projects for the other four subjects covered by the GED.

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 in the skill of learning. One helps the adult student to pass a credentialing test; the other equips him or her both for life-long learning and for 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 Volume 1 of *GED as Project* and the Math Learning Projects found in Volume 2. The Language Arts – Reading and Writing Learning Projects will be published in mid-2003 with Science and Social Studies following in 2004. Go to the *GED as Project* web site at <http://www.jmu.edu/gedproject> to see the most current information about this project and to view video clips that illustrate how to use the *GED as Project* approach in the classroom. Information about ordering *GED as Project* videos on CD-ROM is also on the web site.

The project team members are as follows:

- Dr. Diane Foucar-Szocki – Research /Principal Investigator
- Barbara E. Gibson – Project Management
- Edmund Vitale, Jr. – Curriculum
- Susan Holt – Instruction
- Bonnie Burt – Technology
- Candace Miles – Program Assistant

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* from the very beginning inspired the team to higher levels of performance than we imagined possible. Special words of thanks must go to Myrna Manly without whose knowledge, experience and patience the Math section of *GED as Project* would not have been possible.

Consultants for this project were:

- Myrna Manly – Consultant, author and former math instructor
- Dr. Thomas Valentine – Author and Professor in Adult Education and Research, University of Georgia
- Dr. Kenn Barron – Assistant Professor of Psychology, James Madison University
- Scott Fields – McCabe/Pillow Graphic Design
- Jennifer Norvell – Norvell Communications

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, but also made suggestions for additional materials and 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 listed below:

- New River Community College, Adult Education — Jenny Leadbetter-Bolte, Coordinator and Instructors: Sara Smith, Charlotte Leslie, Rebecca Yearout
- Prince William County Public Schools, Adult Education — Susan Garlock, Coordinator and Instructors: Eileen Rakshys, Vickey Logan, Debbie Caselli
- Regional Adult Education, Planning District 9 — Phyllis Metzger, Coordinator and Instructors: Margaret Buraker, Clysta Walters, Eileen Moser

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

- Robert MacGillivray, Adult Secondary/GED Administrator, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Virginia Department of Education, who gave guidance and support to the project team throughout the development process
- Gwen Smith, Specialist for Literacy Projects, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, Virginia Department of Education, who wrote the scripts for the videotapes accompanying *GED as Project* and starred as Mrs. Harriman, the instructor
- Marcia Phillips, independent consultant and WIN Certified Program Developer, who edited *GED as Project* and wrote the pages for the project's web site
- Lydia Powers, graphic designer, Madison Media Labs, a program of James Madison University, who created the logo for the print and web versions of *GED as Project*
- 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.