



## Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program

by GEORGE BAILEY

For as long as I can remember, there have been discussions about a standardized system for professional development in adult education, one that recognizes that the specialization in adult education is a bona fide field of study and ensures program quality for learners, funders, and community partners. With the advent of the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program (VAECP), the first steps are being taken toward the implementation of such an effort. Providing consistent and

structured training for adult educators is a major step toward improving the adult education system statewide and achieving the overarching goal of increased student achievement in programs where management, teachers, and support staff work together to provide the best possible environments for adult learning to occur.

For more than twenty-five years, the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, the professional development arm of the Office of Adult Education and Literacy, has been providing workshops and trainings in promising and best practices

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for adult education and literacy providers throughout the state. However, for the most part, participation in these workshops has not been a requirement for employment or continued employment in adult education and literacy programs, and while generally well received and widely perceived to be effective professional development efforts, they have not been a part of a required system of standardized offerings. The Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program presents a plan of standardization which, in addition to and in conjunction with the ongoing professional development workshops provided by VALRC, adds a

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# PROGRESS

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## A Few Words on *Progress*

For the past two years, a team of Resource Center staff has worked closely with the Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL) to develop the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program, a landmark initiative for Virginia. This program has been designed to create a common foundation of knowledge and information across the entire system. Program managers, teachers, and support staff will participate in sessions designed especially for them but always with the broad view of adult education in mind. The overarching goal of the program is increased student achievement in programs where management, instructors, and support staff work together to provide the best possible environment for adult learning.

While this program is not mandatory, OAEL is strongly encouraging participation, especially in Levels I and II for managers and teachers and the two sessions for support staff. Participation in the certification program will be recorded on each program's report card, and it will help meet the program's professional development requirements. After completing Levels I and II certification, teachers and program managers may receive credit for Level III certification if they have completed equivalent graduate courses in or after 2006. In addition, teachers who have completed the Online Certification/Endorsement Program offered through VCU and sponsored by VALRC and the Department of Correctional Education will receive credit for Level III.

The first two sessions of Level I for ABE/GED teachers will be offered at the end of July at Southwest VAILL and the equivalent sessions for ESOL teachers at Northern Virginia VAILL. The second session of Level I for program managers will be provided at Southwest VAILL.

Through the Certification Program, adult educators will have a unique opportunity to learn together, to help strengthen our field, and to continue to build on our shared commitment to excellence in adult learning. We are looking forward to working with adult educators from across the state in initiating this exciting new opportunity for professional development.



## Calendar

### June 3-5

Innovations in e-Learning Symposium  
GMU, Fairfax, VA  
<http://innovationsinlearning.gmu.edu>

### 19

TESOL Academy 2009  
Charleston, SC  
[www.tesol.org](http://www.tesol.org)

### June 28 - July 1

National Educational Computing Conference  
Washington, D.C.  
<http://center.uoregon.edu/ISTE/NECC2009>

### July 2

National Literacy Day

### 29-31

Virginia Institutes of Lifelong Learning (VAILL)  
Radford, VA, and  
GMU, Fairfax, VA

### August 8

Passport to Employment  
VCU, Richmond, VA  
[www.vaged.vcu.edu/passport](http://www.vaged.vcu.edu/passport)



# A Letter from OAEL Director **Elizabeth Hawa**

In the last few years, the Office of Adult Education and Literacy staff has spent considerable time and energy developing a stronger framework for the delivery of adult education and literacy services in Virginia. This year we published the *Operational Guidance Manual for Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Programs*, we issued our first *Program Performance Report Cards*, and we conducted the first on-site monitoring visits of local adult education programs under a new monitoring and evaluation plan. In effect, we have focused on communicating our expectations to the field based on federal and state requirements and the state vision of our direction as a vital educational program contributing to workforce and economic development. Our ultimate goal is program improvement, which translated to the local program level means serving more adults and achieving greater success with those we serve.

I believe the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program (VAECP), another part of the new infrastructure, will significantly enhance the performance of our programs statewide. The work of the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center, our primary professional development arm, is commendable and has made a significant difference in program quality over the years by meeting a vast array of local needs. However, for too long, professional development has been a strong priority in some areas of the state and less valued in other areas, depending on factors such as local leadership and initiative as well as available resources. The time has come to correct this disparity.

VAECP is a different approach because at the heart of its foundation is the notion that all Virginia adult education practitioners deserve access to quality professional development. By institutionalizing a statewide system of professional development, we have placed a high value on those services. The professional development goal is to develop practitioners who are well informed, up-to-date, and equipped to deliver quality services to adult learners. VAECP will also help us, in the words of JFK, “pass the torch” as long-established practitioners retire and a “new generation” takes charge.

Why should practitioners in one part of Virginia be better prepared than those in another area? Our challenge is to close the professional development gap so that programs can close the performance gap. We look forward to the results of this proactive approach to professional development because we know adult education programs and learners will benefit.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth M. Hawa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# FAQs

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program

### Why do we have a certification program?

Accountability extends from the individual classroom to state and national performance. In recent years, Virginia did not meet several targets for student performance and goal attainment. This certification program ensures that all programs and their staff have access to current developments in adult education instruction and program management in order to more consistently meet the needs of adult learners throughout the state.

It will provide for Virginia adult educators a unified vision of excellence and opportunities to share as we move forward in preparing our students for the learning and work challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Who can participate in the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program?

Any full- or part-time teacher, program manager, or support staff member who works in an adult education program that receives funds from the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL) may participate in the program.

### If I am a licensed teacher in Virginia, will I get re-certification points for attending certification training?

In most cases, you will. It is, however, up to your local school division or the Virginia Department of Education, Division of Teacher Education and Licensure to approve activities earning relicensure points. More information can be found at the Virginia DOE's web site: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/newvdoe/teached.html>.

### Why should I participate in the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program?

The program provides adult educators with a standard platform of knowledge and skills. Sessions are designed to help you bring current research and best practices into your program to help adults learn. A uniform system of certification not only sets the standard for program performance, it gives everyone equal access to professional development opportunities. In addition, professional development will contribute to future annual program performance report cards issued by OAEL.

### Am I required to participate?

Everyone is strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity for personal and professional growth. While participation is not required by the OAEL, it will meet professional development requirements and be reflected on the programs' performance report cards.

### How will my participation be acknowledged?

Each person will receive a certificate and a recognition pin after successfully completing each of the three certification levels.

### How long will it take to complete certification?

Program managers should complete certification for Levels One and Two within three years; instructors, within five years.

### Can I take the workshops out of order, that is, Session Three before Session Two?

Because the sessions are scaffolded,

building on each other, you may not take the workshops out of order. However, we will make every attempt to schedule the workshops so that each session is offered annually.

### Will I get credit for the workshops I've already completed?

In most cases, you will not receive credit for trainings taken in the past. There is an exception. If you have completed ESOL Basics in or after 2006, you can receive credit for it.

### What if I already have an Adult Education endorsement, Masters in Adult Education, or graduate level courses? Can I get credit for those accomplishments?

Individuals who have completed masters level adult literacy classes since 2006 may be credited with Level III ABE/GED Instructor Certification, but completion of Levels I and II is still required. The certification programs will complement university coursework by emphasizing the practical application of research and best practices in the contexts of Virginia and local programs.

### I teach ABE and ESOL. Which strand should I take?

You should complete the levels in the strands that will benefit you and your instruction the most.

### Will all sessions be offered in my area?

We plan to offer sessions regionally during the year, but there is no guarantee that all sessions will be presented in your area. Most Instructor Program sessions will be rolled out at summer VAILLs.

## VAILL 2008: Virginia Institutes for Lifelong Learning

From the first days of planning for the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program, we knew that the logistics were the essence of necessity. The task, to have as many program managers and instructors certified within the three or five years, respectively, established by the planning group as the ideal time frame, meant that Resource Center trainers would be on the go.

The VAILLs (Virginia Institutes of Lifelong Learning) were early identified as the perfect venues for the comfortable training of many, particularly instructors. The Radford VAILL has hosted about 300 participants for several summers; the Northern Virginia VAILL has long been associated with training for ESOL instruction. The Institutes for Lifelong Learning, designed originally as a group of effective training venues around the state, were also symbolic of the institutes of earlier times, particularly the Chautauquas, held in the summertime, for the further education of teachers and others simply interested in improving their levels of knowledge. This summer and next, both VAILLs will present sessions of the Certification Program, with the idea that a significant number of program managers and instructors can accomplish their Levels One and Two certification in the program by attending one of the summer institutes that have already been a familiar part of their professional lives.

So, plan to join us at SW VAILL in Radford, for Program Manager, Level I, session 2, and ABE/GED Instructor, Level I, sessions 1 and 2, or NOVA VAILL at George Mason, for ESOL instructors. Register now, because spaces are limited.

See you this summer!

### **Southwest VAILL** *for Program Managers and ABE/GED Instructors*

July 29 - 31  
Peters Hall, Radford University  
Radford, Virginia

- **Program Manager Level I, session 2**  
Managing Adult Education Programs: Instruction
- **ABE/GED Instructor Level I, session 1**  
Instructing the Adult Learner: The Field of Adult Education
- **ABE/GED Instructor Level I, session 2**  
Instructing the Adult Learner: Resources

Contact Jane Swing at [jswing@radford.edu](mailto:jswing@radford.edu) or 540-831-6207 for more information.

### **NOVA VAILL** *for ESOL Instructors*

July 29 - 30  
Johnson Center, George Mason University  
Fairfax, Virginia

- **ESOL Instructor Level I, session 1**  
Instructing the Adult ELL: The Field of ESOL
- **ESOL Instructor Level I, session 2**  
Instructing the Adult ELL: Resources

For more information, contact Jennifer Fadden at Fairfax Adult and Community Education, 703-658-1201.

To learn more about the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program and the summer VAILLs, go to [www.valrc.org](http://www.valrc.org). Choose "Training" and then select "Certification Program."

# Planned

## Certification Program Rollout Schedule

### ABE/GED Instructor Certification Program

#### Level One (three, six-hour workshops)

- Instructing the Adult Learner: The Field of Adult Education rollout at Summer 2009 Southwest VAILL
- Instructing the Adult Learner: Resources rollout at Summer 2009 Southwest VAILL
- Instructing the Adult Learner: Delivering Instruction planned rollout, Fall 2009
- An additional, self-selected workshop

#### Level Two (three, six-hour workshops)

- Instructing the Adult Learner: Methodologies planned rollout, VAILL 2010
- Instructing the Adult Learner: Curriculum planned rollout, VAILL 2010
- Instructing the Adult Learner: Enhancing Instruction planned rollout, Fall 2010
- An additional, self-selected workshop

**Level Three:** the online Adult Education Certification Program, a series of graduate-level courses offered by Virginia Commonwealth University

### ESOL Instructor Certification Program

#### Level One (three, six-hour workshops)

- Instructing the Adult ELL: The Field of ESOL rollout at Summer 2009 Northern VAILL
- Instructing the Adult ELL: Resources rollout at Summer 2009 Northern VAILL
- Instructing the Adult ELL: Delivering Instruction ESOL Basics, face-to-face or online
- An additional, self-selected workshop

#### Level Two (three, six-hour workshops)

- Instructing the Adult ELL: Methodologies planned rollout, VAILL 2010
- Instructing the Adult ELL: Curriculum planned rollout, VAILL 2010
- Instructing the Adult ELL: Enhancing Instruction planned rollout, Fall 2010
- An additional, self-selected workshop

**Level Three:** a series of graduate-level courses designed for ESOL and to be developed through Virginia Commonwealth University

### Program Manager Certification Program

#### Level One (two, two-day institutes)

- Managing Adult Education Programs: Administration rollout at the Fall 2008 Program Managers' Meeting
- Managing Adult Education Programs: Instruction rollout at Summer 2009 Southwest VAILL
- An additional, self-selected workshop

#### Level Two (three six-hour workshops)

- Managing Adult Education Programs: Outreach, Recruitment, and Retention planned rollout, VAILL 2010

- Managing Adult Education Programs: Developing Staff planned rollout, VAILL 2010
- Managing Adult Education Programs: Planning planned rollout, Summer 2011
- An additional, self-selected workshop

**Level Three:** a series of graduate-level courses developed through Virginia Commonwealth University and offered online

# Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program

(continued from front page)

level of professionalism and accountability to the field of adult education and literacy program management, instruction, and support.

The VAECP is designed to help managers, teachers, and support staff build their knowledge and skills. For program managers/administrators, the plan emphasizes program development (marketing, program planning, community relations, organizational culture), program management (human resources management, finance, curriculum, and instruction), and program accountability (operational accountability and student achievement). The emphases for instructors will include teaching resources, instructional design and methodologies, technology implementation, and distance learning. The support staff component will concentrate on the field of adult education and customer service.

What are the incentives for undertaking this certification process? There are of course programmatic incentives for participation in the VAECP as professional development will be a measure on the Report Card for Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Programs. Section VI.A.12 of the *Operational Guidance Manual for Virginia Adult Education and Literacy Programs* states that “grant

recipients receiving funding to deliver adult education instructional services must employ well-qualified staff, including teachers, counselors, and administrators.” Participation in the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program is one

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way local programs can address this requirement, which is based on federal and state regulations.

However, it is hoped that some important personal incentives will guide program managers, teachers, and support staff to participate in the program. Much of the incentive to undertake this process should be a genuine desire to improve your practice as an administrator

and/or instructor and ultimately foster program and student success. As you go through the program and earn a Virginia Adult Educator Certification Credential, you will be recognized as a professional in the field of adult education. Teachers who undertake concentrated study in the field of adult education and literacy and work to improve their practice often become more reflective about how and why they teach and more clearly aware of and focused on the need to improve student outcomes and reach program goals. In addition, with a Virginia Adult Educator Certification Credential, program administrators and teachers may find it easier to gain employment or move to full time positions in different programs across the state or in other states.

As individuals and programs across the state receive recognition for increased professionalism and accountability, we expect these accomplishments will highlight our mission and lead our legislators, clients, community partners, and the general public to view more favorably the field of adult education and literacy in Virginia. ■

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*George Bailey is Assistant Manager of the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.*

## Support Staff Certification Program

Certification for adult education program support staff will consist of two workshops:

### The Field of Adult Education

- planned rollout, Fall 2009 (six hours)

### The Practice of Customer Service

- planned rollout, Spring 2010 (four hours)

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**Editor's Note:** *I recently spoke with Dolly Whelan and Rebecca Spurlock about how their experiences with adult education have informed their work on the Virginia Adult Educator Certification Program. Both have been working with Resource Center staff to develop certification program trainings, particularly the sessions of the Program Manager Certification Program, and plan to help deliver them at Southwest VAILL.*



Virginia Adult Educator  
Certification Program

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## A Conversation with **Dolly Whelan**

### **through your experiences in adult education?**

Everybody comes with a story; there's always a reason that people come to you.

Everybody is different, and you have to treat each person like it's the first time you're telling them the answer to the questions that they're asking (even if you've already given them the answer). When you're talking to a potential learner, you have to realize that this is an important call; this person may have had to call 20 people in order to get to you, and you may have already told 20 people the same information today, but it's the first time for this person. Treating adults with respect, that's just key.

### **How did you become involved in developing the certification program?**

I've been on the Resource Center advisory board for many years. At the meeting right before my retirement (the one I came to mostly to say goodbye), everyone was talking about this new certification program that Barbara Gibson was explaining to us. I said, "How wonderful, how can I help?" Later Barbara called to say she was taking me up on my offer and asked if I could help in the program development. I said sure: I think this will be valuable for our field.

### **What was the process of working on the certification program like?**

Well, it's been wonderful, because I can do a lot of the work here at home and I've been working hand in hand with Becky Spurlock. She and I have been col-

leagues for many years: she started out as a volunteer in one of my programs; she says I changed her life because I got her into adult education. We became close friends. It's been helpful to have someone at this end to work with in addition to coming down to Richmond to meet with the folks at the Resource Center. It's been a rewarding experience.

### **What do you hope participants will get out of the certification program?**

I think they will see a bigger picture of adult education, that it's not just their own program, that it's important not only across the state but across the country. I believe the certification program will be valuable when reauthorization occurs; it will give Virginia a step up, because hopefully most of our program managers and teachers will have gotten the certification. This will be a real plus for Virginia when we apply for reauthorization money.

For our program managers, even if they have an excellent program, there are still things that they, including myself, can still learn. I believe we're giving them valuable information with the certification program, and I think everyone needs continuing education as they grow in their position.

### **Is there anything else you'd like to share with Progress readers?**

Just that I hope that all program managers and instructors will take advantage of this outstanding opportunity for professional development.

Summer 2009 **PROGRESS**

### **Please tell me a little bit about your background in adult education.**

I have been in adult education for – I go by my daughter – 33 years; it'll be 34 this year, actually. When my daughter was a year old, I literally fell into adult education, which I initially thought was cooking and sewing; I had no idea there were people who didn't know how to read.

I started teaching an ABE class two nights a week in Montgomery County, Maryland. When we moved to Virginia in 1978, I taught at the learning center in Fairfax. In 1986, my boss left (she went to work for GEDTS), and I applied for and got her job as Specialist for Fairfax County for basic skills and GED. In 1991, I became Fairfax's GED Chief Examiner as well. The rest is history ... up until 2008, when I retired to help my daughter out with child care.

### **Are there any lessons that stand out as the most important you've learned**

# A Conversation with **Rebecca (Becky) Spurlock**

## **Please tell me a little bit about your background in adult education.**

I started in adult education as a volunteer with VLP (Volunteer Learning Program) in Fairfax County. VLP is a partnership between Fairfax Public Schools and the libraries, and it matches tutors with adult education and literacy students.

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**“Overall my experiences have reinforced the fact that learning is lifelong. They have affirmed that teaching and learning are fun and exciting and that every experience is a new one.”**

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So I volunteered first, then I worked with Fairfax County Public Schools Adult Education for about 11 or 12 years doing ABE and GED classes in a variety of settings. I worked in a subsidized housing project; actually, over the 11 years, I worked in three housing projects, but I taught in one consistently over the 11-year time period. I taught workplace – at a rock quarry, for the Department of Public Works, teaching report writing skills for the police department, teaching the Commercial Driver’s License – and I taught in the jails: there’s really been a wide range of projects. While I was working for Fairfax, I also did some trainings for what was then the Resource Center, at VCU, and I became active in VAACE. Over the years, I’ve served as secretary for VAACE several times.

Then I went to George Mason University, to the Office of Adult Learning and Professional Development; our mission was to provide professional development for K-12 teachers. While I was there, Ed Jones and I developed a mas-

ter’s program in adult education, and we taught the 12 hours of core courses; this lasted for eight years, until we both retired. Since retirement, I’ve helped develop a series of non-credit seminars delivered online for the University of Virginia as part of their Adjunct Faculty Academy, and I facilitate those from time to time. (I received my Master’s in Adult Education degree from George Mason.)

## **Did anything stand out as a most important lesson learned from all of these experiences? Or did you gain any insight into how adult education fits into this educational variety?**

That’s an interesting question. From the subsidized housing project, I learned that you don’t have to work with people from another country to have a multicultural experience.

I began working with the Master’s in Adult Education program at George Mason with a relatively narrow view of adult education as ABE and GED instruction, and I became amazed at the breadth of professional venues in which people describe themselves as adult educators.

Overall, my experiences have reinforced the fact that learning is lifelong. They have affirmed that teaching and learning are fun and exciting and that *every* experience is a new one – you may think you’re teaching the same course, but with different people, in a different setting, it’s a different course every time.

## **How did you become involved in developing the certification program?**

Dolly Whelan is the one who got me involved, but my husband is the one who originally suggested volunteering at VLP, and that’s where I met Dolly. I was a stay-at-home mom who had taught in K-12 and had been a guidance counselor. I’m very grateful to her for getting me involved in adult education and, now, the certification program.

## **What has the process of working on the certification program been like?**

Very exciting; I think this is an idea whose time has come. I had long been a proponent of someone doing this kind of thing. At one point, I had hoped VAACE could take it on, but it wasn’t possible for that organization at that time.

I’ve thoroughly enjoyed the development process; it’s helped to keep my thinking fresh, and I’ve been able to use things I’ve learned both academically and experientially. I’ve enjoyed working with the Resource Center; I’m really pleased to have been involved.

## **What do you hope participants will get out of the certification program?**

I hope they’re going to get an enhanced sense of professionalism in the field. I hope they’re going to get an affirmation that much of what they’re doing, almost intuitively, is grounded in research, and I hope they will continue to learn and to be open to new ways of thinking and doing as they continue to work in the field.

## **Is there anything else you’d like to share with Progress readers?**

Just what a valuable resource is there at the Resource Center, what valuable information and tools and services the Resource Center offers, and how fortunate we are in Virginia not only to have the Resource Center but to have the quality of people working there that we do have. ■

# Professional Development in a Grocery Store

by NANCY FAUX

*"Who wants some fruit?"*

*"Pass the ketchup!"*

*"...and what was the cognitive level on Bloom's taxonomy for this assignment?"*

These lively comments are heard above the general din of conversation and clatter of dishes. They are coming from a group of six adult ESOL practitioners and their coordinator, sitting around a table in the dining area of a large local grocery store in northern Virginia.

"All right, our next step is to unpack the standards that we have identified," directs Debby Cargill, lead teacher for Prince William County Adult Education's ESOL Program. "But first, anyone want a muffin?"

This banter, a mixture of meal sharing and participation in a national pilot project in professional development, goes on for two hours this evening. It is one of six meetings that were held in the fall of 2008, all at Wegman's Grocery Store.

What were they doing there? During the fall and into the following spring, two adult education programs, Prince Wil-

liam County Public Schools (PWCS) and Roanoke City Public Schools (RCPS), formed part of a state team that participated in a pilot program, Standards-in-Action (SIA), funded by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) of the U.S. Department of Education. Virginia was one of six states selected to pilot materials and processes to assess ways of implementing content standards in the classroom. Virginia's team consisted of the two local programs, Prince William County and Roanoke City; their ESOL coordinators Debby Cargill (PWCS) and Aimee Clarke (RCPS); Randall Stamper from the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy; Nancy Faux and Jim Andre from the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center; and Jane Swing from Radford University. Our team was assigned two coaches, Cindy Turner and Suzy Seibert of Aha Consultants in Arizona, who provided technical assistance and made one site visit to each local program.

The Standards-in-Action pilot program had two phases. The first, from August to December of 2008, focused on classroom assignments. The second,

from January to May of 2009, focused on classroom observations.

A national meeting of all the state teams was held in Washington, D.C., in August 2008 to initiate Phase I. After attending this meeting, Virginia's two local coordinators each invited a small group of their teachers to form part of

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*Critical Friends Groups ensured that the collegial exchange of ideas about how to improve the quality of teaching was comfortable, customary, and informative.*

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a Critical Friends Group. These groups met with the goal of piloting materials and a process, designed by the national Standards-in-Action program, to align classroom materials to content standards and improve instruction. The selected teachers attended an orientation meeting in Charlottesville, where the processes were explained and demonstrated by members of Virginia's SIA team.

Each local Critical Friends Group met six times; at each meeting, one of the teachers presented a classroom assignment for group review, followed by a discussion of how the assignment might be "ratcheted up" to better address the needs and abilities of the students. Once the presenting teacher adjusted the assignment and tried it out in the classroom, she reported the results to the group at the next session. The process then continued with another teacher presenting an assignment. Finally, the feedback from these Critical Friends Groups was provided to the U.S. Office of Vocational Education through documentation and numerous conference calls.

Word got out that the teachers from Virginia were becoming passionate about this Critical Friends process of professional development, and the team from

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Summer 2009 **PROGRESS**



Prince William County's Standards-in-Action team gathers at Wegman's Grocery Store.

# Money Talks

(continued from back page)

format for easy downloading, at <http://moneytalks.valrc.org>.

Money Talks: An ESOL Toolkit for Financial Literacy went online in March 2009, but the seeds for this curriculum were sown with a 2005 EL/Civics grant. During the design and development process, Nancy Faux, ESOL Specialist at the Resource Center, coordinated a team that included staff from the Resource Center and The Literacy Institute at Vir-

ginia Commonwealth University; staff and teachers at two pilot sites, Northern Shenandoah Valley Adult Education and Prince William County Public Schools; instructional design consultant Mary Kay Alegre; content reviewer and ESOL consultant Vanessa Caceres; and Joey Mason, artist. The enormous task of finalizing the content and creating a user-

friendly website was recently completed by Kate Daly, Instructional Specialist at the Resource Center. To help decide what topics to include in Money Talks, the team undertook a survey of existing resources as well as a survey of learners at the pilot programs. Results indicated that, while most ESOL textbooks include a section on basic banking, relatively few address money management. An online resource from San Diego Community College addressed many of the relevant financial topics for an ESOL population, but activities were at an advanced language level; this resource served as a guide in developing Money Talks, which required creating multi-level lesson plans and picture stories to support each topic. In the pilot programs, about 70% of learners reported using the U.S. banking system. More than half had checking accounts, and 49% had a credit card, but only 39% of learners reported having a savings account. 71% of learners reported sending money home. A similarly high percentage (76%) reported saving for a house as their financial dream; buying a car or truck and saving for education were also priorities for more than half of the learners surveyed.

In its finished form, Money Talks includes lessons for literacy, beginner/low-intermediate, and high-intermediate/advanced language levels. The literacy and beginner levels cover fewer units than the high-intermediate/advanced level, which includes:

- Introduction to Money Talks and Needs Analysis
- Unit 1: Goals and Budgets
- Unit 2: Basic Banking Services
- Unit 3: Checking Accounts
- Unit 4: Savings Accounts
- Unit 5: Credit
- Unit 6: Loans
- Unit 7: Growing your Money

Integral to the Money Talks lessons are the picture stories that put the financial topics in a real-life context. In the Saving Money picture story, two office cleaners get into a car accident and each

breaks a leg. Only one has savings with which to pay the bills while out of work; the other has to leave her apartment. In other stories, Chen and Soo learn about budgeting as they try to save for opening their own restaurants, Ali finds out he has bad credit when he applies for a home loan, and Marco learns about car loans (and lemons). Teachers can also use the picture stories to have their classes generate the description of what is going on in each picture.

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In the pilot programs,  
about 70% of learners  
reported using the  
U.S. banking system ...  
but only 39% reported  
having a savings account.

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In addition to picture stories, the Money Talks lessons incorporate ESOL teaching techniques such as using information grids, role plays, and information gap activities. An introductory lesson includes a learner needs assessment to assist instructors in choosing which topic areas to cover in their classes. All materials have been designed with an eye toward classroom use, and many of the lessons have been improved by feedback from ESOL teachers in the pilot groups. One of these teachers commented: "I gained insight into my students' needs. They were very interested in all topics related to money matters. During the lessons I clearly saw the benefit of having outstanding picture stories for beginning students. Because these stories were interesting, humorous, and 'real world,' they encouraged a great deal of discussion. They also served as excellent reading and writing prompts." Now that Money Talks is available to a wider audience, we hope that more teachers will take advantage of this free resource and that they and their learners will have similarly positive experiences. ■



gina Commonwealth University; staff and teachers at two pilot sites, Northern Shenandoah Valley Adult Education and Prince William County Public Schools; instructional design consultant Mary Kay Alegre; content reviewer and ESOL consultant Vanessa Caceres; and Joey Mason, artist. The enormous task of finalizing the content and creating a user-

# Competing with Online GED Scams

by JASON GUARD

If it weren't already difficult enough for adult learners to find our GED and literacy services, matters are made worse by the sharks in the muddy waters of adult education. Seemingly, every kind of educational and professional certification can be obtained online, with almost as many kinds of alleged accreditation propping them up. Ultimately, our learners need to consider what they plan to do with their credential and determine the admission or application requirements. Unfortunately, they often find out too late that their online "diploma" is good for everything except getting a job or enrolling in college.

In an effort to address the preponderance of dubious certificates, the GED Testing Service has been garnering press attention for a new report titled *Online Programs Offering Unauthorized GED Credentials* (available from GEDTest.org at [http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ged/etp/pros/NAAG\\_File.pdf](http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ged/etp/pros/NAAG_File.pdf)). However, aside from protecting the copyrighted name and GED logo, there are few regulations to prevent companies from charging \$200 to \$1200 for minimally useful educational certificates. The responsibility falls on legitimate adult education programs to educate potential learners, agencies, and their surrounding communities. Here are some of the suggestions offered by the GED Testing Service, adapted from the list in the above-referenced report:

- Notify partners, stakeholders, and state and local offices (e.g., the Department of Education, Office of Workforce Development, and Department of Social Services) to the threat of dubious online high school credentialing programs.
- Inform the citizens in your region that there is only one GED Testing Program, that the GED Tests are NOT available online, and that the GED Tests are not a generic creden-

tial available from any other source.

- Notify the above state offices to accept only official GED Transcripts, which are difficult to forge, instead of a certificate or diploma.
- Work with your state department of education to create a list of credible accreditation bodies and, if possible, programs that are recognized as accredited by your state.
- Monitor the legitimacy of online degree granting programs and take action as appropriate.

## A Story and a Suggestion

In March, Rondel Hensley from Page County got laid off from his job of 14 years at a textile plant and figured things couldn't get worse. Then, he was offered a similar position making more money than he'd ever made before in his life. However, just before starting his new job he was informed that his high school equivalency credential was from an unaccredited diploma program. Rondel couldn't believe it. Several years prior, he had spent a good deal of money and class time, and he had thought for years that he had earned a GED diploma. The job offer was rescinded – unless Rondel could pass the GED Tests in two weeks.

Rondel looked online at sites advertising the term "GED" that would use the "bait and switch" tactic of denigrating the value of a GED credential and promoting their own online "diploma" at a premium price. After looking at the gamut of seemingly well-meaning online credentialing companies, Rondel asked for guidance from his unemployment agency. He was quickly referred to Amy O'Shell at his local adult education program. Rondel took the Official GED Tests at the next possible date and passed everything but math while achieving a passing battery average. With the clock ticking on his employment future, he was willing to do anything to bring his 390 in math up to a 410. Amy matched him up with eLearn Virginia, and Rondel

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Rondel Hensley's story of getting educationally swindled is all too common.

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got to work online in no time. Over the course of four days (including a weekend of beautiful weather), he put in over 23 hours of online math preparation. That Monday, Rondel scored 450 on the GED Mathematics Test, and he started his new job two days later.

Rondel Hensley's story of getting educationally swindled is all too common. Not only is the cornucopia of dubious online credentials and misrepresented "GED" services giving people phony certificates, the ubiquitous advertisements are giving our client base an expectation that education is something that can be purchased, that an investment of preparation time is not necessary, and that they won't have to wait for classes or testing dates.

State-funded adult education programs have good news for learners with regard to the price of services and strategic ways to approach test prep efficiently. Addressing the issue of expedience can also keep our learners from looking elsewhere. In addition to spreading responsible information about legitimate credentials, Virginia's adult education programs need to find ways to meet immediate needs that may not be satisfied by closed enrollment classes. Compiling and distributing credible resources for independent study (including websites) can help educate our potential learners and testers about their options while holding their attention and giving them a chance to improve their skills. By increasing accurate GED awareness among our potential clients, we can combat the misinformation that is so widely available online. ■

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Jason Guard is GED Specialist at VALRC and manages eLearn Virginia.

Summer 2009 **PROGRESS**

# Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Report from the National Staff Development Council

by HILARY MAJOR

Teachers across the nation are facing increasingly complex demands: a diverse body of learners needing differentiated instruction, accountability expectations requiring instructors to understand and perhaps take part in standardized assessment procedures, content standards that shape lessons and curricula, and changing technologies that impact how and what we teach. In this climate, it should come as no surprise that professional development for educators is receiving attention. While the focus of some efforts (such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' certification program) has been at the K-12 level, emphasis on professional development is a trend from preschool programs to adult and post-secondary education.

In February 2009, the National Staff Development Council issued *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A*

*Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*. The report, which focuses on the K-12 system in the U.S. and its counterparts in European and Asian nations, is the first part of a larger, multi-year research initiative. Its main sections investigate what research has to say about professional development, explore trends and strategies in professional development abroad, and analyze the current status of professional development in the U.S.

Research on the effectiveness of professional development is relatively rare. In an analysis of 1,300 studies, only nine were rigorous enough to meet the report writers' requirements, which included administering pre- and post-assessments to evaluate the impact of the professional development on student achievement and including a control group for comparison purposes. Based on this limited pool, the findings were striking:

*"Rigorous research suggests that*

*sustained and intensive professional learning for teachers is related to student-achievement gains. An analysis of well-designed experimental studies found that a set of programs which offered substantial contact hours of professional development (ranging from 30 to 100 hours in total) spread over six to 12 months showed a positive and significant effect on student achievement gains. According to the research, these intensive professional development efforts that offered an average of 49 hours in a year boosted student achievement by approximately 21 percentile points. Other efforts that involved a limited amount of professional development (ranging from 5 to 14 hours in total) showed no statistically significant effect on student learning."* (p. 9)

According to the research, professional development should:\*

*Continued on page 15 ...*

## Professional Development in a Grocery Store (continued from page 10)

Prince William County was invited to demonstrate it at the March 2009 National State Directors' Meeting in Washington, D.C. In front of a national audience, the team not only demonstrated the process, but also provided insightful ideas and comments that created quite a buzz at the meeting and beyond. Go Virginia!!

In January 2009, the Virginia state team again attended a national meeting in Washington, this time to learn the processes used for Phase II, conducting classroom observations using a protocol designed to highlight the standards-based teaching practices already at work in a program and to target areas for improvement. Instead of the teachers meeting to discuss assignments, each local

coordinator observed her teachers in the classroom. The coaches from Arizona visited each program to participate in one of the observations, and Nancy Faux also visited each program for one observation.

*The process of aligning standards to cognitive demands and to instruction became second nature.*

Again, feedback was shared through conference calls.

It was Phase I of Standards-in-Action, however, that created opportunities for instructors to delve into standards as a part of a learning community. The Critical Friends Groups ensured that the

collegial exchange of ideas about how to improve the quality of teaching was comfortable, customary, and informative. The process of aligning standards to cognitive demands and to instruction became second nature to the participating teachers. Participating in this project has proven to be an invaluable tool in helping teachers see their classroom activities, standards, and their own professional development in a different light. Sharing a meal and classroom assignments with their peers has led to an increased awareness of the real workings behind what goes on in a classroom. ■

*Nancy Faux is ESOL Specialist at VALRC and a member of Virginia's Standards-in-Action team.*

# Partners and Community Involvement are at the Heart of “Reading: A Family Affair”

by VICTOIRE GERKENS SANBORN



This year, 760 people attended Reading: A Family Affair (RAFA), “not counting babies and backpacks,” enthused Patricia Donnelly, the Executive Director of the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, which organized the event, held at the James Lee Community Center in Falls Church, for the third year in a row. A record number of people from a broad multicultural cross section of the region, including immigrant and at-risk families, participated in an event that saw attendance jump by 70% in one year. RAFA celebrates family literacy and supports parents who, as their children’s first teachers, are largely responsible for their children’s academic success. Underwritten by the Verizon Foundation and held in close partnership with Fairfax County and Arlington County Libraries, WETA PBS Television, and Fairfax Community and Recreation Services, which donated the classrooms and auditorium in the community center, RAFA brings books to life through planned activities, talented performers, and storytellers.

When asked why this event has caught on so quickly, Ms. Donnelly said, “It’s free, it’s fun, and we hand out a book to all the children. Activities include ‘See a book,’ ‘Hear a Book,’ ‘Become a Book,’ ‘Read and Write a Book,’ and ‘Click a Book.’” Children who participate in the “Read and Write a Book” activity are encouraged to become authors. They receive paper, crayons, and story prompts

and, when they are finished, their stories are tacked onto a bulletin board for all to read. In the Reading Corner, children can listen to a storyteller. Free books, donated by sponsors, are distributed before children move on to another activity. “Click a Book,” located in the computer room, is designed for parents to help children find online resources. Volunteers help parents and caregivers navigate kid-friendly websites, like Verizon’s Thinkfinity (<http://www.thinkfinity.org/home.aspx>), the PBS Kids website (<http://pbskids.org/>), and the public library’s kids website (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/kids/>). Perform-



ances were offered throughout the day by “the best local talent we could find”: storytellers Diane Macklin and Candace Wolf, magician Joe Romano, the Kaydee Puppeteers, musical group Rocknoceros, and Readers Theatre from the Rainbow Company and H-B Woodlawn Fine Arts Department.

RAFA notably drew visits from local representatives, like The Hon. Gerry Connolly, U.S. House of Representatives, Virginia 11th Congressional District, and the Hon. Sharon Bulova, Chairman, At-Large, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, who both spoke in support of Literacy Council programs to a packed house at the James Lee Community Theatre. Delegate David Marsden and Linda Smyth, Supervisor of Providence District in Fairfax County, also attended. Much to the children’s delight, WETA Televi-

sion sent Clifford the Big Red Dog for photo opportunities.

When asked why an adult literacy organization would organize an event for children, Ms. Donnelly said, “We offer a family learning program and so many of our adults don’t know about the services in our community that promote learning in the home. This event points families to those free opportunities.” Due to the abundance of community support and family interest and to publicity from local media outlets like WETA television and community organizations like the libraries, Ms. Donnelly confidently predicts that the next RAFA will attract a thousand people. ■

*Victoire Gerkens Sanborn is Literacy Specialist at the VALRC.*

## Facts about RAFA 2009

- 760 individuals attended Reading: A Family Affair, a 70% increase over 2008 attendance.
- 64 volunteers from the community assisted at the event.
- Reading: A Family Affair was publicized to more than 200 schools, libraries, media outlets, and community organizations.
- The Literacy Council of Northern Virginia’s RAFA web page had more than 200 visits.
- Approximately 75 parents and their children spent time using the educational websites PBSKids.org and Thinkfinity.org at RAFA.
- More than 800 Literacy Council students were invited to attend, including many participants from the Family Learning Program.
- About a third of the attendees who returned comment cards reported learning about the event through school newsletters and parent email listservs.

# Professional Learning in the Learning Profession:

(continued from page 13)

- be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice.
- focus on student learning and address the teaching of specific curriculum content.
- align with school improvement priorities and goals.
- build strong working relationships among teachers.

These findings make sense: professional development needs to be relevant to teachers' day-to-day classroom implementation, but it also needs to clearly connect to broader educational goals. Teachers find professional development most valuable when it is "hands on" and addresses local concerns. Significantly, the findings highlight the need for more collaboration and interaction among instructors. Most U.S. schools employ an "egg crate model," in which most teachers spend most of their time in separate classrooms. Combatting this isolation from fellow educators is key to developing "a shared sense of intellectual purpose and a sense of collective responsibility" (p.11) as well as a greater level of comfort in sharing with and providing feedback to colleagues, all of which can lead to an increased focus on student mastery and an understanding of what that mastery looks like. Critical Friends Groups, observations, and videotaping of classes are strategies that can help build such professional learning communities.

In addressing professional development abroad, the report writers studied countries that were members, with the U.S., of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and who performed well on international student assessments. They found that practitioners in these countries enjoyed four advantages not typically provided in the U.S.: regularly scheduled time for professional learning, strong supports for beginning teachers, widespread teacher participation in school decision-making,

and government support for additional professional development.

While U.S. teachers average 1,080 hours per year of direct teaching time with students, the OECD average is only 664 hours per year for upper secondary schools. In fact, in most European and Asian countries, teachers spend only half of their time on instruction, while the other half is spent on lesson planning, grading, consultation, and professional learning, mostly in "collegial" settings such as a large faculty room (p.15).

In Japan's lesson study approach, a

## Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers

In adult education, one national organization devoting its attention to professional development is the Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers, an affiliate of COABE. Discover more about AALPD, including the AALPD Quality Professional Development Standards and Recommended Policies to Support Professional Development for Adult Education Professionals, on their website: [www.aalp.org](http://www.aalp.org)

teacher prepares a "best possible lesson" and a group of colleagues observes the delivery and provides feedback. Often, a different teacher will then give the lesson, with improvements made, and the group will observe the results (p. 16). Another international initiative, Singapore's "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation..." aims to produce life-long learners by making schools a learning environment

## A Report from the National Staff Development Council

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Research findings highlight the need for more collaboration and interaction among instructors.

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for everyone from teachers to policymakers and having knowledge spiral up and down the system" (p. 17). It includes learning circles, teacher-led workshops, and opportunities for action research.

Turning to the current status of professional development in the United States, the report writers recognized a wide variability from state to state and among differing schools. While nearly all teachers participated in some form of professional development, the report concludes that the U.S. still has far to go in implementing the kind of professional development that research shows is most effective: intensive, ongoing, and leading to collaborative communities of practice.

Former North Carolina governor James B. Hunt, Jr., who contributes a foreword to the report, notes that, compared to education, "other fields, from medicine and management to the military, do a far better job of providing ongoing learning opportunities and support for their professionals." He continues: "It is time for our education workforce to engage in learning the way other professionals do—continually, collaboratively, and on the job—to address common problems and crucial challenges where they work." The challenge is a timely one for Virginia's adult educators. ■

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*Hillary Major is Publications Coordinator at the Resource Center.*

\*Findings are quoted from *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*; the full report is available online at: <http://www.nsd.org/stateproflerning.cfm>

# Money Talks: An ESOL Toolkit for Financial Literacy

Virginia Commonwealth University

## Money Talks



- **Units by Level**
- **Materials by Topic**
- **Picture Stories**
- **Websites (.pdf)**

**Attention:**  
 Within the documents, links to handouts and materials will be active soon. In the meantime, all handouts and materials are available in several places on the site: immediately following each instructional unit in both the *Whole Curriculum* on the main page and the *Units by Level* folder; and in the *Materials by Topic* folder.

**THE VIRGINIA ADULT LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER**

**An ESOL Toolkit for Financial Literacy**




Managing money and understanding the United States financial system are great challenges for newcomers to the U.S.; however, few financial resources exist for adult ESOL learners, especially beginning-level English learners.

Money Talks is a comprehensive, multi-level resource for teaching financial literacy to adult ESOL students that can be used and adapted to fit a wide range of learning situations.

**Teacher's Guide:** This guide contains information about teaching the Money Talks units, including how to use the Picture Stories, suggested teaching strategies, and a flowchart that details the progression of units, as well as the structure of each unit. (.pdf)

**Whole Curriculum:** This contains all Money Talks instructional units and accompanying materials for the literacy, beginning / low-intermediate, and high-intermediate / advanced language levels. (.pdf)

**Introduction and Needs Analysis:** This document contains the introductory unit to

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center is pleased to announce a new online curriculum for teaching financial literacy to adult ESOL learners. Managing money and understanding the United States financial system are great challenges for newcomers to the U.S.; however, few financial resources exist for adult ESOL learners, especially learners at the literacy and beginner levels.

Money Talks: An ESOL Toolkit for Financial Literacy seeks to fill that gap by providing an easy-to-use, multilevel toolkit that includes lesson plans, instructional materials and handouts, and a teacher's guide. Money Talks is freely available online, in a PDF *Continued on page 11 ...*