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all write news

PUTTING STUDENTS ON THE GED FAST TRACK

by Marie Hassett

Many adults come to literacy programs hoping to earn a GED quickly. They may want the diploma in order to qualify for a job, to advance in the workplace, or to qualify for admission to a post-secondary or job-training program. Others face constraints like welfare-to-work timelines, or conditions of probation/parole. Program staff are eager to help these learners, but don't always know where to begin, or what activities will bring the greatest benefit. With the release of a new test in January 2002, the challenge of helping learners to earn a credential quickly has become even more difficult. This article will present data about how candidates are performing on the new GED and make suggestions to help programs and teachers structure fast track programs that meet their students' particular needs.

What Do We Know So Far?

As of July 2002, 153,000 candidates had taken the new GED. Sixty-four percent passed, down from sixty-nine percent on the old test in 2001. If five percent sounds small, consider the real numbers: Over one million people took the GED in 2001. A five percent decrease in passing percentage would mean approximately *fifty thousand fewer diplomas*. Closer to home, how many program directors would be comfortable with a five percent drop in their overall number of GED graduates?

The same 153,000 candidates had an average score of 2.3 on the essay portion of the Language Arts, Writing exam. Given that a 2.0 is the minimum score required for passing, this suggests that, while candidates may pass this portion of the test, their writing skills may not hold up to the demands of post-secondary work or more extensive writing on the job connected with a promotion.

Another important pattern is the percentage of people who pass the test

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SPEAKING OF YOUR HEALTH...

by Janice Jin

A little less than a year ago on a clear, Friday afternoon, I walked into a small classroom in the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center with Vanessa, a classmate and fellow ESOL tutor. We had just finished our training to become ESOL tutors as part of a medical school volunteer program, and we were eager to begin putting the training to use. Quiet greeted us as I saw half a dozen or so middle aged, Asian women scattered about the room. Some were gathered around the tiny table in the center, some were seated in front of the computers, while others were just sitting in chairs along the periphery. No one was talking. Sam, one of the BCNC teachers, made the introductions and explained to the women that Vanessa and I were students from Harvard Medical School who would be teaching a new class with a focus on health topics. Since this didn't seem to excite their interest, Sam also mentioned that this would be an excellent opportunity to practice conversational English. At this, several of the women nodded and smiled.

The introductions were short and sweet, and in a matter of minutes, Vanessa and I were left completely alone. We tried another round of more in-depth introductions, calling upon all the combined ice-breaker knowl-

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**Please share this newsletter
with others at your program.
The deadline for submitting
material for the next issue is:
Feb. 15.**

**Happy
New Year!**

Putting Students on the GED Fast Track

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in each age cohort. For people in the 17-19 age group, the passing rate is 68%; for those 20-29, it's 65%; 30-39, 61%; 40-49, 60%; 50-59, 58%; 60+, 54%. In Massachusetts in 2001, the largest single group of test-takers was the 20-24 year old cohort, who accounted for 26.6% of all testers. However, 32.5% of test-takers were older than this group, which suggests that the decrease in passing rates for older candidates could have an impact in a number of programs.

The following chart shows the average scores and passing percentages broken down by subject area.

Test Passing Percentages & Average Standard Scores

	Passing %	Passers	Non-Passers
Reading	72%	522	364
Writing	70%	467	296
Math	68%	485	327
Science	71%	523	363
Social St.	71%	543	367
Battery		485	262

The significant discrepancies between average passing scores and average non-passing scores suggest a large gap between those who pass the test and those who do not. Among non-passers who take the whole battery, the average score of 262 is 42% below the minimum passing score of 450 and 46% below the average score for candidates who do pass the battery. (Passing percentages for the individual sections of the test are higher than those for the battery as a whole because candidates who are in the 70% passing Language Arts, Writing, for instance, may be among the 32% who fail Mathematics)

Even more disturbing are the average scores and passing percentages for people who are re-taking the test, as the chart below demonstrates.

Re-test Passing Percentages & Average Standard Scores

Reading	62%	408
Writing	71%	409
Math	53%	404
Science	48%	329
Social St.	54%	375

While retesters appear to make progress in Language Arts, their success rate for Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies is much lower. In fact, students who have failed one of these sections of the test appear to have only about a 50-50 chance of passing when they take the test again. And on no section of the test is the average score for retesters at a passing level. This suggests that even on tests like Language Arts, Writing, where 71% of retest candidates pass, the non-passing scores are so low that they keep the average from reaching a passing level. The average scores on Science and Social Studies are, respectively, 81 and 35 points below the mini-

imum required to pass, 121 and 75 points below the average score required to secure the credential.

Teachers and program directors can infer a number of things from this data, but four points seem especially critical for staff involved with fast track initiatives:

- **Younger students seem to have an advantage.** This is probably because of greater familiarity with standardized testing and the current public school curriculum.

- **Large gaps exist between passers and non-passers.** Much of this gap may be attributed to a lack of preparation, but retest scores suggest that mere familiarity with the form and content of the test is not sufficient to achieve a passing score.

- **The Language Arts (Reading & Writing) are students' greatest strength.** It can be argued that these sections of the test have changed the least in terms of the skill demands they make and in terms of teachers' need to make significant curricular changes from the 1988 test.

- **Students who have failed once are likely to fail again.** This is particularly important for teachers whose students say they just want to "brush up" before attempting to retest.

Teachers whose students want (or need) to prepare rapidly for the GED need to think in terms of the essential skills and knowledge that the new test demands.

Critical Components of GED Success

There are, in essence, only two kinds of knowledge that concern us in the classroom, declarative and procedural. Declarative knowledge is that which does not change, no matter how long it is known (the alphabet, the Bill of Rights, multiplication tables, etc.). Procedural knowledge is that which develops over time (reading & writing skills, problem solving, etc.). Both kinds of knowledge are critical to GED success. The checklist below includes the most important indicators of readiness for the GED:

- Reading fluency
- Competent essay writing
- Visual literacy skills
- Knowledge of the Casio fx-260 calculator and the Math answer grids
- Prior knowledge of key documents in Social Studies
- Prior knowledge of basic concepts in Science
- Subject-specific vocabulary

This list begins with knowledge that is procedural and then moves into more declarative knowledge because this is the best and most efficient way to help adult learners gain the knowledge and skills they need to pass the test. As their reading skills improve, they can better absorb and retain information about Social Studies and Science. As their visual literacy skills improve, and they become more skilled in working with information presented in graphs, charts, etc., they are better able to solve problems that include such information. Through reading and writing about topics in different subject areas, vocabulary will improve.

These competencies are the building blocks for effective

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tive fast track programs, because they focus on the skills and knowledge students need to pass the GED. When considering how best to organize these components into a curriculum, fast track teachers need to address student starting level, the length and intensity of the program, balancing activities, and maintaining focus in the classroom.

Starting Level: Most GED teachers have worked with students who were not quite ready for GED level work in all areas. When time limits are not urgent, this is not a problem; however, in a fast track situation, teachers need to consider setting more stringent limits on admission, or at least candidly advising students as to their true level of readiness. For programs of six months or less in duration, students should be able to score a minimum of 400 on each section of the Official Practice Test (OPT). Shorter programs (three months or less), should require a passing score on the OPT for at least three of five subject areas.

Length and Intensity of Program: Most teachers recognize that the majority of their students do not have much time outside of the classroom to study for the GED. If the test is a long way off, gaps of three or four days between classes do not present a significant impediment. But when a student is working in a compressed time frame, frequency of study becomes more critical. In order to achieve the desired results, intensity of program needs to be inversely proportional to its length. A program three months or less in duration should include at least nine hours of class time per week. For programs in the six-month range, six hours per week is the minimum necessary; in a program of only six hours per week, every effort should be made to encourage students to do homework.

Balance of Activities Obviously, in a tight time frame, curriculum should be individualized to the strengths and weaknesses of each student. Those teachers using the OPT in its electronic form can review the results in some depth with regard to the specific subcontent areas of each test, and can evaluate students' higher-order thinking skills in terms of their answers as they plan each student's program of study. Beyond this, teachers do well to include both activities that will build skills in areas of weakness and develop greater strength in areas where the student is already skilled. This strategy helps to reduce the incidence of students passing each section of the test with a minimum 410, but failing to earn a credential because they have not reached an average score of 450.

While activities that build both procedural and declarative knowledge are valuable elements of any class, fast track classes should include a greater proportion of procedural activities. Given that such a class is unlikely to cover all of the material a student will encounter on the GED, good reading, writing and problem-solving ability will mitigate the effects of unfamiliar material. The most valuable activity in any GED class is sustained, silent reading. Few stu-

dents have time to do this outside of class, but it is critical for building reading fluency, which is itself the most important skill a student can have in relation to the GED.

Focus In order to achieve success in limited time, GED fast track programs need to maintain a narrow focus on the skills and knowledge needed to pass the test. This includes both the kinds of skills and knowledge in the checklist above and familiarity with the form of the GED test itself. This may at first sound limited, but when we consider the broadened scope of the new test, it is clear that even a teacher focusing exclusively on materials related to the GED will be hard-pressed to cover everything of value.

Prior to taking the operational test, each student should once again take the OPT for the subjects he/she will be trying to pass. If students' scores make the prospect of passing the test seem limited, teachers should counsel them to wait and prepare further, if at all possible. This is not what most learners want to hear, but again, given the level of failure exhibited by retesters thus far, it is in each student's best interest not to take the GED until the chances of success are better than hit-or-miss.

In conclusion, the most successful fast track programs will be those that: plan carefully around the strengths and weaknesses of each student; build procedural knowledge in order to improve students' ability to absorb and retain declarative knowledge; provide opportunities to build reading skill; maintain a tight focus on GED form and content; and counsel students realistically about their chances for success.

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edge that we had accumulated in college. Soon, I could feel the uncomfortable silence settling slowly around the table again – that awkwardness that comes after the small talk and getting-to-know-yous are done; when you just don't know what to say.

As I sat there, the pauses seemed interminable and the differences seemed glaringly obvious between myself, a 23 year old, American born Chinese (ABC, as they call us) who went to medical school straight from college, and these women who were immigrants from Indonesia, China, and Vietnam. Even amongst themselves, there were many differences. One woman, the most elderly of the group, had moved to the US from Macau 14 years ago but still felt her heart pound whenever she had to speak in English. Another student, a stylish young mother, had worked at an English speaking office in Hong Kong before coming to the US a year ago. Yet another woman from China worked a full time job at a fast food restaurant while taking care of her son and taking several ESOL classes. Everyone had a different background and a different level of English, but, as I soon found out, these differences were no match for their common desire to communicate and express themselves fully in English.

This was the first time that I had ever been a teacher for a class, and I had no practical knowledge about how to set up a curriculum or run a classroom. All that I knew was that, at the end of the class, I wanted my students to feel comfortable talking about their health. Verbal communication is such a critical component of the patient doctor relationship, and, as a native English speaker, this was one thing that I had always taken for granted until I saw how difficult it was for my students to ask questions about their health and describe what they were feeling. From the beginning, it was clear that everyone had a thirst for vocabulary. "Give us more new words" was a common request heard every week. As a medical student who often complains about having too much to learn, it was truly inspiring to see my students' love and dedication to learning. To me, it seemed that the single greatest obstacle to communication was not lack of desire or lack of basic skills, but rather a lack of confidence in the skills that they did possess. These students were perfectionists seeking the holy grail of ESOL teaching: maximum accuracy with maximal fluency. However, the drive for total accuracy chipped away at their fluency, at times to the point where they felt too self conscious to even speak. This, it seemed, was too high of a price to pay proper grammar and syntax. So, with the decision to emphasize fluency over accuracy, the class was patterned after a problem based learning style focusing on teaching one another through discussions. Every week for two hours, the students would read a short story involving a central character's encounter with some aspect of medicine or health. The stories were designed to be no longer than a few paragraphs, and the

scenarios would unfold page by page. After reading each page, a discussion of the scene would follow. The goal was to provide a general framework of key concepts and vocabulary, while allowing the students control over the actual direction of the discussion.

At first, the discussions were minimal. The students would take turns reading the short stories, and following a long, long pause, someone would offer a timid, one sentence opinion. We often had to resort to games or play acting to get the students to talk. Most of the time was spent either defining vocabulary words as a group or answering extremely difficult grammar questions. For example, the word "congestion" was a new vocabulary term in a story about the common cold. One astute student asked if this was the same word as that used when talking about traffic. Our students were all grammar whizzes, and I often found myself learning everything that I had never understood about present perfect tense. While the students tended to pull in the direction towards grammar and syntax, Vanessa and I tried to focus on free talk. "Don't be afraid to speak even if your grammar is not completely correct" became a mantra in the class.

Gradually, the students began to speak up more and more in class. By the time we had covered the flu, reading medicine labels, high cholesterol, and proper nutrition, the women began to share their own experiences with health issues. The talk in the class became less and less centered on making sure the proper verb conjugation was used and more focused on sharing stories and opinions. As the one sentence opinions morphed into longer discussions, the mood of the class also lifted from sedate and timid responses to light hearted conversation. Most memorably, during a class on women's health, I distinctly remember sitting back and being unable to get a word in edgewise. Speaking virtually all English, the women were sharing personal experiences, telling funny stories, and using words like osteoporosis and lactose intolerance as if they had been using these terms their whole lives. Soon, I found that my role was less to start discussions or ask questions, but rather to act as a talking bilingual dictionary. While speaking, the students would pause and turn to me with the Chinese term that they wanted to use. I'd scour my brain for the English equivalent, and then they would continue on in whatever it was that they were saying. It was beautiful to see the students conversing so fluently about their health. Many times, they were not completely grammatically correct, but it was always clear what it was they were trying to say.

Most importantly, this increased confidence in their ability to converse about their health also translated into increased communication with their doctors. A few months after the discussion on osteoporosis, one of my students came to class and told us that she had asked the doctor to check her bone density because she was worried about osteoporosis. The test results indicated that she did have decreased bone density, and she proudly told the class that she was

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CHANGE MINDS WITH *THE CHANGE AGENT*

by *Angela Orlando*

Next time you're looking for interesting reading or math exercises for your students, consider using *The Change Agent*. For over six years now, the New England Literacy Resource Center at World Education has published this specially designed newspaper for the adult education classroom. *The Change Agent* is a biannual, 24-page, theme-based teaching and learning resource that offers news stories; opinion pieces; student and teacher writing; graphics and cartoons; and lessons and activities that help teachers incorporate social justice issues into their classroom curriculum. It is a flexible and creative tool for educa-



tional development that is helping people become informed and active members of their local and global communities. The paper is intended for use in intermediate-level ESOL, ABE, GED and adult diploma classes. Each issue of the paper focuses on a different topic that is relevant to adult learners' lives. The content is a mix of classroom-ready material and background articles that can deepen and extend learners' and educators' knowledge in the topic area.

In addition to the print newspaper, *The Change Agent* has a great website at <www.nelrc.org/changeagent>. Check out on-line learning activities and information about topics ranging from media literacy and immigration to economic justice on our improved Change Agent web site. For example, students and teachers can read an online article about the economic situation of three families, then follow it up with a math activity in which students chart and compare each family's expenses and income. Or, you can go on a web quest and find out more about poverty levels and the minimum wage in the US. This activity asks students to follow the Internet links to find the answers to questions like: How many people in a family of three need to work for that family to be above the poverty level? How much would the annual income of a person working 40 hours a week at a minimum wage job be? Internet links lead students to precise pages where they can find the information needed to perform these calculations. Interactive activities also include fill-in-the-blank vocabulary exercises, crossword puzzles and reading comprehension activities. All activities on our

website can be printed or done right on the computer.

We're also trying to make parts of the paper easier for teachers to access. Now, you can view and print selected articles to use right in the classroom. For each issue, five articles will be available in an easily printable format right from our website. These articles will print out on regular letter size paper for easy copying and use in the classroom.

You can also learn about our upcoming issue and find out how to write for the paper or be on our editorial board. The "Get Involved" section of our website offers suggestions for submitting student writing or class projects to the paper. As always, current and back issues of the paper can be downloaded or viewed in PDF format. Individual subscriptions to *The Change Agent* are only \$5 per year. Bulk subscriptions – great for classroom use – are available in sets of 25 for \$50 per year (that's only \$1 per copy!). Try us out for a year, it's only five bucks.

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able to talk to her doctor about ways to get calcium even when lactose intolerant. This was the same student who used to get so nervous speaking in English that she would break into a cold sweat.

Classes these days are a far cry from that first day of silence. Now, the students are talking in English to one another before we even arrive for class. They usually already have some questions ready for either Vanessa or myself as soon as we get there. We've all become friends, and everyone feels open and comfortable about sharing their own health experiences with one another. We've covered a wide range of topics from cancer, hepatitis, and stroke to more sensitive topics like abortion and depression. It has been an amazing privilege for me to work with these women and learn about their points of view about medicine and health, patient doctor relationships, and the immigrant experience.

Last Friday was our last class. The demands of medical school and increased hours in the hospital have made it much more difficult for Vanessa and I to continue teaching every week. However, there is so much more to be done. In one brief year, I saw first hand how crippling it can be to be unable to communicate even the most basic of feelings about one's own body and health. I also saw how empowering it is to feel comfortable sharing one's thoughts, and ultimately, this freedom and comfort in communication is really the heart of why we teach at all.

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Janice Jin is a student at Harvard Medical School and a volunteer in the Health Now! Project (see last issue for more information on this project).

GRAPHIC TOOLS AND SKILLS FOR ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

[The following comments are excerpted from an "e-discussion" that took place on the NLA list in November of last year and are printed here with the authors' permission.—Ed.]

While reading and writing as a substitute for listening and speaking is the first order of business in acquiring the literacy of the alphabet, a secondary goal for literacy development is to learn to combine the written language with the unique features of graphic technology to develop tools for aiding communication, thinking and reasoning for developing new knowledge. Specifically, sifting through and organizing the vast bodies of information being developed daily in contemporary knowledge societies demands that adult basic skills learners develop skills for using graphic tools that help them render large amounts of information comprehensible and usable.

In a program of instruction developed for adults with reading skills from the 4th to the 7th grade levels on a standardized test, students were taught how to analyze paragraphs of complex information and to synthesize the information into new knowledge displays using different forms of graphic tools. For instance, adult students in work-oriented programs were given [a paragraph containing information about different types of bar tools]. They were taught to read the dense information contained in the paragraph and to use it to construct a matrix like the following:

Type	Use	Length	Diameter
Crowbar	Moving timbers and rocks	4-5 ft.	1 or 1-1/4 in.
Pinch bar	Prying out spikes and nails	12-36 in.	1/2-1 in.
Wrecking bar	Moving timbers and rocks	12-60 in.	1/2-1 1/8 in.
Pry bar	Prying out gears and bushings	16 in.	1 1/16 in.

To transform the information from paragraph form to matrix form, students had to analyze the paragraph into its different parts, and then synthesize the information by constructing a matrix with labeled columns and cells containing the appropriate information. In the early stages of learning to use the matrix as a tool for information analysis and synthesis, students were provided with paragraphs and matrices that were mostly already completed. Students then went on to complete the matrix. Over practice trials, using different types of content, the information in the matrix was reduced and the students had to complete more of the unfinished matrix. Finally, students were simply given paragraphs to analyze and synthesize into a matrix of their own construction.

Students were also taught to read detailed procedural instructions, analyze them and synthesize them into a new graphic form—a flow chart. Data [from this program] indicate that even adults with weak reading and writing skills can acquire, in a relatively brief period of time, considerable knowledge of graphic tools for information processing and communication and use them to develop analysis and synthesis skills to render complex information more understandable and usable. It seems likely that with the rapid expansion of knowledge, the need for analytical skills and the ability to use graphic displays to synthesize the products of analysis into more communicable and usable formats take on added importance as components of the curriculum in basic skills for adult literacy students.

—Thomas Sticht, consultant in adult literacy

Tom's description makes it look like you need a researcher to design and teach adult literacy, but practically speaking, the "graphic tools" and synthesis and analysis skills are means, not ends. Imagine the following scenario:

Foreman (and yes, it's almost always a man!): You done with that job yet?

Crew member: I haven't even started yet, but I've almost got the matrix done so I can decide which tool to use.

Foreman: We've got a schedule here, and you're screwing it up! Go make a matrix to decide which pen to use to fill out the unemployment form!

Seriously, how often do people study written instructions and create "graphic tools" to understand how to use the tools of their jobs? And at what point does such knowledge cease to involve reading skills and declarative and procedural knowledge, and become a matter of strategic and conditional knowledge? And none of the skills Tom discusses—neither decoding nor "graphic tools"—gets to real issues like contracts, pay and benefits, safety and other working conditions, job security, and the degree of knowledge workers have to decide what their needs are and to prioritize them, and the degree of power they have to organize and negotiate in their best interests and to act on those interests in other relevant situations (such as deciding whom to vote for). I used Tom's example of "workplace literacy," but the same issues apply to family and civic issues and to our own ability to critically understand the issues facing the adult literacy field.

—Eileen Eckert, doctoral student
in adult learning at the University of Connecticut

I disagree. My understanding of *why* many of the 2002 GED changes were incorporated was because there is such an emphasis on infographics in our culture. Understanding them and interpreting the data to create them speaks to higher order/critical thinking skills that are essential when you are trying to ensure job security, pay conditions and

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Graphic Tools and Skills for Analysis and Synthesis

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negotiating for your best interests. Students find charts, data tables, graphs and other information in visual form everywhere, including at work. Unless you are a workplace program with set parameters on what must be covered, I feel there is an obligation to help our students learn how to cope with the information they receive every day. For adults not seeking a GED, the need for infographic interpretation specifically is no small issue.

My students are at the below 4.0 grade (hate that term!) reading level and we work on visual information processing regularly. The emphasis in our class is phonemic awareness, but expanding higher order/critical thinking includes knowing how to process the information you encounter on a daily basis. Before the 11/5 election, we spent a class analyzing the campaign literature we all received in the mail. The easiest way for us to really look at who was who and what they were promising was to create a comparison chart. It was a challenging lesson, but illustrates the daily relevance of having that skill.

—*Mary Lynn Carver, Lake County Adult Learning Connection, Waukegan IL*

Mary Lynn, thanks for pointing out that “understanding them [infographics] and interpreting the data to create them speaks to higher order/critical thinking skills that are essential when you are trying to ensure job security, pay conditions and negotiating for your best interests.” A few points in response to your message:

1. I interpreted Tom’s comments to be advocacy for the ability to *create* (not interpret) “graphical tools” as *the* best way of comprehending complex information, and I said that this was a means not an end. That’s not saying it’s worthless; it’s saying it’s not the end result of comprehension abilities.

2. I did look at it too narrowly—your examples of how “infographics” can be used to develop critical thinking skills were helpful in making me aware of the limitations of my interpretation. After posting my comments, I did think that the exercise Tom outlined would have been useful if learners were looking at a proposed collective bargaining agreement or a range of health plans from which they had to choose—activities where the information is written and the “real life” task is to evaluate it critically. Having some family members in the construction trades, it struck me as absurd that they’d be learning how to choose and use tools with the kind of reading exercise Tom detailed.

3. A discussion of the best techniques for building reading skills *doesn’t* address the question of whose interests are served. If the employer is paying for the class, will the teacher and students feel free to critically evaluate information that may highlight the difference between the employers’ and workers’ interests? Even if the employer is not the one paying, the workforce development emphasis in public policy around adult ed. these days is about responding to employ-

ers’ needs as “stakeholders.” How does that square with meeting students’ needs to be able to act in their own best interests? Can the best techniques be used in service of students’ needs, or only to promote the employer’s agenda?

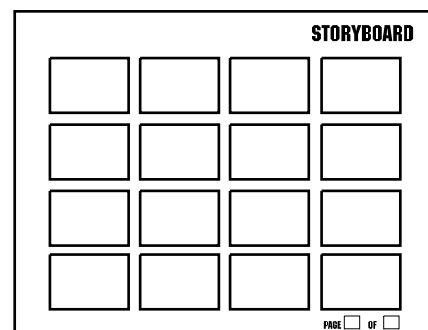
—*Eileen Eckert*

I think both Eileen and Mary Lynn Carver are right, and that Tom Sticht’s initial posting has been misinterpreted from what I see as his original intent. The graphic tools he used in his discussion were an example of how analysis and synthesis skills might be taught, and his point was the importance of this type of instruction. Too many programs concentrate almost solely on decoding and vocabulary development skills, giving short shrift to critical thinking. Of course thinking skills are a means to an end, and of course reading graphic material is relevant to the workplace, where much information is available in graphic formats. His post could have just as easily used an example from the opposite direction, where graphically organized materials is synthesized into a narrative report, a summary, etc.

—*Deborah W. Yoho, Greater Columbia Literacy Council, Columbia SC*

Adults need to be able both to interpret and to create graphic information. Without the ability to create, they cannot truly participate as equals. It is like reading and writing. Without the ability to create text or graphics, you are only on the receiving end of information. You cannot tell your own story, represent your own data. We all know that there are many ways to interpret and represent data. People need to be able to represent their own data the way they want it represented. Eileen used the example of a construction worker. Let me use the example of a community organizer who wants to raise some money for her community-based literacy program. Will her proposal look better if it has some information represented graphically, such as a timeline? In one of my favorite student interviews, when I asked the student about her goals, she said she wanted to do what I could do, she wanted to be able to run a literacy program. I think that anytime we do not entertain the idea that our students might need a skill that we need, we are limiting them based on our own expectations and assumptions.

—*Rose Brandt, Mayor’s Commission on Literacy, Philadelphia PA*



NEWS FROM THE A.L.R.I.

Staff Changes

The A.L.R.I. has unfortunately said good-bye to two of its staff. Amanda Kennedy, who has so ably served as our Administrative Assistant for the past several years, has decided not to return from maternity leave. Deborah Schwartz, the Coordinator of our Home-buying Readiness Special Project (funded by the Fannie Mae Foundation), is leaving due to the expiration of the grant for that project. It's been a pleasure working with Amanda and Deborah and we want to wish them both the best of luck in the future!

Activity Cancellation Policy

Please take a look at the activity announcements included in the mailing with this newsletter for information on finding out whether any of our activities are being cancelled in case of bad weather.



Adult Literacy Resource Institute

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*Announcements
of Upcoming
Staff Development
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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

National Adult Education Honor Society

The National Adult Education Honor Society is an organization, based in Kentucky, that has recognized adult learners since 1993. Not affiliated with the high school National Honor Society where emphasis is on academics, NAEHS membership is instead based on attendance, cooperation, and self-reliance, traits that many employers look for in new hires. Students that have been selected by their local programs for NAEHS recognition receive a letter of recommendation for employment from NAEHS headquarters that emphasizes these traits. Adult learners have benefitted from this letter with increased opportunity for employment. To begin recognizing students, an ABE program requests an NAEHS charter, decides whom to recognize, requests materials from NAEHS, and holds an induction ceremony. The costs are a one-time \$50 charter fee and \$12 per student recognized. Some programs have been successful in obtaining sponsors who pay costs of recognition. A student's only requirement is to share with family, friends, and co-workers what adult education has meant to them. To contact NAEHS, phone 1-888-210-0935 or go to their website at <www.naehs.org>. —*NAEHS Information Packet*