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ABSTRACT

This document reports findings of eight Virginia adult educators who designed and conducted research projects within their programs. Abstracts and bibliographies appear first. "Why Tutors Do What They Do" (Karen Cook, Jean Dooley, Charles Fuller) examines responses of volunteer literacy tutors to questions about their expectations and training. "Reflective Journal Writing and Its Effects on Teaching Adults" (Susan Holt) reports on an evaluation of a journal writing activity which teachers undertook. "The Use of Portfolios by the Adult Learner/Job Seeker" (Christina Seanor) provides results of a survey of employers on their opinions of student portfolios as sources of relevant information. "Adult Education for the Nightshift Worker" (Cheryl Spainhour) discusses results of interviews with adult learners who work nights to discover their learning needs and patterns. "Learner Participation in Multilevel Class Activities" (Ellen Grote) reports on research into characteristics of successful group activities in a multilevel English as a second language setting. "Why Did I Drop Out of School" (Ophelia C. Bragg, Yvonne R. Harris) describes adult learners' reasons. "Perceptions of a Family Learning Program" (Muriel M. Howard) reports results of interviews with parents and elementary school teachers and an examination of school records to document the academic and behavioral improvements among children in the program. "Adult Education Non-Participation" (Suzanne Cockley) analyzes interview results to identify reasons adults give for not completing school and not enrolling in adult education classes. (YLB)

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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Volume 3: 1993-1994

Reports of Research
Conducted by
Adult Education
Practitioner-Researchers
from Virginia

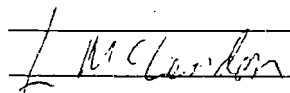
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YEAR IN REVIEW
Volume 3, 1993-1994
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Introduction

The Virginia Adult Educators Research Network promotes and supports practitioner-research among the Adult Education teachers in Virginia. During the past year, several practitioners, working alone or with others, participated in the Network by designing and conducting research projects within their own programs. The following reports represent their findings.

These practitioners come from geographic areas throughout the state and work in a variety of Adult Education settings. Their "research laboratories" are their classrooms, their "subjects" are their students and fellow teachers, and their audience is the adult education practitioner who wishes to learn from another's experience. The researchers used existing research literature to support and focus their questions and, with the dissemination of these reports, add to that base of knowledge for others to access.

Each Practitioner-Researcher begins with his or her own experiences and level of expertise and builds from there. The reports in this volume vary in length and scope, but all reflect growth and a deepening understanding of adult learning.

Copies of this Year in Review, as well as Volumes 1 and 2, are available from the Research Network office and from the Virginia Adult Education & Literacy Resource Center in Richmond. Copies of the individual reports are also available.

If you would like to correspond with individual researchers about their projects, please contact the Research Network and the staff will be happy to assist you.

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Abstracts and Biographies

3.1 WHY TUTORS DO WHAT THEY DO

Karen Cook, Jean Dooley, and Charles Fuller

Volunteer literacy tutors in three Virginia literacy programs were interviewed in focus groups about their expectations for the tutoring experience. They were also asked about their training and how well it prepared them. The researchers examined the responses to discover the characteristics of successful tutor - student relationships.

KAREN COOK is the Executive Director of Skyline Literacy Coalition serving Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. She is also a Research Network Coach - helping practitioners with their own research projects, and serves as a Network Advisor. JEAN DOOLEY is a longtime volunteer tutor in the Albemarle County LVA program and CHARLES FULLER has recently retired as president of LVA-Augusta County.

3.2 REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING AND ITS EFFECTS ON TEACHING ADULTS

Susan Holt

This research project was designed as an evaluation of a journal writing activity which teachers at the Adult Career Development Center (Richmond VA.) undertook during the summer of 1993. The teachers were interviewed and their journals were examined for indications that they had improved their teaching skills or had become more reflective practitioners. A helpful list of criterion for analyzing journals is included.

SUSAN HOLT is a graduate student in Reading at Virginia Commonwealth University and she teaches at two workplace education programs in the Richmond VA area.

3.3 THE USE OF PORTFOLIOS BY THE ADULT LEARNER / JOB SEEKER

Christina Seanor

Entry level employers in the Fredericksburg VA area were surveyed on their opinions of student portfolios as sources of relevant information about persons applying for employment.

CHRISTINA SEANOR teaches adult education classes in the Fredericksburg area at night and is a middle school reading specialist during the day.

3.4 ADULT EDUCATION FOR THE NIGHTSHIFT WORKER

Cheryl Spainhour

After conducting an extensive literature search on the special needs of nightshift workers, the researcher interviewed adult learners who work during the night to discover their learning needs and patterns.

CHERYL SPAINHOUR teaches in various workplace programs and general ABE/GED programs in the Danville area. She sleeps at night.

3.5 LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN MULTILEVEL CLASS ACTIVITIES

Ellen Grote

This research project examined the characteristics of successful group activities conducted in a multilevel ESL setting. Data was gathered through student and teacher questionnaires.

ELLEN GROTE previously taught ESL classes in Fairfax County VA. She now lives in Surrey, England, where she is pursuing a doctorate in adult education.

3.6 WHY DID I DROP OUT OF SCHOOL?

Ophelia Bragg and Yvonne Harris

This article describes the reasons adult learners in Amelia, Nottoway, and Prince Edward counties give for having dropped out of public school. In addition to reasons documented in the literature, the researchers found an interesting connection between student drop out rate and an historical event in Prince Edward County.

YVONNE HARRIS and **OPHELIA BRAGG** teach evening ABE/GED classes in Amelia, Nottoway, and Prince Edward Counties. Yvonne also teaches kindergarten in Amelia during the day and Ophelia works as her teaching aide.

3.7 PERCEPTIONS OF A FAMILY LEARNING PROGRAM

Muriel Howard

This project was a case study of a small family learning program on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The researcher interviewed parents and elementary school teachers and examined school records to document the academic and behavioral improvements among children in the family learning program.

MURIEL HOWARD is a former elementary school teacher who currently teaches adults in the Family Learning program.

3.8 ADULT EDUCATION NON-PARTICIPATION

Suzanne Cockley

This project examined the reasons adults give for not completing high school and not enrolling in adult education classes. The researcher interviewed adults in rural Rockbridge County and Harrisonburg VA.

SUE COCKLEY coordinates the Virginia Adult Educator's Research Network.

WHY TUTORS DO WHAT THEY DO

A Study Conducted by Literacy Administrators and Volunteers
in Harrisonburg and Charlottesville Cities
and in Albemarle, Augusta, and Rockingham Counties, Virginia

Karen Cook, Jean Dooley, and Charles Fuller

Introduction

How many times have literacy administrators worried and fretted over the actions, responses, and attitudes of the volunteer tutors who they supervise? Every literacy organization I know of has held committee meetings, searched for teachers, gathered information, and put hours of effort into planning in-services for tutors, only to experience the let down of producing a great workshop which only a handful of the most dedicated tutors attend. Tutor and Program Coordinators search diligently for just the right match for a student and tutor, making sure experience, schedules, transportation, and all of the other assorted details are a great "fit". The pair meet a few times and quit. The Coordinator won't find that out until a personal call is made to the tutor asking "How are things going?" and the tutor replies, "Oh, we haven't met in some time. I don't know what happened." The Coordinator is wondering what happened, too -- what happened to the tutor. Why didn't she notify anyone about the match breaking down? And what literacy office hasn't had the fun of sending out report forms knowing full well that perhaps less than 25% will be returned?

Program committees, literacy administrators, and boards search for answers to tutor retention. How can we motivate them? Are we letting tutors know how their appreciated? What's the best mix of programs that we can offer to support matches? And how can we adapt the initial training to best prepare tutors? Time, earnest consideration, and planning go into forming the answers to these questions. Specialists on volunteerism are sought out at workshops and conferences. Programs and projects are initiated. But in the end, we often don't know which of our projects and programs did or didn't make a difference, because, at the root, we do not know what are tutors are really looking for, from their students, from the support systems, or from themselves.

To find out why tutors do what they do -- how they think and feel, and what their needs really are -- this was the motivation that drove three literacy organizations in Virginia together into a research project. Through the efforts of Karen Cook, Executive Director of Skyline Literacy Coalition in Rockingham County, two other organizations, Literacy Volunteers of America Charlottesville/Albemarle County, represented by Jean Dooley and Literacy Volunteers of America Augusta county, represented by Charles Fuller, gathered together to discuss how to proceed.

Researching the Questions

The three researchers met with Sue Cockley of the Virginia Adult Educators Research Network in order to discuss the methods of research and to apply for a grant through the Network for covering expenses.

During these initial stages, the decision was made to hold six focus group discussions, two in each literacy organization. Each organization would put together a list of both active and inactive tutors. Tutors would be called on a purely random basis and asked to attend one of two focus group meetings held in their area. The maximum number for any group would be eight tutors. Each focus group would be scheduled to meet for one and a half hours on a Saturday, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The three researchers, Cook, Dooley, and Fuller, would each travel to another one of the organizations to lead the two focus groups for that area. Karen Cook would lead the groups in Augusta County, Jean Dooley would lead the groups at Skyline Literacy in Rockingham County, and Charlie Fuller would lead the groups in Charlottesville. In this way, the researchers hoped that tutors

would feel free to voice their true opinions and the group leader would be less likely to bias the discussion. Each group meeting was to be taped and transcripts typed from the tapes.

Following these decisions, the researchers went home to begin formulating questions for the discussions. Pooling all of the questions together, the research group created a list of ten questions to be used in all of the groups. In addition to the main questions, some had follow-up or clarifying questions that could be asked at the discretion of the group leader in order to keep tutors on the "right track". Of particular importance, was creating questions which couldn't be considered "leading". So, for instance, the research group wanted to find out how much tutors considered learning disabilities in students to be a problem, but the words "learning disabilities" do not appear in any of the questions. Instead, the researchers ask about student's abilities, needs, and the tutor's thoughts on screening. In another area, the research group was curious about tutor attitudes toward reporting, but wanted to ask this in neither a positive or negative way. The result was to ask tutors for their feelings, thoughts, and reactions to requests for reports from literacy management.

Now the questions were written. It was time to identify the focus group participants. Back in Albemarle, Augusta, and Rockingham Counties, tutors were called and asked to the meetings. Held in late May and early June, before public schools let out, the scheduling proved to be good. Forty-one tutors were signed up to come to the sessions. In the end, thirty-four tutors attended the discussions.

Of the thirty-four tutors participating, only four were men. Most were trained in Literacy Volunteers of America methods, although five were Laubach tutors. All but two had tutored for over a year and half had been tutors for three or more years. Educational background covered the spectrum of high school graduate through graduate degrees, but it was interesting that over a third had backgrounds in education. Almost half had only had one student, but the rest had worked with between 2 to 5 or more students. A profile of the focus groups, listed by sex, education level, training type, years as a tutor, and number of students, is found in Appendix A.

Each of the focus groups began with an introduction of everyone present - with the tape recorder on so that voices could be identified later. One and a half hours seemed just about right for a thorough discussion of each question, though by the last few questions, participants often gave scanty answers since they felt they were beginning to repeat themselves. In the two sessions that Karen Cook lead, an extra question was asked on a topic that seemed to grow naturally out of the discussion.

Following completion of the focus groups, the research group met again to discuss how transcriptions would be made. Each participant was given a number. Transcriptions attempted to include everything that was said, although there were occasional sections of the tapes where the voices were muffled. In addition, there were a few times when tutors rambled into long descriptions of their students. These descriptions were most often paraphrased or summarized in the transcripts.

At last the painstaking job of transcribing was done. Answers were divided up between the researchers for tallying. The tallies with their corresponding questions, found in Appendix B, attempt to cover every type of answer given.

Following the analysis of the data, came a library search for existing research on the topic of learning the motivations of volunteer tutors. Searches of the ERIC data base and others were conducted at the James Madison University Library. In addition, a trip was made to the Library of Congress to search for anything written on the subject. The services of two graduate students in Richmond, one of whom specialized in conducting library research, were also used in the search for material. Although much was found on the topic of how to motivate volunteers, nothing was discovered in the area of information on how tutors actually think -- what tutors themselves say about their motivations, needs, and frustrations.

The Findings

While the actual questions asked can be found in Appendix B, and are interesting for their wording and order, it is on the answers and discussions that we now focus.

Why they became tutors

About a third either were teachers or wished they were. Some had become very concerned with helping the many people that can't read. Others just liked the idea of tutoring, versus teaching a class, and assumed that the one-on-one approach would prove particularly effective in obtaining some results for the amount of time they would put into it. Many of the tutors assumed that an adult in a tutoring program would have a higher degree of interest in learning than students in other programs.

I work with high school age kids one-on-one, but I also wanted to work with someone who really wanted to learn.

Elaine

I'd been an English teacher for years and thought I could use my experience. I wanted a student who wanted to learn -- that would be nice.

Kathy

Hannah thought it was a good opportunity to help someone:

I looked forward to the joy of opening up the world of reading to somebody.

Backgrounds in education often opened the tutor's eyes to the problems of the non-reader.

Having been a children's librarian, I have been interested in the process of how children learn, matching their interests with books to encourage them to read. After getting another degree in reading, I am more aware of the labels, unkindness, etc. put upon students who have a hard time learning in the school system, which discouraged a lot of the adult nonreaders from staying in school.

Becky

Janie, a college level biology teacher, brought many of the reasons tutors gave together in her response.

I was drawn into the program as I became aware of the dimensions of the problem, how many people can't read. The numbers are just staggering. I was also interested watching my two kids learn to read. I read about the program in the newspaper, but didn't know anyone who'd gone through the training. I'd also seen ads for the national organization on television. This particular volunteer activity is appealing because there aren't other meetings. I'm involved in other community organizations and the church. They spend a lot of time having meetings. I like to meet with one person and have that type of sharing kind of thing, instead of having to deal with a lot of bureaucracy.

How prepared did they feel?

When the tutors were first matched and put in the real world of tutoring a student, about half felt that they were well prepared for what they ran into. However, many of the tutors were concerned about working with more advanced students than they had anticipated, or facing other learning needs that were beyond the tutor's ability. Tutors felt they left tutor training workshops under the impression that they would be starting with a non-reading student of average capability. They were quite surprised when they found themselves confronted by students reading at levels 3 and 4, students with various learning disabilities or with less than average learning ability.

My first student could read some and I felt LVA training was mainly for lower levels. I thought 'now what do I do?' I felt better off teaching letters and sounds.

Yvonne

The workshop was good and I felt ready, but the first student didn't match the profile of the workshops. She was more advanced and had more problems in math, which wasn't emphasized in the workshop training. Also, the workshop doesn't adequately prepare you for communication problems. It's good material to start out with, but more on extenuating issues needs to be addressed.

Daniel

Almost half felt there was a lack of resources, whether material or "people resources". These tutors were concerned with the small amount of materials available to them, from both local libraries and the literacy organization. Some tutors wished for access to experienced tutors or specialists for help in dealing with the new tutoring experience.

I haven't had a happy experience with resources. The library doesn't cooperate. I live a long way off and can't get in to get things. The bookmobile has been good, but you can't keep things out long. I have a hard time finding materials I need. The adult ed. section of our library isn't good.

Beth

Some (about a fourth) felt the need to branch out beyond their tutor training techniques and try other things. "Other things" might include taking a second literacy training workshop (such as a Laubach tutor taking LVA training), searching for new reading materials not recommended by LVA or Laubach, and asking acquaintances in the education field for new ideas.

Katherine took both LVA and Laubach training and had this to say:

They [the trainers and staff] were very helpful and supportive. I've called several different people several times and they are always there for you. But the LVA was different from what I'd envisioned. I don't use it or Laubach, with my student. They do give you something to start with. But my student could already read and write. He may have a very slight learning disability and he just needs constant reassurance. He needs to be able to read manuals at work. We tried LVA methods, but he didn't take to it. When we tried to do language experience stories he'd say he couldn't think of a thing. It was making him feel bad. Now we're using Challenger. After two years, he's just now at the point where he'll write his own sentences using our vocabulary words.

Gale felt prepared, however:

I needed to start right away or lose confidence.

How their expectations and preparations matched reality

While some (almost a third) felt their expectations and the reality of tutoring were similar, most found the student's higher levels of reading, personal problems, needs, and abilities (or lack) to be very different and more of an impact on tutoring than they were prepared for.

The personal lives, needs, abilities and commitment of students was the focus of many answers.

I noticed my student had a limited ability. She couldn't hear well and needed glasses, too. But she also has very little motivation and no goals. I think she enjoys the social exchange of coming to sessions, instead of wanting to learn to read.

Hannah

I wasn't prepared to deal with people who were required to attend tutoring for ADC payments.

Dorothy

I had a woman she wasn't allowed to go to school. She was really excited about being tutored for about two months. But her parents told her she would lose SSI benefits so the student quit. I tried to get her to continue, as did [the staff], but she wouldn't come back.

Laura

It's a constant process of trying to meet your expectations and preparations and meeting the student's abilities. I overestimated my student's abilities -- that is a constant reminder. It's hard to find an appropriate balance to challenge him without overwhelming him.

Dorothy

I started tutoring thinking I'd teach great literature, Shakespeare, etc. I brought myself down to reality and now I just want to give my student what he needs, not what I think he should have for his general understanding of the world.

Mary

It's kind of like parenthood; no matter how much people tell you you're never prepared enough. You can't know what it's like until you've done it. I liked the informal part of the training where [the trainers] talked about situations they'd had. That was more helpful than videos with actors making the correct responses all the time. You can't prepare a tutor in training for that. If the tutor will last as a tutor and if the student will last as a student, they have to be the type of person who will rejoice in small amount of progress. You also have to look at the big picture, provide encouragement for the student. If you get frustrated, you can imagine how the student feels.

Janie

You start with high expectations and then lower them to reasonable small steps. They often don't understand what a goal is. In the missionary zeal, you can't have zeal for the instantaneous.

Marie

What about screening?

Many would like information on student's learning disability problems (almost a third) or tutoring history (a fifth). But many others (almost half) like the screening the way it is -- i.e. the basics -- or even advocate as little information given to the tutor as possible so that the student can start out with a "clean slate".

I worked with a Bulgarian. A lot of stuff wasn't told to me, but he had a history of a chip on the shoulder. But he did well anyway.

Yvonne

She went on to discuss how a student who she might not have worked with had she known his record, had gone on to accomplish his goals and become a really successful member of the community by anyone's definition.

The best advocate for passing on only the most basic information to the tutor was
Elaine

Her comments on the subject, below, swayed the thinking of her entire focus group.

Ask for name and most pertinent information only. In the teacher's lounges you always hear, 'wait til you get so-and-so'. You have it in mind. All I knew about my student was her name, she didn't have a car, wanted to go to the library and her age and grade level. It wouldn't have prepared me to know this before [her commitment problems], and probably I'd have gone in thinking I wouldn't persevere the way I have. The first time she did that [not follow through, come late, etc.] I'd have said, 'Oh well here it starts again.' I don't like to prejudge people and just because she did that with you doesn't mean she'll do that with me. People change. Circumstances change. I wouldn't want another tutor to know how she's been with me. Because the time in her life, I know is the time in her life now. I understand it more because we've become friends. But like you said [another tutor], she's surviving right now. She has to work a job. I understand that. I'm afraid if you know too much. I say to my student, 'I know nothing about you, but your name. You have a clean slate with me.' Wouldn't we all like to have a clean slate really? So that's why, for myself, even if you had a lot of information, I wouldn't want it.

Elaine

How did the student affect the tutor's motivation level?

Almost half of the responses revealed the importance of the student's commitment and "follow through" to the commitment and motivation of the tutor. The tutors were highly affected by the student's abilities and accomplishments, their lack of internal goals, and the student's personal life and problems.

If the student's not motivated, there isn't much point in being there. One student of mine decided to quit after two years. I'd never try to persuade someone not to quit. They have to want to keep on with it. My student now is very motivated, but may have a learning disability. I wonder how much he'll ever be able to learn. It's a frustration for both of us. Sometimes the slow progress is discouraging.

Janette

My student's motivation to learn is very helpful. It challenges me to be more prepared to meet his desires.

Becky

I guess my motivation is directly tied to how well my student is doing. The times when we aren't meeting are discouraging, but I still think progress is being made. Progress is important to keep working with a student.

Dorothy

Low motivation in a student is very important to for me to want to work with him. Low motivation is hard to relate to -- I would drop a student like that.

John

You want them involved in the learning process. It's discouraging if they don't want to put in much effort. Just doing it for the job or something. The motivation level is different then.

Marie

I get discouraged because my student has low motivation. I feel like I have to be the one who makes all the initial efforts to get together and keep going at it. Her [the student's] good nature helps -- we get along well -- but it's more a social exchange than learning.

Hannah

I had a student once who had drug and alcohol problems [and low motivation]. My student now is so excited about learning to read. It really makes a difference!

Margaret

Only six tutors seemed to see past the student's response to find motivation in spite of or aside from the student's motivation and commitment. While these tutor's sources of motivation were often found later in the focus group discussions, their comments at this point indicated the ability to take a student's motivation or lack thereof in stride.

You have your successes and failures and you have to learn to bounce with it.

Kathy

My student is motivated in that he comes on time and does what I ask him. But his lack of ability and lack of help at home, he doesn't always get things done. I feel that's just the way it is.

Peggy

If a student shows up at all, there has to be reason why they're there.

Mary

After so many years teaching, I don't let it bother me. You have to know when you've done as much as you can. I wish that my student was really enthusiastic, but I realize that I have done a lot for her as it is right now. I'm not going to let it bother me because I realize I did what I could. We all fail. I may have failed, too. It's 50/50.

Elaine

How do tutors feel about support services?

Almost a fourth said in-services were poorly attended because of poor notification, inconvenient scheduling, and past records of poor attendance. Some didn't feel like returning to more in-services if there had been poor attendance at past in-services. Almost one sixth said that in-services were encouraging when tutors could hear from other tutors. It seems that the primary appeal of in-services was the chance to talk with other tutors. If there weren't many other tutors at an in-service, those that had attended might not return.

I never got notices about in-service workshops. The second tutor training course I took seemed long, maybe because it was the second one I took. As for in-services, you wait around for a meeting if you have a problem.

Gale

If you don't have any problems, why go to in-service workshops? The in-service I went to could have been helpful, but there were so few people that went, it wasn't much of a forum.

Beth

My job keeps me from taking advantage of support services. I do get notice of inservice sessions. But it's hard to give up free time.

Dorothy

My job gets in the way with being able to come to inservice programs.

Geniene

There's always trouble getting attendance at in-service meetings, so none have been scheduled recently.

Becky

A lot of workshops are boring. The materials could be increased and a lot of workshops cut out. It's better to have a buddy to help. Many problems are immediate and you hate to shelve them 'til the next meeting.

Martha

Help Shops can be like brainstorming sessions. I think swap shops, meetings with peers like this focus group, are a good idea -- open it up and let everyone talk.

Julie

Our group does have "Help Shops", but you can't go if you tutor that night. I'd like more peer support to talk about things. But I was a "resource tutor" myself and that never worked out. I'd call people that would just as soon not be bothered. I had good conversations with some, but I didn't get a good response from others. One woman told me she didn't want to be bothered with my calling her to discuss updates. I felt I was bothering people and anyway, it was hard to find them at home.

Janette

There was an overall satisfaction with office support with almost half specifically mentioning the office as a positive source of help. Tutors received advice from literacy staff and referrals to other specialists. Only six pointed to the importance of material resources, whether at the literacy office or the library. Most striking was that well over half specifically referred to the importance of talking to an individual to get answers (other tutors, office staff, specialists). Tutors were looking to other people, primarily in one-on-one contact, to help them with problems.

I got a packet from the office to help understand my student's learning style and disabilities. I went through the assessment for learning styles with him and it was very helpful.

Laura

Cooperation with the literacy office is great. I feel comfortable looking for help. But on the job adult education folks [in a workplace literacy program] aren't as comfortable. Management was approached, but didn't respond in a positive way.

Irene

The office is always cooperative, but I don't seek help that much.

Kathy

I received a phone call asking how my tutoring was going. It was a wonderful contact. It's great to have someone calling to say, 'how are you doing?' I'm out there. If nobody knows what I'm doing, maybe nobody cares.

Mary

During the training we were told we could make a change if the match didn't work out. I'd like a resource person to call and ask 'is this particular situation, problem typical or usual?' It would be reassuring to hear that others have the same problems.

Nora

I remember being told during the training that we could end the match if it wasn't working. A list of more experienced tutors to call would be good.

Janie

Students who aren't making progress ought to be referred. I'd like to be called and asked about that and I'd also like a list of specialists that I could call if I needed help.

Jennifer

A list of people with expertise might be really helpful for tutors to call. I wouldn't care one way or the other about being called regularly, but I think having someone for tutors to call is a great idea. Expand the list of experts -- not just experts in literacy.

Margaret

What do tutors think of reporting?

Almost half stated that they had no real problems with sending in reports. However, over half did have problems with reporting, including the nature of the questions, the paperwork, and the time it takes. Some were just glad that written reports were a thing of the past, now that they make reports by phone calls initiated by the office.

I've got mixed feelings. I'm glad LVA keeps good records, but it isn't easy to keep the time on meetings with students that doesn't involve specifically planning lessons. Like helping the student learn how to use a computer at the library, find a job, or something else. Reports come more often than I'd like it to be, too.

Ted

It's hard to give precise dates and times for things that aren't lesson planning or tutoring, but I'm glad LVA follows up on the records.

John

I'm glad LVA makes contact quarterly -- it gives me reinforcement to be followed up on.

Dorothy

Reporting's necessary sometimes. But a great deal of paper work turns me off. After all, this is a volunteer organization. If LVA wants personal information that doesn't apply, I don't give it.

Irene

Paper work turns me off. But it's just a chore. I know it's important for funding. [The staff] are always polite in asking for reports, but some information is secret.

Kathy

I'd really welcome follow-up from the office. I was really motivated at first, but after eight or nine months, I felt isolated, left alone. I'd like quarterly contact from the office, combined with a report of hours. I never started keeping track of hours.

Sue

Reporting is fine with me. They aren't that detailed or take much time. I tried to call an assigned tutor once -- it was awkward -- and they tried to help me. The next time, I asked someone I knew for help.

Beth

I'm happy being called. With my first student, I used to keep track of all the hours.

Laura

Where are the rewards coming from?

Almost half of the tutors mentioned the rewards related to some sort of progress in the student's reading. Even though much of the progress was in small increments, these tutors were still looking primarily to the reading successes themselves, for a source of rewards and value in their tutoring experience.

I feel good when people get excited over what they're learning. People reading something and then reading it again next week.

Marie

Seeing self-confidence in my student improve dramatically -- being able to read and comprehend two magazine articles he read on his own.

John

Progress is rewarding. The student making progress that I may take for granted -- like looking up names in the phone book.

Irene

Many were rewarded by non-reading changes such as self-esteem. Others looked for the good feelings involved in a relationship with the student through friendship, appreciation, and the tutor feeling needed.

Watching a person grow in his life is rewarding. My student has been able to get a job with benefits so he can go to doctors and dentists when needed, which he neglected to do before. His life [the student's] has become more rewarding.

Ted

Everybody likes to succeed; like to be a part of helping someone succeed who hasn't experienced success at some level; seeing a student begin to affirm himself; empowering somebody else to succeed; helping someone find the resources to learn or helping someone who has already survived on her own with a limited education. It's rewarding to see people become aware of doing something they couldn't do before.

Paula

A few tutors voiced a clear separation between the short and long term successes without losing sight of either goals.

Set a goal and help them get there. Every step is a reward. Now he'll [her student] will confide in me and feels comfortable. He feels he can come and talk. Someday, I hope he reads.

Lou Ann

Martha put some of the ambivalence between the rewards of reading and other rewards into words.

It's rewarding when strangers become friends. But how long do you keep going without progress??? On the other hand, so many don't stay that when they do, you want to keep them.

Some things are not rewarding

Half of the tutors mentioned the student's commitment level, follow-through, and lack of time put into lessons as the least rewarding aspects of tutoring. Regarding these difficulties as "unrewarding" did not necessarily indicate a tutor's inability to see past these frustrations to fulfillment in other areas. However, the vehemency behind some of the tutor's comments was often heard throughout the discussions, as those particular tutors seemed unable to discover rewards that led to a fulfilling tutoring experience.

When the student doesn't show up it's frustrating for both me and the student. We have to backtrack and retreat, so much that nobody feels any progress is being made.

Jane

I asked my student after two and half or three years what he was reading. He said, 'car tags,' and that just blew my mind. After working so hard he was reading license plates. I gave him a set of old encyclopedias for Christmas. I wonder if he ever looks at them. I got really burned out after a few years. One of my younger students may have been on drugs, and also the hit or miss business really bothered me.

Geniene

My student's negative attitude and lack of confidence is difficult. The time factor is also hard. We meet once a week and he doesn't have time to give outside of our sessions, not much time for homework.

Janie

I feel sometimes we're not reaching the ones that really need it -- where your student wastes time.

Irene

When a student doesn't do homework -- just spends most of her time watching TV soap operas, rather than making homework a top priority.

Dorothy

If they would put a third into it what you did.

Lou Ann

Almost one fourth of the tutors were frustrated with the various personal problems of students (family, jobs, life crises). Many of these tutors were the same people that were not prepared on beginning tutoring for the degree to which student's personal circumstances would impact on the tutoring sessions.

When folks don't get or give messages -- families that are unsupportive.

Martha

No one in her [the student's] family ever helped my student.

Beth

[It's frustrating] when a student's life problems handicap his learning.

Ted

You see home life or other problems pulling them back. It's frustrating when you know you can't turn them around.

Marie

Only a few mentioned slow progress as the least rewarding aspect of tutoring (although slow progress was mentioned often in responses to other questions).

Were there achievements?

Tutors tended to see achievements in two primary areas, either in reading or writing or in learning and/or using skills in the real world.

My student was totally illiterate. We used a lot of language experience stories and made lots of progress. There was a growing vocabulary. This was over one and a half years before her family problems and mine got in the way. It didn't serve her in her job, though. We were just starting to get into that when it ended.

Marie

She has met her goals. Got a job, reads to her children, and can call out her daughter's spelling words. She caught a cashier counting out change wrong. But she still seems to need a tutor as a safety net.

Elaine

When I first got my student, it depressed me that he'd been through all these Laubach books and couldn't read. But now we see a lot of progress. I'm pleased and so is he [the student]. He can see his progress at work. Progress is slow, but that doesn't bother either of us.

Katherine

My student learned to use the dictionary.

Laura

He [the student] has a lovely handwriting. He's learning math, things like how to 'borrow' tens in adding and subtracting.

Yvonne

My student began to receive the respect of his peers. That was really important.

Irene

A few tutors were somewhat negative in mentioning what they felt were tiny or nonexistent achievements. Most of these tutors were showing, throughout the discussions, evidence of great frustration and lack of fulfillment in tutoring.

It's discouraging to not see progress or much ability.

Martha

The time I spend! We make some progress. But he still can't write his address. He can tell you, but not write it.

Lou Ann

He's improved with letters d, b, k; learned what rhyming words are and started reading 'ing' on the end of words. He doesn't set goals, though, and the achievements are really minimal.

Hannah

Beth couldn't think of any achievements, but said, "*He definitely needs testing.*"

What about learning disabilities?

Throughout the discussions, there were several subjects which, although they weren't specifically asked for, just kept coming up. Among these topics were the problems with learning disabilities. When this project was first envisioned, there was an expectation that the researchers would hear a great deal about learning disabled students and how this weighs upon the level of motivation a tutor may have. In actuality, only six of the tutors reported that they had personally worked with an adult who they believed to be learning disabled. In each group, the topic tended to come up under the subject of screening. Tutors would be concerned that the literacy office, making the match, was not screening for LD problems. In each focus group, once the topic of learning disabilities had been raised, several other tutors might take up the subject with comments on how literacy organizations could better handle this area.

Less than half of the tutors spoke of LD problems in any way. Only six actually mentioned having a student that was, or was possibly, LD. However, all fifteen that mentioned LD problems viewed them as a real difficulty for tutors. All fifteen seemed to think that tutors needed more help with LD students, either in early diagnosis (prior to matching), training in initial tutor workshops, or help from specialists. Eight of the tutors felt that students should be tested and diagnosed before matching and perhaps not assigned to the average tutor. Perhaps most interesting was the general feeling that tutors were not prepared for the possibility of having a student with a learning disability.

My student was a bundle of learning disabilities. I couldn't diagnose them and I didn't know how to deal with it. The people who did the matching could have done better, they could have known. It was a blow to realize we weren't progressing. The match was a failure ultimately. He [the student] had motivation; he needed to get a hazardous materials drivers' license in order to keep his job. He had about as concrete a motivation as can be imagined. The information I got on him was accurate, but I wish I could have been prepared for the disability. I feel badly. I don't know where he is now or what has happened to him.

Jane

I've talked to our executive director about helping others [tutors] deal with people with learning disabilities. There are probably a lot of people coming into LVA that are LD. It would really help to include in the training more about working with learning disabled students. It would be really valuable.

Margaret (learning disabilities specialist)

LVA does prepare you well - like people talking differently in different areas. You have to consider that. My students have trouble hearing sounds; i and e are pronounced the same here sometimes. I think my student may be learning disabled. It would be helpful if workshops dealt with this -- how to recognize learning disabilities. Probably most adult non-readers are LD.

Janette

I wasn't aware of my student's limited abilities other than a hearing deficiency. He had been to fifth grade and didn't do well in school. I would have liked to have known about his deeper problems. I felt misinformed about the grade level, as it didn't represent his actual reading level, which was minimal.

Hannah

A fight for priority -- the student's life versus tutoring

Tutors were especially affected by the personal lives of their students. This might come out in either a positive or negative manner, depending on the tutor. In fact, as will be shown later, how a tutor viewed the personal life and problems of the student was often a key factor in the tutor's own motivational level.

While many tutors could get frustrated with various circumstances like transportation problems or work schedules, the most damaging thing to tutor motivation from a student's personal life was the perspective students often had on the tutoring. Those tutors who seemed to be most disturbed by their student's lives were those that felt student's should be putting a greater value on the tutoring.

Some are only motivated by parole. They don't put in a third of what tutors do. Tutors reported that student's were often so overwhelmed by their circumstances that they don't see something beyond the little things.

Lou Ann

Beth reported that her student had no phone, unreliable transportation, three kids, was on welfare, and had many other problems. She was frustrated that the student was often late. These tutors and other like them, were often more easily discouraged by the various ways in which the student's life was impacting on the tutoring.

Other tutors saw things differently. Even though their students also had personal problems, that certainly impacted on tutoring, these tutors were able to view those things from another angle.

This isn't a social club. Student's lead a survivalist life. Day to day needs are a higher priority than reading. It's best to keep communication lines open.

Irene

Janette saw the hard life of her student:

Many do work long hours. He [the student] gets up at 5 a.m. and works until dark on a farm. He's tired when he gets home.

What tutor's feel is important isn't necessarily what the students feel is important.

Julie

Once again, Elaine gave an interesting view on the personal life of the student:

I have reluctant students in public school. But I was shocked that an adult going to such trouble to get tutoring wasn't willing to make the commitment. Why someone who wants it so much would let so many things get in the way. I asked her if she'd like to quit for awhile or switch tutors. But she keeps calling and making appointments, and keeps in touch, yet not meeting and getting the benefit of tutoring. There's a problem knowing when to say 'I've had it.' Maybe another time in her life would be better....But like you said [Irene] she's surviving right now. She has to work a job. I understand that....So many others need help. Knowing their life problems, even though discouraging, makes you more willing to keep going despite their problems. Putting myself in their shoes. The last thing I'd want [if I were her] is someone coming in wanting an hour to tutor me.

Tutors' actual rewards — how they differ from those rewards tutors originally were seeking

After reading the transcripts several times, the research group became especially interested in how the reasons tutors initially volunteered may vary from the reasons tutors continue as long term volunteers. Of course, the first question asked the obvious "why did you become a tutor?" But how did those responses differ from the rewarding aspects that tutors mentioned throughout the discussions?

First, the researchers looked back at the responses to Question 1. Going into the tutoring position, volunteers were looking forward to the *results* that can be obtained from the one-on-one work. "One-on-one is a teacher's dream," said a former high school teacher. Volunteers wanted to help in an area that could produce concrete benefits in someone's life. In addition, the would-be tutors often had high ideals of "passing on [the love of] reading." For a few, these dreams of glory may have been partly realized. One tutor later reported that her student's reading ability grew dramatically. But for the most part, tutors had to make do with the accomplishment of tiny goals, students who would probably never read for pleasure, and some students who, for lack of time, commitment, ability, or something else, would never appear to accomplish anything. How would these tutors continue? Where would they find their rewards?

Not all tutors seemed to be finding rewards, but those that seemed to be finding fulfillment in tutoring were taking joy in things other than great reading triumphs. Small goals steadily met in reading were viewed with excitement as were the personal growth of the student - in confidence, self esteem, social successes - and in life skills learned and used by students. It was the tutors who saw these successes as *important* successes that found their own rewards. Yvonne became a tutor because she, "liked the direct result aspect of one-on-one teaching. I wanted to see some improvement if I was

going to put in my time." But as time went on Yvonne realized, "You have to reassess your expectations and focus on small things. My student's handwriting really improved and now he's learning to 'borrow' tens in subtracting."

Elaine, an often eloquent speaker, was the tutor who labeled one-on-one a "teacher's dream. "I was working on recertification. I work with high school age kids one-on-one, but also wanted to work with someone who wanted to learn. One-on-one is a teacher's dream. You see results (maybe not what you're expecting)." As time went by, she had a change of perspective. "I don't let her lack of effort bother me. You have to look for what the student sees as success. Knowing their life problems, even though discouraging, makes you more willing to keep going despite their problems. Putting myself in their shoes. The last thing I'd want [in the student's place] is someone wanting an hour to tutor me."

The Trends

A set of pictures evolved through the discussions of the "unfulfilled" and "fulfilled" tutor. While, of course, there are many shades of grey between the two profiles, it is worth listing those characteristics which seem to fit these tutor types.

The unfulfilled tutors, while volunteering for the "big picture", are thrown into frustration by a combination of the following:

1. The magnitude of the students' mundane problems and crisis situations
2. Feeling unprepared for students' reading levels or learning difficulties
3. Seeing a lack of commitment in the student
4. The inability of the student to see past small goals
5. Feeling that the tutors' time is not valued
6. An inability to find true value in the student's view of success

Making the shift from being rewarded by what the tutor sees as success to being rewarded by the student's version of success, seems crucial to being fulfilled by tutoring in the long term. Many of the most frustrated tutors showed marked signs of being uncomfortable with the student's version of success. Said Geniene, "He just can't seem to see something beyond all of these little things. He came in one day and said he'd been reading car tags. That really blew my mind." Or Laura, who worried that, "she can't see the world opening, only little steps ahead."

Throughout the group meetings, this ability to get excited by small goals and small successes went hand-in-hand with being able to see the student's life from his own perspective. While few tutors had gone into tutoring with a background of experience with adult learners, those that were the most enthusiastic for the endeavor had been able to step out of their own culture and view life from the other side of the educational track.

Most tutors volunteer for the big ideals — passing on the gift of reading, making an impact in lives, conquering the problem of illiteracy, finding a teacher's dream. Many are thrown into frustration by a variety of the circumstances above. It is how the tutor reacts to these frustrations that will determine whether or not the tutor will find a real satisfaction in the tutoring experience. Beth, an excellent example of the unfulfilled tutor characteristics, reported that her student had no phone, unreliable transportation, three kids, was on welfare, and had a abundance of other problems. Yet Beth had little understanding for these situations and was very frustrated by the student not putting a higher priority on tutoring sessions.

Dealing successfully with these feelings of frustration seems usually to require two tutor characteristics. Interestingly, these two characteristics, the ability to get excited by small goals or successes and being able to see the student's life from his own perspective, tend to go hand-in-hand. Those tutors who had evidence of these characteristics in the focus group discussions seemed to have a combination of the following:

1. They make a transition from the "big picture" to the small and immediate.
2. Small goals have become a joy.
3. The student is seen as a person whose cares and responsibilities may *indeed* outweigh learning to read.
4. The self-esteem and inner growth of the student has as much value to the tutor as the progress in reading.
5. Answers to tutoring needs are found, even if much effort and searching is required.

In earlier quotes, tutors are seen running into various difficulties such as learning disabilities, unexpected reading levels, teaching techniques that don't seem to work, and inadequate resources. Tutors that got answers to those difficulties often described going beyond a call to the local literacy office. Many searched libraries, called up other tutors and friends in education, networked with social service agencies, and took extra courses to increase teaching skills. An interesting aspect of the directions tutors took to find answers, is that they went most often to *individuals*. Whether in actual practice, or in suggestions for the future addressing of tutor difficulties, these tutors did not seem to find, or expect to find, answers to questions either in written materials or an in-service workshop. The only help tutors mentioned as coming from an in-service workshop was the information obtained through talking with other tutors. No one mentioned in-services as a possible help in dealing with any of the myriad of difficulties and questions brought up in the discussions.

Elaine, a fine example of a fulfilled tutor, had a student situation that presented all of the frustrations of the "unfulfilled tutor" list. But Elaine consistently gave responses that surprised her focus group in her depth of understanding for the student, and her ability to see value in her tutoring, apart from the value that the student placed upon it.

I was shocked that an adult going to such trouble to get tutoring wasn't willing to make the commitment. Why someone who wants it so much would let so many things get in the way....But....she's surviving right now. She has to work a job. I understand that. Knowing their life problems, even though discouraging, makes you more willing to keep going despite their problems. Putting myself in their shoes. The last thing I'd want [if I were her] is someone coming in wanting an hour to tutor me. — After so many years of teaching, I don't let it [the student's commitment level] bother me. You have to know when you've done as much as you can. I wish that my student was really enthusiastic, but I realize that I have done a lot for her as it is right now. I'm not going to let it bother me because I realize I did what I could. We all fail. I may have failed, too. It's 50/50.

Some tutors quit. As experienced in many literacy organizations, when the match ends, for whatever reason, many tutors will not even report it. Why not? Over and over again, the transcripts suggest a sense of betrayal in the tutors; a "why wasn't I prepared for this?", particularly on the part of tutors who evidenced characteristics of the "unfulfilled tutor". Even though perhaps not clear from the actual transcripts, tape recordings reveal emotions and views that, while not specifically verbalized,

seemed to the researchers to distinctly reveal a sense that the literacy organization had not prepared the tutors for circumstances which the organization knew fully well might occur.

Not knowing the commonality of their difficulties with other tutor/student matches, the tutors often feel that they have failed. Sensing this, Karen Cook asked participants in the Augusta County focus groups, "How much do you see a student's perceived failure as your own failure?" Seven out of ten of these participants felt that, on an emotional level, it was the tutor's fault. Is it any wonder that tutors would be hesitant to report a perceived lack of success to a literacy office, feeling both betrayed by the organization and a failure as a tutor?

Conclusions

Certainly, most literacy administrators have seen characteristics such as these many times. The difference in this research is that it is an attempt to answer specific questions concerning tutor motivations with a goal of discovering what characteristics produce tutors who will gain enough satisfaction and gratification from the tutoring experience that they are motivated to continue tutoring for the long term.

Suggestions for how to use these findings in affecting the perceptions and motivations of tutors are found in Appendix C. Some of these ideas are already being implemented at Skyline Literacy Coalition in Harrisonburg/Rockingham County, although any results so far, while promising, are not verifiable. Greater time and study will be necessary to discover more about the needs of tutors and to determine the extent to which literacy organizations can change or shape tutor's perceptions and needs, and alleviate their frustrations.

For this reason, it would behoove the literacy field to put further effort into uncovering more concerning the motivations of tutors. A series of six focus groups with thirty-four tutors is only scratching the surface of the thousands of tutors who can offer thoughts, experiences, and expertise in this direction. Broadening the scope of tutor motivation research would give an ever clearer picture of literacy tutors, and certainly offer a wider range of possibilities in strengthening the volunteers.

Tutors can grow and they can change. They can overcome many of their frustrations. And they can find their rewards in the small victories. But they may need assistance in finding help answers, and perhaps, new perspectives.

Appendix A: Profile of Focus Groups

Appendix B: Discussion Questions and Answers

Appendix C: What Can We Do?

Appendix A
Profile of Focus Groups

<u>Sex</u>		<u>Training Type</u>	
Women	30	LVA	29
Men	4	Laubach	5
<u>Years as a Tutor</u>		<u>Number of Students</u>	
1 year or less	2	1	15
1-2 years	15	2-3	13
3-4 years	7	4-5	3
More than 4 years	10	Over 5	3
<u>Education Level</u>			
High School Diploma	2		
Some college	8		
College	11		
Some graduate	5		
Graduate Degree	7		
Unavailable	1		
Education backgrounds	12		

Appendix B

Discussion Questions and Answers

Question 1

With so many opportunities for volunteerism available, why did you volunteer to become a tutor?
*Did something appeal to you about one-on-one tutoring as opposed to volunteering in classroom situations? **

Answers

Past teacher	7
Always wanted to teach	2
Interest in how we learn to read	3
Knew a tutor	2
Inspired by magnitude of problem	6
Likes 1 on 1	6
Like direct results from 1 on 1	4
Concern for nonreaders	5
Pass on love of reading	5
Stimulation	1
Help others, give back to society	4
Want to tutor a specific person	3

About a third are teachers or wish they were and another third liked the idea and assumed results of a one-on-one tutoring approach. About a third are concerned about helping the many folks who can't read.

* Questions in italic were used as follow-up or clarifying questions, to be asked at the discretion of the group facilitator if the focus group participants did not understand the intent of the question.

Question 2

Upon completion of your training, how prepared did you feel to begin tutoring?
Did you feel that there were places or people to whom you could go for help if needed?

Answers

Needed LVA and more Laubach or other	3
Laubach, but needs more	4
Nothing matched what they learned, expectations different from reality	5
Resources were good	4
Poor resources available	6
Inadequate training for higher level readers and comprehension	6
Wish had experienced tutor to go along at first	1
Scared of non-reader	2
Scared of a student who can read some	1
Felt prepared	15
Unprepared for LD, no training for this	3
Experience stories didn't work	1
Tutor testing students was a problem	2
Whole language approach was a problem	1
Role play in training workshops a negative	2

About half felt prepared in general, but many (almost half) were concerned about working with more advanced students. Almost half felt a lack of materials or "people resources". Some (about a fourth) felt the need to branch out beyond their tutor training techniques.

Question 3

As you began your first tutoring experience, in what ways did your expectations and preparation match the realities of your student's abilities, needs, and motivations? - *(This might take some thought before answering.)*

Answers

No expectations	2
Student was more advanced than expected	5
Expectations & reality similar	6
Student's personal life created a problem	7
Surprised at student's lack of commitment	2
Student absences were unexpected	2
Temporary nature of tutoring unexpected	2
Not enough time together - once a week not enough	2
Didn't feel prepared for reality of student's needs	1
Not prepared for slowness of progress	3
Need to understand student	2
Apprentice or practice with another tutor would be good	1
Wasn't prepared for the student's needs versus learning to read for pleasure	3
Unprepared for LD problems	2
Pronunciations and accent difference surprised	1
Needed more people resources	1
Surprised at some student's being required to have tutoring	1

While some felt expectations and reality were similar (almost a third), many (two thirds) found the student's greater rate of reading, personal problems, needs, and abilities (or lack) to be very different and more of an impact on tutoring than was expected.

Question 4

How do you feel about the screening of your students prior to your being matched together? *Was your information about your student, prior to being matched, helpful? What other information about the student might be helpful to receive before you start tutoring?*

Needed Special Ed. or LD information	10
Special Ed. or LD info. was given and helped	1
Screening for mental and emotional problems would be good	1
Some kind of screening is a good idea	7
Students should start with a clean slate. Tutors shouldn't be given a lot of information beyond basics	6
The student's past record of commitment is important	3
There should be screening for overall reliability	1
Information from a past tutor is helpful	4

Many would like information on student's learning disability problems (almost a third) or tutoring history (a fifth). But many others (almost half) like the screening the way it is -- i.e. the basics -- or even advocate as little information given to the tutor as possible so that the student can start out with a "clean slate".

Question 5

How has your student's commitment, motivation, and desire to learn affected your commitment, motivation, and desire to tutor?

Student's being on time and doing homework helps with tutors motivation	4
Student's lack of ability hurts motivation	1
Student's support from home (or lack of it) really affects tutor's motivation	2
"I feel that's the way it is." Tutor doesn't let students commitment bother her.	4
Student's lack of goals decreases tutor's motivation	6
Personal problems of student get in the way such as kids, transportation, welfare, etc.	4
"I did alright," in spite of student's problems	1
"I quit working with an uncommitted student."	1
Having a motivated student is great.	1
Tutor's student was motivated by requirements such as parole or job. This was discouraging to tutor.	3
Student's response (or motivation) is important to the tutor's motivation or commitment.	6
"We all fail. I've failed, too."	1
Student's continuing to seek out the tutor is encouraging.	1
Tutor is discouraged making all of the effort for so little response.	1
How well the student does (i.e. learning new things) is important to the tutor's commitment	8
Tutors get dependent on the students.	3

Almost half of the responses revealed the importance of the student's commitment and "follow through" to the commitment and motivation of the tutor. Over a fourth of the responses focused on the student's abilities and accomplishments as a factor in the tutor's commitment. Another fourth were highly affected by the lack of internal goals in their students. Six tutors mentioned the effect that the student's personal life and problems had on tutoring. Only six tutors seemed to see past the student's response to find motivation in spite of or aside from the student's motivation and commitment. Four tutors specifically mentioned the importance of the bond of relationship that builds between tutor and student.

Question 6

In what ways have management/support services helped you? In what ways have management/support services failed to meet your needs? This includes in-service workshops, meetings, mailings, referrals, materials, etc.

Never get notices of in-services	3
Tutor always gets a good response from the office	9
Training courses seem too long	1
Training is very boring	3
Tutor trainers were very good	2
Tutors need more help in teaching writing	1
It's good to have another tutor or a specialist to call when you run into problems	6
It is not very interesting or valuable to attend a poorly attended in-service	1
Support from the literacy office is fine	2
"I don't seek help much."	1
There's no point in quarterly calls to tutors	4
Tutors need ways to identify learning disabilities and tutors need help in LD techniques	5
Tutor's need referrals for students not making progress	1
Tutors need to be able to terminate a match	3
In-service times are not convenient	5
Tutor received help from resource materials	3
In-services were encouraging when tutors could hear from other tutors.	6
Support of students is good. Awards are good.	5
After match follow-up is good.	2
Tutor wishes someone would call to follow-up	2
Tutors need more and better material resources	3
Continued, next page...	

...Question 6, continued

Almost a fourth said in-services were poorly attended because of poor notification, inconvenient scheduling, and past records of poor attendance. Some didn't feel like returning to more in-services if there had been poor attendance at past in-services. Almost one sixth said that in-services were encouraging when tutors could hear from other tutors. There was an overall satisfaction with office support with almost half specifically mentioning the office as a positive source of help. Only six pointed to the importance of material resources. Most striking was that well over half specifically referred to the importance of talking an individual to get answers (other tutors, office staff, specialists).

Question 7

How do you react (emotionally--how does it make you feel) to a request from management/support services for reports on your tutoring?

How regularly do you feel tutors and management/support service representatives should be in contact after tutors are assigned a student?

Fine	2
Reports don't take much time	1
I do reports. It's a fact of life.	6
I don't like to give or ask personal information	3
Paperwork is a turnoff.	2
Reports are important for funding	2
Good records are important.	4
There's too much reporting. It's hard to do.	4
Tutor welcomes phone reports initiated by the office.	5
Return postcards are a good idea.	2

Almost half stated that they had no real problems with sending in reports. However, over half did have problems with reporting, including the nature of the questions, the paperwork, and the time it takes. Some were just glad that written reports were a thing of the past, now that they make reports by phone calls initiated by the office.

Question 8

What have you found most rewarding about tutoring?
If you are still tutoring, what has motivated you to continue?

Friendship/relationships with students	2
The student's commitment is rewarding, I continue because the student wants it so much	2
The student's achieving their goals is rewarding.	4
Small steps are a reward.	5
We need to know when to stop.	2
The student's appreciation is rewarding.	2
Positive life changes in the student.	4
Seeing needs daily inspires tutor to keep working.	1
Seeing improvement in reading is rewarding.	5
Giving something that will be with someone for their entire life.	3
Seeing confidence grow in student	3
Student may view success differently than tutor	2
Rewarding for tutor to see her own children's reaction to their mom tutoring	1
Good self discipline	2

Almost half of the answers mentioned the rewards related to some sort of progress in the student's reading. About a fifth were rewarded by non-reading changes such as self-esteem. Others looked for the good feelings involved in a relationship with the student through friendship, appreciation, and the tutor feeling needed. Four tutors continued to feel that the magnitude of the literacy need made working in literacy rewarding.

Question 9

What do you find least rewarding about tutoring?

If you are no longer tutoring, what factors led to your deciding to go inactive?

Student's not doing any work during the week.	4
Student's not on time or missing lessons	6
Tutor feels inadequate in the face of the overwhelming needs in student's life.	2
Lack of support from student's family	2
Lack of follow-through or commitment of student	5
Continuing repetition of concepts when the student isn't "getting it".	2
Student's personal problems getting in the way of learning.	2
Difficulty keeping track of students (when they move, change jobs, phones, etc.)	2
When tutor feels time is wasted	3
Student's lack of confidence	1
Finding appropriate reading materials	2
Tiny steps of learning frustrating	1
Student's getting tutoring help only to fulfill requirements for another agency or payroll	2
Have to work in unsuitable conditions	1
Lack of progress and/or ability of student	1

Half of the tutors mentioned the student's commitment level, follow-through, and lack of time put into lessons as the least rewarding aspects of tutoring. Almost one fourth of the tutors were frustrated with the various personal problems of students (family, jobs, life crises). Only a few mentioned slow progress as the least rewarding aspect of tutoring. However, slow progress was mentioned often in responses to other questions.

Question 10

From your tutoring experience, name some achievements that have been made. Overall, to what degree do you feel your students have achieved their goals -- or to what degree are they making progress toward their goals?

We need centralized testing to see how students are doing	1
We make very small steps in progress (name, address, etc.)	2
Great progress in reading over long term.	1
Student meeting short range reading goals	9
Student learning math or other skills	4
Progress in writing	2
Student began to get self confidence	2
Student met her goals for a job, reading to children, etc.	1
Student doesn't set goals	3
Student using new reading skills in the real world	6

Several tutors did not answer this question, either because they were newer tutors, or because they felt they'd already answered the question several times within the discussion. Of those answering, over a third said the main achievements had been in reading or writing. Another third mentioned learning and/or using skills for the real world. A few tutors were somewhat negative in mentioning what they felt were tiny achievements.

Appendix C

What can we do?

Because this research effort was executed by literacy practitioners, it was important to take the thoughts generated in the focus groups and propose strategies to answer them. Since the focus groups were held, many of these proposals have actually been implemented at Skyline Literacy Coalition in Rockingham County. Other proposals correlate to the changes in the Literacy Volunteers of America Tutor, the recently published seventh edition.

Much can be done during the intake of new tutors to help prepare for, or even circumvent, many of the frustrating aspects of tutoring.

Orientation - Literacy groups can work toward giving a clear picture of what tutoring is like. A job description will make responsibilities clear. And from the very start, information given to prospective tutors should emphasize the variety of students and their needs, as well as the variety of support programs and options open to tutors.

Tutor Training - Tutor training, whether Literacy Volunteers of America or Laubach methods, can include a session on identifying and dealing with learning disabilities. Trainers should be preparing the new tutors for not only the non-reading student, but also those students at somewhat higher reading levels. And trainees should be hearing from students during the training to get their perspective -- not just about the learning experience in tutoring sessions, but about what being tutored is like for students and how tutoring sessions interface with the rest of student's lives.

Making Matches - Literacy organizations must have clear, written policy as to what information they will pass on to tutors concerning a potential student. Tutors should be fully aware what types of information they will receive, as well as the types of information that they will not receive.

Ongoing support of the tutor/student matches is a vital area when considering how to help tutors overcome, or simply live through, the problems inherent in most tutoring situations.

Fast help for hard questions - Tutors facing big challenges to their tutoring skills often need help now, not six months from now at an appropriate in-service. Meet tutor needs through referral networks for one-on-one advice and counsel. Use direct mailing of materials that focus on a given tutor's particular area of concern. In other words, if they won't come to in-services for answers, answer their questions in different ways. Tutors often need immediate help anyway.

Focus on small successes - In all contacts with tutors, whether by phone, mail, in-services, newsletters, encourage tutors to look for small successes, to help students in setting their own goals, and to look for areas of the student's personal growth aside from reading.

In-services - Although tutors aren't much motivated to come to in-service workshops, all of those in the focus groups loved the opportunity to share their thoughts and hear one another. Find ways to get tutors together outside of the "in-service" context. Try social gatherings with food on the agenda. In addition, make at least some in-services a networking time for tutors, where they can share and hear about the experiences of one another.

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL WRITING AND ITS EFFECT ON TEACHING ADULTS

Susan Holt

Introduction

At the end of the day, an Adult Education teacher pulls out a small folder, poises her pen, and begins to question herself: "How did class go today? What worked? What didn't work? Did I try anything new? What will I do differently tomorrow?" This teacher is practicing reflective journal writing.

The act of reflection is, very simply, taking time to think about and analyze past performance in order to improve future performance. Collecting these thoughts in written form is journal writing.

In my research, I studied ten such journals written by ten adult education teachers in a public school adult education center. They wrote during their summer school session, 1993. For most of them, it was their first attempt at reflective writing. The purpose of my study was to determine 1) to what extent their reflection impacted their teaching methods and 2) what factors seem to be necessary for creating an effective journal writing experience. (Note: for simplicity, I will use "she" to refer to teachers throughout this report.)

Reflection...A Summary of Literature

■ Definition of Reflection

There seems to be a good supply of research concerning reflection. Many articles are by teachers and administrators who have tried various methods of implementing reflective thinking and are encouraging "reflective practice" in their schools and learning centers. Most of these writers agree on a basic definition of reflection. Schoenbach echoes others when she describes reflection as "taking time on a regular basis to step back from the often overwhelming demands of everyday classroom life, and consider...what is happening in one's classroom and why" (1994). For her and others, it is a time of "renewal" (Evans, 1991; Soper, 1992; Wellington, 1991; Wibel, 1991).

Schoenbach goes on to say that reflection helps teachers *generate* knowledge rather than be "passive recipients" (1994). Likewise, Eleanor Duckworth, author of *The Having of Wonderful Ideas* and former research assistant to Piaget, calls reflective thinking "owning the ideas" (Meek, 1991). She states that "It's not only that you feel good that you came up with this idea; it's also that you don't have the idea unless you've created it."

■ Methods of Reflection

There seem to be as many methods of reflective thinking as there are teachers. For example, one school district integrated reflection into a staff development project that is currently underway. They begin every "team meeting" with time for reflective writing. The teachers also bring students' work to the meetings to discuss and analyze them with their colleagues (Schoenbach, 1994).

Lee and Barnett (1994) suggest a strategy called "Reflective Questioning." Educators learn how to ask questions in a way that encourages teachers to reflect aloud about their work. Quality communication and idea-sharing in situations like this makes reflection more meaningful and productive.

Another angle is to create a forum through which teachers find support for individual projects and ideas. Claryce Evans (1991) began such a forum in 1984, and it continues today. Every two weeks, teachers meet for two hours to assist each other with "classroom investigations." There is always a discussion leader and four to five teachers who present a special project. The remaining teachers act as

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an advisory board. "The purpose of the forum," according to Evans, "is to help them gain a better understanding of their students, themselves, and their teaching."

For good measure, I should mention Langer and Colton's review of various reflective methods. They present a range of ideas from video taping to role-playing to interactive journal writing in their *Journal of Staff Development* article (1994).

■ Journal-Writing as a Form of Reflection

The consensus seems to be that journal writing can be very effective, because it encourages teachers to analyze their own work and create their own solutions to impact future work. Langer and Colton call the experience "a dialogue with oneself" and consider it a powerful tool "for creating new mental representations, reframing problems, and engaging in metacognition" (Langer & Colton, 1994). As a process, teachers who write in journals regularly reread them to respond to their own ideas and see how their thinking has changed over time.

Journals can also be interactive. For example, one group of teachers paired themselves with teachers from another school and exchanged journals once a month (Langer & Colton, 1994).

However, for journal writing to be most effective, the writer must ask the right questions... Wellington (1991) offers these suggestions:

- 1) What do I do?
This elicits an observational description of one's practice.
- 2) What does this mean?
This asks the teacher to examine personal theories that drive the teaching.
- 3) How did I come to be this way?
This asks the teacher to think beyond the classroom, and
- 4) How might I do things differently? ...is a call to action.

Wellington concludes that reflective journal writing "reminds us that the roots of our profession lie in service to the *people* rather than to systems" (emphasis added).

Methodology

■ General Overview

After learning about journal-writing through workshops and articles, the administrator of an urban-area adult learning center decided to ask the summer school teachers to keep a journal. They would be compensated for 15 minutes at the end of each day (roughly ten minutes for reflection and five minutes for actual writing) for the nine week program. If the teachers seemed to gain something from the journals, the center would go to the next step: a broader plan with more teachers at a later date. I was asked to evaluate the summer journals, and speak with the teachers after they had completed their journals, to see if "step two" of the program was warranted. I developed two research questions to focus the study and help accomplish the task:

- 1) What effect did the journals have on teaching?
- 2) What are the most important elements for implementing a successful reflective journal-writing program?

■ Specifics

The ten teachers who wrote journals for this study were given a small binder of journal sheets (Appendix A). Each sheet contained four questions to guide them:

- 1) What did you observe?
- 2) What happened?
- 3) What were the high points?
- 4) What were the low points?

Instructions were general: the writers were asked to write about their class at the end of each day (as discussed previously). The classes were Math, Reading, English, GED Studies, and Computer Lab. Each class met from two to four days per week. The administrator would read the journals at the end of the session, when they were turned in.

I used the following materials to evaluate the journals:

- 1) A demographics form for a profile of the teachers' backgrounds (Appendix B).
- 2) A questionnaire to interview the teachers (Appendix C). We talked in person or by phone, depending on the teacher's preference. Two teachers had moved and were unreachable, so only eight interviews could be completed.
- 3) A questionnaire for the administrator (Appendix D).
- 4) A cognitive activities list to evaluate the journal writing (Figure 1, and Appendix E).

This fourth item was the most critical piece. It is a list of cognitive activities, or thinking skills, that can take place in the process of journal writing. This list helped determine and compare the depth and breadth of thinking that took place in each journal. It was originally developed by Toby Fulwiler (1989) for analyzing student journals in higher education. After reading the journals through, I adapted the list to teacher journals. This meant minor revisions to some term definitions, deleting two items that were not relevant, and adding three new terms that appeared in the journals but were not on Fulwiler's list. To clarify the difference between each cognitive activity, I also added a sample "quote" to each definition. The resulting list is provided in Figure 1. The original list and the summary sheet may be found in Appendix E.

See Figure 1, next page.

Figure 1

**COGNITIVE ACTIVITIES
STIMULATED BY JOURNAL WRITING
REVISED LIST**

Observation	Writers record what they see in the most useful language at their command. "Today the students were particularly alert..."
Speculation	Words or phrases that show the writer wondering "what if?" "What would happen if I tried this method over that one?"
Doubt	The writer doesn't know or isn't sure about something and records that uncertainty in the journal. "It was unclear to me why they didn't score higher on the vocabulary portion."
Questions	Evidence of curiosity in written language. "Why were the students so interested in this particular essay topic?"
Self-awareness	Words or phrases that indicate the writer is conscious of him- or herself as a learner and a thinker. "Watching the students support each other helped me see the effectiveness of cooperative learning."
Connections	Evidence that writers see ideas or material from one event in relation to another. "Because we had seen the government video, the history section went much faster."
Digressions	Indications that the act of writing has caused the writer to wander away from the subject about which he or she began to write...and to begin dealing with another subject which also holds interest. "The lack of motivation to learn fractions may mean the students don't see how they are useful. Practical application is important in my Social Studies class, as well, in regards to, etc."
Information	References to the class subject matter: "We worked on syllabication."
Rereading	Has the writer looked back in the journal and changed his/her mind on a subject written about earlier? (Special notes would appear in margins.)
Problem-Stating	The writer examines an issue and redefines it in his/her own terms. "The classroom was too hot today."
Problem-Solving	The writer attempts to solve a problem while writing. "Tomorrow, I'll try using that educational computer game to distract them from the heat."
Emoting	The writer uses a journal as a place to express emotion concerning a student or an event. "I was thrilled!"
Ideation/Planning	Evidence of lesson planning and brainstorming for ideas as the writer writes. "I will have to work on xxx tomorrow to address the questions today."

(Adapted from Toby Fulwiler, Writing and Response: Theory, Practice, and Research, 1989.)

Findings

The majority of teachers had never kept a journal, yet all but one thought it was a relatively easy task and would not mind doing it again. Comments were:

Journal writing in some form is necessary for teaching.
and
My journal was like a road map of where the class had been as a group.

On the other hand, when asked if the experience had helped them as a teacher, (question #8 and 9), six out of eight said "No." Either the needs of the class they taught that session were not transferable to other classes,

The teaching needs change too much between classes.

or the journal was merely for record-keeping and not a learning tool:

It was just observations...that's it.

For some teachers, the activity became tedious toward the end of the session, marked by shorter and more "hurried" entries. Teachers reported that the process became more difficult, and that,

I was just recording what happened.

The cognitive activity list supports these findings. All ten journals contained ample "observations" and "information" about the classes, and most teachers made "connections" between what they observed, but more analytical thought processes such as "speculation," "self-awareness," and "questions" were rare. "Digression" and "rereading" did not appear at all.

Further, an item that occurred often (8 out of 10 times) was "problem-stating," but this step did not usually progress to "problem-solving." The latter was found in only four journals, and within those four, problem-stating outnumbered problem-solving three to one. In the interviews, the teachers discussed what could be done differently "next time" to make journal writing more helpful. Discussion ranged from using a new set of guiding questions, which I suggested in the questionnaire (see Appendix C1, p.3, #10)....

I would have liked these (new questions) better.
They are more important. I would have thought it through better.

...to learning more about reflection, per se, by reading about it before starting the project:

Keep it as is...simple. But I do need the reading preparation!

In addition, one teacher resolved that, next time,

I would try to write more about my own teaching methods.

Discussion/Interpretations

These findings answer the two original research questions, as follows:

Question #1: How did the journal writing affect teaching?

Overall, this pioneer journal project was a pleasant experience for the teachers, but it did not affect their teaching. Most teachers wrote passively, recording observations, as they were requested. They missed the opportunity to question and explore their ideas in depth, and solve problems. However, the teachers and the administrator were able to identify at least two reasons for this. First, the guiding questions were unmotivating for true reflective thinking, and second, the teachers were unaware of *how* to write reflectively, and what the benefits could be. Both situations can be easily addressed, as discussed later, under Question #2.

The project was a good start, however, judged by the positive responses in the interviews, and the full accounts given in most of the journals. Teachers claimed, in fact,

It helped me relax at the end of the day,

and

It added closure.

Question #2: What factors are necessary for implementing a successful reflective journal-writing program?

The interviews, journal evaluations, and the literature point to the following suggested factors:

1) PREPARATION

Providing reading material and discussion before the project begins is important in order for the writers to understand what reflection is and what rewards it offers. Pieces that are particularly appropriate for this are noted in the attached bibliography and in Appendix F.

2) "REFLECTIVE" GUIDING QUESTIONS

The journalists need to be able to focus their writing. Good, thought-provoking questions, preferably agreed upon by the writers themselves, are critical. The following questions might be considered, for example:

- How did you know the lesson was a success?
- How did you feel about the lesson?
- How can you use these thoughts in future lessons?

(Garmston et al, 1993)

3) REGULAR MEETINGS

Holding regular meetings throughout the project supports the teachers and provides an outlet for ideas and/or concerns. It can keep the writers motivated and fresh, especially toward the end of the project. Time for reflection can be part of a meeting that is already on the teachers' agenda.

4) A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Several ideas fall in this category. The teachers need to feel supported, and not intimidated, by the administration. For instance, all the teachers in this study were comfortable with the

fact that the administrator would be reading the journals. The folders and forms provided were very helpful, and of course, all the writers were paid for their time.

5) KEEP IT SIMPLE...

A positive remark I heard several times about this project was that the administration had kept it simple: a notebook, some direction, and their first attempt at journal writing was underway. The straight-forward fifteen minute time limit was well-received. Similarly, the suggestions here should be accomplished as simply as possible to encourage the teachers and reduce anxiety.

Unanswered Questions

There are still questions that go unanswered for now. One dilemma is how to answer the teacher who, as I heard in one interview, "does not like to write." She does not feel a need, nor enjoy putting her thoughts down on paper.

Another unanswered question came from one teacher who would rather "think on her feet." The idea of taking time to reflect is too tedious for her. She would rather address needs as they arise and handle them "on the spot."

Finally, although this administration was able to pay for time for these teachers to reflect, this is not the case for many schools and learning centers. How can other institutions encourage reflective practice among teachers, who already give so much, if budgets are restrictive?

Conclusion

Even though the journal writing in this research was more observational than reflective, it was still helpful to several teachers, and lessons were learned which can be valuable to others interested in reflection. With more preparation, reflective guiding questions, and on-going support, the implications are that reflection can truly be a "renewal" for teachers. Yes, it takes time, but in the end, reflection can be its own reward:

Reflection is a gift we give ourselves, not passive thought that lolls aimlessly in our minds, but an effort we must approach with rigor, with some purpose in mind, and in some formal way, so as to reveal the wisdom embedded in our experience.

(Killion & Todnem, 1991)

- Appendix A: Teacher's Daily Class Journal
- Appendix B1: Teacher Information
- Appendix B2: Demographics Summary
- Appendix C1: Teacher Interview
- Appendix C2: Summary of Answers
- Appendix D: Administrator's Interview
- Appendix E1: Cognitive Activities Chart
- Appendix E2: Cognitive Activities Original List
- Appendix F: "Reflection"

Teacher's Daily Class Journal

TEACHER: _____ DATE: _____

NUMBER OF STUDENTS PRESENT: _____

*What did you observe? What happened? What were the high points? ... low points?
(Please take 5 minutes to document your daily observations.)*

[illegible]

TEACHER INFORMATION: Personal Data Form

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE(W): _____ PHONE(H) _____

Name of county, city, or region that is your employer. _____

What is your primary occupation? _____

1. How many years have you been employed in education? _____
2. How many years have you been in adult education? _____
3. How many years have you held your current adult education position? _____
5. How many hours per week do you work as an adult education teacher? _____
6. For what type of adult education institution do you work? (Check all that apply below)

<input type="checkbox"/> Public school	<input type="checkbox"/> Library
<input type="checkbox"/> Regional vocational-technical center	<input type="checkbox"/> Correctional setting (What Institution?) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Community college	<input type="checkbox"/> PEMS (Physically, emotionally, and mentally disabled)
<input type="checkbox"/> Social service	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

7. Do you work in an rural (1) _____, suburban (2) _____, or urban (3) _____ area(s)?
8. For what adult education instruction are you responsible?

Type of Instruction	Time of Day			Number of classes	Hours per week	Days per week
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening			
Adult Basic Education (ABE) (0.0-8.9)						
General Educational Development (GED) (9.0-12.9)						
External Diploma Program [EDP]						
Adult High School Credit						
English as a Second Language (ESL)						
Other (workplace, family, etc.)						

9. Are your classes: single subject _____, multi-subject _____? Are your classes single level _____ or multi-level _____? Or is it a combination of the above?

10. What is the highest level of education you have completed to date?

- _____ a. GED or diploma
- _____ b. Associate's Specialty _____
- _____ c. Bachelors' Specialty _____
- _____ d. Masters' Specialty _____
- _____ e. Doctorate Specialty _____
- _____ f. Other _____

11. Do you have a valid Virginia teaching certificate/license? _____ (1) Yes _____ (2) No

If yes, what endorsements do you hold? _____

12. Does your employer require that you possess a valid teaching certificate/license? _____ YES _____ NO

13. Have you had specialty training in the following areas? If yes, indicate instructional delivery:

Reading _____: Workshops _____ College courses _____;

Special Education _____: Workshops _____ College courses _____.

14. Do you have a degree in adult education? _____ (1) Yes _____ (2) No

15. In what adult education training or professional development activities have you participated?

_____ (1) VAILL _____ (2) VAACE _____ (3) Cluster training (4) Other, be specific

_____, _____ (5) None.

16. To what professional organizations do you belong? (Check all that apply) VAACE _____; AAACE _____; IRA _____; Others (Be specific) _____

17. What professional journals do you read and how often?

18. Gender: _____ (1) Male _____ (2) Female 19. Age (in years): _____

20. Ethnicity:

- _____ (1) Black, Non-Hispanic _____ (4) Hispanic
- _____ (2) American Indian, Alaskan Native _____ (5) White, Non-Hispanic
- _____ (3) Asian Pacific Islander

Appendix B 2

DEMOGRAPHICS SUMMARY
(See Appendix B1 for actual demographic survey form)

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Yrs in Ed.</u>	<u>Yrs in Adult Ed.</u>	<u>Hrs per week</u>	<u>Highest Educ.</u>	<u>Reads</u>		
					<u>Prof. Org.</u>	<u>Prof. Jnl.</u>	<u>Certificate</u>
#1	27	20	19	Bach.	--	--	--
#2	1.5	1.5	35	Bach.	√	√	--
#3	19	9	6	Bach	√	√	--
#4	11	7	35	Bach	√	--	√
#5	5	5	38	Bach	√	√	--
#6	Not Available-----						
#7	45	25	35	Bach	--	--	--
#8	6	2	10	Bach	--	--	√
#9	13	4	20	Bach	--	√	√
#10	Not Available-----						

Adult Career Development Center
Teacher Journals: Reflection Research Interview
for Summer 1992
2/1/94

Date of Interview: _____ Teacher _____

Class Name _____ Type _____

Age Range of Students _____ Avg. Attendance _____

I. Review with Teacher:

- a) REFLECTION IS...Thinking through and analyzing past performance in order to improve future performance. Article for further reading provided.
- b) RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: First, to discover how journal writing affects teaching. Second, to determine what factors are necessary for a successful journal writing experience. "Successful" can be defined by the evidence in the journals, and the changes made in teaching due to reflective thinking.

II. Interview:

- 1. Have you ever kept a journal before? yes _____ no _____
- 2. On a scale of 1 - 5, how would you rate the difficulty of keeping this journal? (1 = easy, 5 = very difficult)
Rating: _____ Why? _____
- 3. Were the directions and objectives for this journal clear to you before you began?
yes _____ no _____
- 4. Logistically, how did you go about your writing (time of day, environment, frame of mind)? How long did each writing take? (It is understood that teachers were directed to take five minutes at the end of each class.)

Interview, p. 2

5. Did the content of your writing change over time?
(more/less thoughtful, more/less specific, etc.)
6. Did your feelings about writing a journal change over time? (more/less difficult, more/less enjoyable, more/less helpful)
7. Did you ever find yourself going back over previous writings for any reason?
8. Do you see any difference in yourself as a teacher since your journal-writing experience? In what way(s)?
How will this change affect your students?
9. Is there any specific learning from this experience that you plan to use in the future? (If different from #8)

Interview, p.3

10. If the following set of guiding questions were asked at the top of your journal forms, what would the impact have been on your writing?

- a) How did you know if the lesson was a success?
- b) How did you feel about the lesson?
- c) How can you use these thoughts in future lessons?

11. Would you have written differently if you had been assured that your supervisor would NOT read your journal?

yes_____ no_____

12. If you were asked to keep a journal again, what would you do (or want done) differently?

13. Any other comments?

Holt, 2/94

**QUESTIONNAIRE
SUMMARY OF ANSWERS**

(See Appendix C1 for actual questionnaire form)

Note: Answers are representative only. All eight responses from the interviews are not necessarily recorded in the "Details" section.

1. Ever kept journal?: Yes: 2 No: 6
2. Difficulty rating?: Choose from 1 to 5, easy to difficult:
Rating #1.....2 responses
#2.....3 responses
#3.....2 responses
#4.....1 response
3. Directions clear? Yes: 6 No: 2
4. How did you conduct the writing? End of class, 5 to 10 minutes: All
5. Did content change over time?
No: 3
Yes: 5...Entries were shorter/ Added more feelings/ More general, less involved/
It depended on the day.
6. Did feelings about writing change over time?
No: 2 Yes: 6
Other answers: (Covered a wide range, as follows)
Became less enjoyable/ became more enjoyable/ became less
difficult/ not enjoyable, just recording what happened/ no change-
remained helpful/ more helpful-a road map of where you had been
as a class/ more difficult, not enjoyable.
7. Ever went back to review previous writings?
No: All teachers but one, who used it for lesson planning.
8. Any difference in self as a teacher?
No: 6 Yes: 2
Details: No, I think it through in my head, don't like to write/
Yes, it helped me determine what would have improved my classes/

Yes, it helped me evaluate the progress of the students and analyze the day/

No, the teaching needs change too much between classes/

No, it organized my thinking for this particular class but did not change my teaching methods.

9. Any specific learning to apply to the future?

No: 6 Yes: 2

Details: Yes, writing off the top of your head gives you true thoughts. I'd do it again./

Yes, how to evaluate students better and analyze the day/

No, because each class is different/

No, it was just observations..."that's it"/

10. Would another set of guiding questions impact your writing?

No: 2

Yes: 4

Maybe: 2

Details: I liked the other ones. You could number them, and structure your writing /

I would have liked these (new ones) better. Our thoughts would have been directed differently/

These would be better. They are more important. I would have thought it through better. The "high point and low point" questions were hard/

This set would have been as valid as the first set of questions/

The others were too open-ended. These are more of a guide/

These were deeper questions...they would involve critical thinking like we expect our students to do and learn. We should do it ourselves.

11. Written differently if supervisor had NOT planned to read journal?

No: 8

12. What would you do or want done differently?

Make changes: 4

Keep as is (with some changes): 3

Don't do again: 1

Details:

I would try to write more about my own teaching methods. The articles you mentioned would help/

This is fine, as is. But it's OK if you asked me to read some articles first/

I would like the new questions. The articles aren't a big deal but I'll read them if they're given to me/

Keep it as is. Five minutes is fine...no more/

I might keep two journals...one as things occurred, as a "rough," and then a more polished version/

Keep it as is...simple. But I do need the reading preparation/

I would prefer not doing them at all/

Change the lead-in questions. Would have been good to do sample readings first. I'm OK with the five-minute time limit.

13. Other comments?

These comments reiterated many of the previous answer

Two teachers "got very bored with it" and did not find it helpful at all.

Four said that overall, it was a helpful experience. They liked it and liked to write. It added "closure" for one while another said it helped her relax at the end of the day. These teachers also commented that it would be helpful to all teachers.

Finally, one teacher asked that we keep the old questions and don't ask the one about "How can you use these thoughts in future lessons?"

INTERVIEW WITH THE ADMINISTRATOR

1. Why did you choose these classes for the journal writing project?

There are fewer classes (and teachers) during Summer School. It was a way to get them together as a team. Also we had time and it was more convenient (than regular session).

2. Give an overview of the classes: subject matter, demographics of the students, expectations of the classes.

In the summer, we offer Levels I, II and III in Reading and Math. There are also GED and two Social Services classes. The age of the students is 17 plus. None are trying to get high school credit.

3. Explain their testing and grading system.

The students are TABE tested at the end of nine weeks. Beginning scores are obtained from Spring '93 classes or the students are given a pretest.

4. Is there any enforcement of attendance?

No. Teachers are encouraged to maintain attendance of 1:9 ratio, though. They call the students and are given time to follow-up with them.

5. What inspired you to assign this journal-writing project?

I had attended several workshops on journal-writing, and I wanted our teachers to try it. The biggest issue was always the time factor.

6. What were the teachers' incentives?

They were paid for it and given the time to do it.

7. How were directions given? How much instruction did the teachers receive before beginning their journal-writing?

They were given 15 minutes reflection time; they were told to write for five minutes directly after class. I did not "spell it out." I just asked them generally, to write.

8. Would you do anything differently next time?

1) It would have been nice to have a get-together to read journals outloud...sharing anecdotes, and having a discussion about their reactions to the journals.

2) I would give step-by-step instructions and maybe give them reading material to prepare them.

Appendix E1

COGNITIVE ACTIVITIES

Summary Based on Figure 1
Cognitive Activities - Revised List

Teacher	Observ.	Specul.	Doubt	Quest.	Self-Aw.	Connect	Digr.	Info	Reread	P.State	P.Solv.	Idea	Emoting	Summary
1	✓		✓							✓				3
2	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	8
3	✓					✓		✓		✓			✓	5
4	✓				✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	6
5	✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	8
6	✓					✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	6
7	✓					✓		✓						3
8	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓			✓	6
9	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	10
10	✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		7
Totals	10	3	2	1	3	9	0	9	0	8	4	6	7	6=average per journal

**ORIGINAL LIST
COGNITIVE ACTIVITIES
STIMULATED BY JOURNAL WRITING**

Observation	Writers record what they see in the most useful language at their command.
Speculation	Words or phrases that show the writer wondering "what if?"
Confirmation	Evidence from the journal that the student's ideas are being supported or reinforced by the class or teacher.
Doubt	The writer doesn't know or isn't sure about something and records that uncertainty in the journal.
Questions	Evidence of curiosity in written language.
Self-awareness	Words or phrases that indicate the writer is conscious of him- or herself as a learner and a thinker.
Connections	Evidence that writers see ideas or material from one course in relation to another course or to use other events in their personal lives.
Digressions	Indications that the act of writing has caused the writer to wander away from the subject about which he or she began to write.
Dialogue	The writer using the journal to write directly to the teacher, expecting a response.
Information	Reference to the subject matter of the course.
Revision	Has the writer looked back in the journal and changed his or her mind on a subject written about earlier?
Problem-Solving	The writer examining an issue and redefining it in his or her own terms - perhaps answering it as well.

Fulwiler, Toby. "Responding to Student Journaling." *Writing and Response: Theory, Practice, and Research*. ed. Chris M. Anson (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1989), 149-173.

REFLECTION

by Susan Holt

Reflection is...

Think about the student(s) you taught today. What worked? What didn't work so well? Why? Did you try anything new? What were your students' reactions? Would you try it again? If so, what would you do differently? This is reflective thinking, and an effective form of reflective practice.

Specifically, reflection is *taking the time to think through and analyze our past performance in order to improve our future performance*. In retrospect, we can see the consequences of our behavior, teaching techniques and interaction with students. We can determine what was effective and what was not. Then, we can go one step further, which is the crucial step, and conceptualize ways to improve in the future.

Ways to Practice Reflection

Reflection can take several different forms ... it is very adaptable. Each of the ideas below can be altered to suit individual needs:

- ✓ Take 5 minutes at the end of each class. Think through or write down reflections on that class and what happened. Record observations, student reactions, and any questions you may have or want to research.

What can you do in the future to improve the next class?

- ✓ Take 15 minutes at the end of each day to reflect in thought, or to write down ideas in a teacher's log or journal. Record the same types of ideas mentioned above in the 5-minute method. Question every aspect of teaching. This end-of-the-day approach revitalizes an educator to take on a new day, open to new ideas in the profession.
- ✓ Find a "mentor." Write brief notes in a loose-leaf notebook or journal and, on a regular basis, let that person read your notes and make comments. He/She should be able to interact with the journalist's writing in three ways:

1. With vision: The mentor should have the ability to see where the writer is going professionally, and to make that vision clear.
2. With challenge: The ability to push the journalist to new ways of thinking and new understanding.

3. With support: The ability to give positive feedback and express belief in the journalist's ability to achieve and grow as an educator.

- ✓ Seek out knowledgeable peers in order to discuss, question and

" Question every aspect of teaching. "

analyze performance. Some authors have suggested forming small groups, in which members can "reflect" on each other's questions. One proven value of the small group approach is that assumptions we hold as educators can be scrutinized, sometimes for the first time. We may discover those assumptions are actually groundless. It is then that we can re-think those assumptions previously held as unquestionable, and open ourselves up to approaches and research that will move us forward.

The Benefits

In today's very complicated, fast-paced lifestyle, it is extremely difficult to carve out time for one more task. But practitioners exhort us to make the time for some type of reflection because the benefits received are far-reaching and may not be attained in any other way.

For instance:

Reflection takes unconscious behavior and brings it to consciousness, then asks, "how can I do this better next time?" It converts insightful thoughts to action which may have never been realized otherwise.

Reflection helps us break habits; it helps us change the way we do

things. It can change the way we see our practice, and ourselves as educators.

Reflection is risk-free. No one can see our journal (or hear our thoughts if we choose not to write them down) without our permission. Emotions, opinions, questions and ideas can all be stated and explored with no hindrances. In this environment, we are more likely to discover or devise new approaches that otherwise would not have been considered.

Reflection can turn the "teacher" into a "teacher-researcher." The

educator is, in fact, researching his or her own work. In this role, one takes ownership for solving problems and for personal development and learning.

In summary, reflection takes some time and work, but pursued thoughtfully and

consistently, it can be a powerful tool for improving ourselves as educators.

For further information:

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" We may discover those assumptions are groundless."

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* Recommended for first-time reflective journal writers or those who want a quick overview with some useful ideas. See also Holt, Appendix F.

THE USE OF PORTFOLIOS BY THE ADULT LEARNER/JOB SEEKER

Christina Seanor

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Introduction

The Adult Basic Education Program of Virginia has launched a major initiative to institute the use of portfolio assessment with adult learners enrolled in the various adult education programs: Basic Adult Education, ESL (English as a Second Language), and the GED Program. With the cooperation of the Virginia Adult Educators Research Network, this researcher conducted a local survey (greater Fredericksburg VA) to determine how prospective employers view portfolio assessment as evidence of skills in determining suitability for employment.

The survey, commissioned in the fall of 1993, examined the employers' perception of work related job skills, identified some of the essential skills needed, and examined the use of portfolio assessment as documentation for the adult learner who makes up the work force of today and the next century.

Methods

The study included a survey of 25 businesses and 3 educational institutions. I devised the survey based upon my own knowledge of portfolio contents and possible employers' needs. Letters and questionnaires were mailed to employers in the Greater Fredericksburg area. (See Appendix A) First, I waited for phone responses; after three weeks, I decided to begin follow-up calls. The endeavor took three months. I battled bad weather, missed telephone calls, and was put on hold forever!

The questions were:

1. Do you know what a portfolio is?
2. What would you like to see in a portfolio?
3. What kinds of jobs are within your company/business?
4. What information would you like to ascertain about an applicant that is currently not available on an application?
5.
 - a. Do the jobs in your business require additional education?
 - b. Does your business provide additional education or training?
 - c. Is it necessary to have a GED diploma to be employed by your company or business?
6. In your opinion, what is the economic climate of the greater Fredericksburg area?
7. Would you be able to supply basic facts about your company?
 - a. age range of employees
 - b. age of business
 - c. length of time an employee stays on the job
 - d. job status: part or full time
 - e. the turnover rate of employees
 - f. hiring of family members

My goal was to conduct personal interviews with the employers, but I was never able to secure an interview in person. I would have preferred sharing the actual portfolio documents with the employer, to receive a first hand response to the pieces.

When I received the responses, I arranged them in various ways and charted many of them. Discussing the findings with fellow teachers was helpful as I examined the responses for trends. An especially helpful technique was the construction of bar graphs to better "see" the findings and begin analyzing them.

Findings

Question 1:

Do Employers Know What a Portfolio is?

Food Service Businesses

Food Service: Cafeteria	yes
Fast Food A	no
Fast Food B	yes
Fast Food C	yes

Educational Institutions

Public School Admin A	yes
Public School Admin B	yes
Health Depart Personnel	yes
Rehabilitation Counselor	yes
Community College Couns	yes
Hotel Managem't Educator	yes

Customer Service Businesses

Amusement Park	yes
Nursing Home	yes
Funeral Home	no
Convenience Store	yes
Grocery Store A	yes
Grocery Store B	no
Newspaper	yes
Library Supervisor A	yes
Library Supervisor B	yes
Department Store	yes

Light Industry and Custodial Business

Small Industry	yes
Custodial Maintenance	yes

It should be noted that these responses were self-reported and not subject to any type of verification.

The survey found that 3 of the 4 food service businesses were familiar with what a portfolio is and the purpose for it. Only 1 did not know what a portfolio was.

Eighty percent of the customer service businesses were aware of what a portfolio was and its function. One hundred percent of the educational institutions, light industrial, and custodial businesses were familiar with the purpose of a portfolio. The survey determined that overall, 86% of the employers interviewed were aware of what a portfolio was.

Many employers were aware of the use of portfolios through their children's experiences in the public school systems and the use of portfolios/resumés at the professional level - but not at entry level positions.

The owner of a convenience store believes the use of portfolios "is an important service to adults. I work with the Virginia Employment Commission because it is difficult to screen prospective employees from answers to ads in the newspaper. The portfolio would provide verification of past employers and job training."

The principal at public school B stated, "I would be impressed with the presentation of a portfolio because I'm normally given a portfolio for a classified employee position."

A library manager made the comparison that the performance portfolio is similar to an art portfolio, illustrating what someone can do.

A food service manager did hire a person who presented a portfolio during an interview. She hired the person based on the merits of the provided information from the portfolio.

The principal of public school A believes a portfolio "tells about the person." She supports the concept that a portfolio may help the prospective employee if it ties in with the job.

One fast food establishment supports the belief that a portfolio would help during an interview.

A manager of the fast food establishment B never heard of a portfolio. She said that their business might not be able to use the information in the portfolio because it might be discriminatory toward the prospective employee. The manager, when conducting an interview, could not ask to see the portfolio. The job seeker must offer the portfolio voluntarily.

The personnel department of an amusement park knew what a portfolio was but didn't want to use one. She wants a one-page resumé or data sheet that is brief and concise.

The grocery store B district personnel manager had heard of a portfolio but said that only an application could be used when seeking employment with his company.

A local department store personnel manager had never heard of a portfolio but thought it was a wonderful idea.

A rehabilitation counselor believed that a portfolio is a good start. "It's a document in progress that begins with the adult education instructor and grows."

Question 2:

What would an employer like to see in a portfolio?

Recommendations	# of Responses									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Certificate of academic achievement										
Written letters of recommendation										
Math competency results										
Computer experience										
Courses taken pertaining to the job										
"Lifting technique" workshop certificate										
Proper telephone manner mini-workshop										
Ability to assume responsibility										
One-page personal data sheet										
Copy of CDL license										
Community service recognition										
Know how to complete INS form										
Know how to complete W-4 and W-9 forms										
Have selling experience										
Have sewing experience										

The survey indicates that 50% of the employers would like to see Certificates of Achievement (teacher-generated certificates for specific skills) in reading, writing paragraphs, and math; 41% of the employers would like to have written letters of recommendation with correct addresses and phone numbers. Employers said they would like to see evidence of computer knowledge without "computer phobia".

Specific math skills that employers are looking for are the ability to make correct change, do inventory counting, and a mastery of basic math facts. One necessary reading skill is the ability to read labels with chemical warnings. Employees must be able to read these label warnings because it is an OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Act) safety requirement.

Several employers felt that completion of a mini-course on "How to Lift Correctly" would be an asset to a qualified person.

A personnel director from a nursing home believed, "written recommendations would help because they are favorable to an employee during the interview."

The table above lists the other recommendations of specific information that employers would like.

A convenience store manager needed proof of basic literacy skills because, "I don't have time to teach these skills at work."

Several employers stressed the importance of relevant information and that accomplishments need to be relevant to the job for which the person is applying. The information in the portfolio needs to be specific to the appropriate job skills, "a true representation of ability in an area." The portfolio "can't be covering A-Z. The material must be related to a specific job."

A department manager of a library wondered about the verification of the skills in the folder. Her comment to the researcher was: "I don't know if certificates provided by a teacher hold weight for accurate proof of learned skills."

A college counselor believed a portfolio would be helpful for the traditional student. A portfolio might show handicaps of an older student. The adult learner and teacher need to be careful of the information placed in the portfolio; the teacher must be aware of protecting the student's rights.

Question 3:

What kinds of jobs are within your company/business?

Food Service	Hotel/Motel	Newspaper	Industry
Hostess	Bellhop	Receptionist	Maintenance
Cook	Housekeeper	Customer Serv	Custodian
Server	Groundskeeper	Classified Ads	Groundskeeper
Cashier	Pool Custodian	Drivers	
Waitress/Waiter	Banquet Worker	Switchboard Oper	Small Industry
Dishwasher	Security Guard		Hand Assembly
Bus Boy	Bartender	Clerical	Production
		Secretary	
Fast Food	Nursing	Switchboard	Driving
Cashier	Nurse's Aide	Instructional	Bus
Custodian	Housekeeper		Delivery
Hostess	Orderly	Tailoring	Funeral Home
Server	Laundry Helper	Sewing	Newspaper Del
Driver	Food Service		
		Sales	
Restaurant	Grocery Store	Lounge Help	
Waiter/Waitress	Stockperson	Barmaid	
Cook	Deli	Bartender	
Bus Boy	Cashier	Cashier	
Hostess	Bagger	Stockroom	
	Meat Dept	Inventory	
	Produce Dept	Manager	
	Pharmacy Asst	Assit Manager	

Question 4:

What information would you like to ascertain about an applicant that is currently not available on an application?

Social

Proper presentation of self
Reasoning ability to deal with customers
How frequently did person change jobs?

These attributes: caring
cooperation
dependability
have a smile
have personality
compassion
clean appearance
friendly
hard working

No felons
No drug abuse
High level of worker maturity
Follow detailed directions

Cognitive

Interest in nursing
Have a GED
Read OSHA regulations
Don't need GED
Know proper phone manners
Have communication skills: read & write
CDL license
Write concise paragraphs
Cash register experience
Understand Dewey Decimal System
Understand how to use decimal in counting
Understand alphabetical order
Clear driving record
Clerical skills

Several employers indicated that the following social skills have the most precedence: reasoning ability (to deal with customers) and a high level of worker maturity.

Four employers stress the importance of having a clear driving record. Two employers wanted to see verification of a variety of clerical skills.

Question 5-a:

Do the jobs in your business require additional education or training?

Amusement Park	no	Restaurant	no
Nursing Home	yes	Grocery Store A	no
Hotel	no	Grocery Store B	no
Convenience store	yes	Funeral Home	no
Food service	no	Newspaper	yes
Bus transportation	no	Custodial Maintenance	no
Public School Admin A	yes	Small Industry	no
Public School Admin B	yes	Library Department A	yes
Fast Food A	no	Library Department B	yes
Fast Food B	no	Department Store	yes
Fast Food C	no		

The survey indicated that 62% of the employers do not require additional education or training before hiring. The newspaper personnel director required previous experience in keyboard computer skills and switchboard operations. The bus transportation supervisor would prefer to have experienced drivers with a Commercial Driver's License. The nursing home personnel director felt experience in nursing would be an asset for a newly hired employee and the company. Persons applying for library positions should have experience in computer keyboard technique.

The convenience store owner/manager needed prospective employees to exhibit math competency and strong reading skills. Public school administrators prefer to hire instructional assistants that have had previous experience working with children.

Question 5-b:

Does your business provide additional education or training?

Amusement Park	yes	Restaurant	yes
Nursing Home	yes	Grocery Store A	yes
Hotel	yes	Grocery Store B	yes
Convenience store	yes	Funeral Home	yes
Food service	yes	Newspaper	no
Bus transportation	yes	Custodial Maintenance	yes
Public School Admin A	yes	Small Industry	yes
Public School Admin B	yes	Library Department A	yes
Fast Food A	yes	Library Department B	yes
Fast Food B	yes	Department Store	yes
Fast Food C	yes		

The survey indicated that 95% of the employers do provide additional education and training necessary to complete the job in a satisfactory way. This training was very job specific: OSHA regulations, cash register operation, etc. The employers also indicated that the extra training was based upon an assumption that the employee could read. Only one interviewed employer required that the prospective employee have previous experience to be considered for employment with their company.

One employer preferred inexperienced persons so they could be trained by the store manager, learning specific jobs pertaining to the company's policies. This would eliminate the possibility of confusing other previously learned experiences.

Fast food business B provides extensive training by the company. The store manager also gives a written test at the interview to the prospective employer.

Several employers prefer that employees have some prior knowledge of the job duties. Experience in a job is extremely beneficial for a smooth transition into a new job setting.

A department manager of a library gives a written test, focusing on alphabetical order and the use of decimals in the Dewey Decimal System.

The department manager of a newspaper requires previous experience with the operation of the switchboard, keyboard experience, and driving.

Question 5-c:

Is it necessary to have a GED diploma to be employed by your company or business?

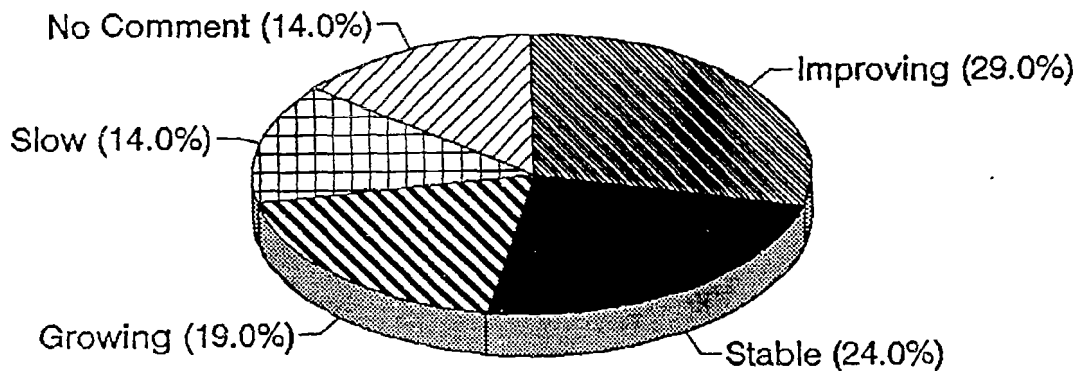
Amusement Park	no	Restaurant	no
Nursing Home	yes	Grocery Store A	no
Hotel	no	Grocery Store B	no
Convenience store	no	Funeral Home	no
Food service	no	Newspaper	yes
Bus transportation	no	Custodial Maintenance	no
Public School Admin A	yes	Small Industry	no
Public School Admin B	yes	Library Department A	yes
Fast Food A	no	Library Department B	yes
Fast Food B	no	Department Store	no
Fast Food C	no		

The survey indicated that 71% of the employers do not require employees to have a GED diploma while working for their businesses. Twenty-nine percent of the employers preferred that their employee have a GED diploma. The newspaper company requires that all employees have either a high school diploma or a GED diploma.

Question 6:

In your opinion, what is the economic climate of the greater Fredericksburg area?

Amusement Park	Growing	Restaurant	Improving
Nursing Home	Improving	Grocery Store A	Slow
Hotel	No Comment	Grocery Store B	No Comment
Convenience store	Stable	Funeral Home	Stable
Food service	Improving	Newspaper	Slow
Bus transportation	Stable	Custodial Maintenance	Improving
Public School Admin A	Growing	Small Industry	Improving
Public School Admin B	Stable	Library Department A	Stable
Fast Food A	Growing	Library Department B	Slow
Fast Food B	Growing	Department Store	No Comment
Fast Food C	Improving		



A convenience store manager suggested that the economy is stable and getting better due to the construction boom in Northern Virginia and the surrounding counties. This could help the area prosper.

Question 7-a:**Age range of employees hired by business/company**

Amusement Park	16 - 70	Restaurant	16 - 65
Nursing Home	16 - 65	Grocery Store A	16 - 65
Hotel	16 - 65	Grocery Store B	16 - 65
Convenience store	16 - 65	Funeral Home	16 - 65
Food service	16 - 55	Newspaper	16 - 65
Bus transportation	16 - 70	Custodial Maintenance	16 - 65
Public School Admin A	16 - 65	Small Industry	16 - 65
Public School Admin B	16 - 65	Library Department A	16 - 65
Fast Food A	16 - 65	Library Department B	16 - 65
Fast Food B	16 - 65	Department Store	16 - 65
Fast Food C	16 - 65		

The survey indicated that 86 % of the employers hire workers between the ages of 16 and 65 years of age. There are age restrictions for some businesses. An employee at a convenience store must be 21 to serve beer to the customers. Fast food C and the restaurant hire people 18 and older to serve beer to their patrons. The funeral home prefers mature retired people who want to earn a supplemental income and are sensitive to the needs of people in a crisis situation. The maintenance company prefers to hire older people because "young people should avoid night work and be at home by 8:30 pm to study. Education is most important for young people."

Question 7-b:**Age of the business**

As the table on the next page illustrates, the average age of the businesses surveyed was about 20 years.

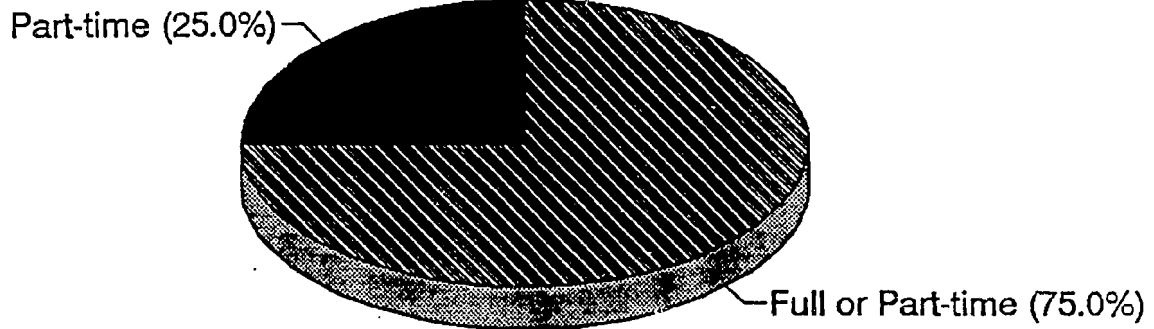
Question 7-c:**Length of time an employee stays on the job**

Most employees stay with the job if they like it. The length of stay on the job ranged from one day to 20 years. Several employers observed that young people tend to stay less than six months.

Question 7-d:**Job Status - Full or Part Time**

Amusement Park	Part	Fast Food C	both
Nursing Home	both	Restaurant	both
Hotel	both	Grocery Store A	Part
Convenience store	both	Grocery Store B	Part
Food service	both	Funeral Home	both
Bus transportation	Part	Newspaper	both
Public School Admin A	both	Custodial Maintenance	both
Public School Admin B	both	Small Industry	both
Fast Food A	Part	Library Department A	both
Fast Food B	both	Library Department B	both

Question 7-d: Job Status - Full or Part Time



The majority of businesses provide both full and part time employment.

Table 7-b: Age of the Business

Company	Years in Business									
	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50+
Amusement Park										
Nursing Home										
Hotel										
Convenience Store										
Food Service										
Bus Transportation										
Public School Admin A										
Public School Admin B										
Fast Food A										
Fast Food B										
Fast Food C										
Restaurant										
Grocery Store A										
Grocery Store B										
Funeral Home										
Newspaper										100
Custodial Maintenance										
Small Industry										
Library Department A										
Library Department B										
Department Store										

Question 7-e:

Turnover rate of employees

Eighty percent of the employers were satisfied with their low turnover rate. Fast food B manager believed her store was fortunate not to have a high turnover rate because she, as a manager, "treats employees like human beings." The maintenance company director/owner believed his business' low turnover was attributed to having a personal involvement with his employees.

A public school system saw little turnover in its classified personnel. The turnover that did occur was due to the job transfer of a spouse, maternity needs, or retirement.

Grocery store B observed that employees "hold on to their jobs because they are members of the U S Food and Common Workers Union. These employees receive competitive wages, insurance benefits, and excellent working conditions.

The owner/manager of a funeral home didn't see any turnover in his business because he hires local retired people who want to supplement their incomes.

An owner of a convenience store believed that his low turnover of employees is due to the fact that he uses very cautious hiring procedures so his time and effort isn't wasted on newly hired employees that may quit within a short term of employment.

The personnel director of a hotel has a high turnover rate with positions of bus help and maids because young people are paid minimum wage. They quit when they find a higher paying job.

The personnel director of a nursing home has seen high turnover of employees at the Christmas holiday season and during the summer months.

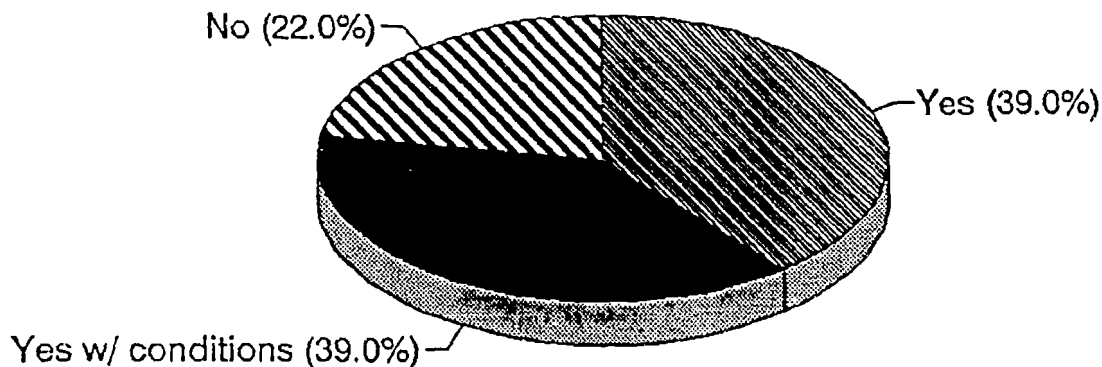
Both the amusement park and department store expect a 50% turnover each year because of seasonal employment.

Question 7-f:

The policy for hiring family members

Amusement Park	yes *	Fast Food C	no
Nursing Home	yes *	Restaurant	yes
Hotel	yes *	Grocery Store A	yes *
Convenience store	yes	Grocery Store B	yes *
Food Service	yes	Funeral Home	yes
Bus transportation	no	Newspaper	yes *
Public School Admin A	yes	Custodial Maintenance	yes
Public School Admin B	yes	Small Industry	no
Fast Food A	yes *		
Fast Food B	no		

* indicates Yes with conditions applied.



Seventy-eight percent of the employers favor hiring family members under some conditions. Most company policies state that family members may work within the business as long as they are not in the same department. A supervisor can not supervise a family member.

Fast food C has a company policy prohibiting the hiring of family members.

Fast food A manager supports the courtesy practice of asking the present employee if he would mind if another family member worked with him.

The maintenance company owner prefers to hire family members because, "you know the good people through the families."

Discussion

Many adult learners are in a period of transition between basic reading and math instruction to passing the GED test. This is a critical time for the adult learner to re-establish his self-identity. This is a stage of a person's life where changes at home and on the job can be dramatic. The adult learner is attempting to make a new set of choices and decisions in order to be a productive person in the work force and serve as a competent provider for himself and family members.

Using portfolios in adult education classes documents the student's growth in academic and job skills. Using the portfolio encourages the adult learner to take an active role. The student is able to self-assess his progress. He can evaluate the strengths and weaknesses he may be experiencing and make choices between alternatives he may have in order to achieve the next goal in his educational plan.

The portfolio is a collection of the adult learner's successes and reflections. The portfolio contains samples of the student's work completed in class. These documents demonstrate mastery in a variety of areas. The material in the portfolio serves as evidence of the student's successes. The intent of the portfolio is to provide an additional resource for the student when he is job seeking. The student can present the folder to a prospective employer to support his belief that he could be a valuable asset for the business. The employer would have an immediate visual picture of what skills the adult had to offer his business. The use of portfolios while seeking employment may open doors of opportunity for the adult learner who needs to join the work force immediately while continuing to pursue his educational goals.

Portfolios illustrate what the student can do. The instructor can use the documents to determine what steps are needed to ensure success for the student. Teacher and student join together to make valid choices and recommendations so the student will be successful in the classroom.

This researcher collected a variety of academic samples to provide evidence of what was learned in the adult education class. The work samples included short essays, articles for a class newsletter, letters of response to funding of the local literacy lab, a student's published letter to the editor, certificates of participation in special interest sessions: typing, computer skills, CPR, a "How to Lift Correctly" mini-course, and computerized math test scores.

The most interesting findings of the survey center on the following:

- the interest of employers in using a portfolio during the job interview;
- the fact that employers provide on-the-job training for most jobs in their businesses; and
- the GED is not required to obtain employment in the greater Fredericksburg area.

Other findings include:

- the need for documentation of educational skills;
- the types of specific training that would be essential for employment; and
- the types of jobs that are available in the greater Fredericksburg area for students with limited educational skills.

These findings represent a move toward understanding how a prospective employee can strengthen his opportunities to secure employment by using a performance portfolio. The findings illustrate several major points:

- Adult educators need to prepare a multi-skilled curriculum so that the adult learner is more prepared to work.
- Adult educators and students need to utilize the performance portfolio.
- Job training is a necessary part of the adult basic education program.

Interpretation and Recommendations

I originally conceived the idea for this research project at the Adult Education Pre-Service, when learning plans were discussed and Sue Cockley presented information about conducting research projects. I was anxious to utilize portfolio assessment in a different format from the public school systems so that the documentation would be beneficial for the adult learners in my class and serve as a springboard resource for me as the educator.

I have discussed in the Methods section of this report the difficulties I had in contacting the employers. When I do another research project, I will attempt to conduct interviews on a one-on-one basis rather than using the telephone. I believe the personal contact makes for better responses from interviewees.

I explained my project to my Adult Education students. Most of them were very receptive to participation in this activity with me. They took a special interest in what went into the performance portfolio. The students wanted to be actively involved in selecting the writing pieces and math tests that were filed in the portfolio. Several students took the initiative to retake math tests to improve their final math test score.

In future classes I will continue to have the adult students be more actively involved in making decisions, establishing short term and long term goals, and leaving my class with a performance portfolio that illustrates what they have learned. It will be useful to them in obtaining a higher paying job or pursuing their desire for higher education or vocational training.

Appendix A: Letter and Questionnaire

REGIONAL ADULT EDUCATION

FREDERICKSBURG, KING GEORGE, SPOTSYLVANIA,
CAROLINE & STAFFORD COUNTIES

703-898-8165

1-800-GED-1520

FAX 703-891-2726

Joyce Hamilton, Program Planner

Spotsylvania Vocational Center

6703 Smith Station Road

Spotsylvania, VA 22553

2221 Cowan Blvd.
Apartment 55A
Fredericksburg, VA
22401

March 2, 1994

Dear Sir:

My name is Christina Seanor and I am a teacher for the Adult Basic Education Program in this area. Presently, I am working with the Virginia Adult Educator's Research Network as a practitioner. My goal as a research practitioner is to conduct interviews with employers from the Greater Fredericksburg Area and discuss the pros and cons of my research question.

The research question is: How would a prospective employer perceive the presentation of a portfolio of job related skills in determining suitability for employment?

I would like to schedule an appointment to discuss this topic with you at your convenience. I would be able to meet with you after 3:30 p.m., during the work week, Saturday mornings or Sunday mornings.

You may contact me at Hugh Mercer School, 703-372-1115, weekdays, from 8:00 a.m. - 3:15 p.m. or at my home, 703-373-7972, evenings.

I want to thank you in advance for your cooperation and support in this project endeavor.

Sincerely,

Christina R. Seanor
Christina R. Seanor

VIRGINIA ADULT EDUCATOR'S RESEARCH NETWORK

PRACTITIONER RESEARCH PROJECT

Practitioner: Christina Seanor, Adult Basic Education
Teacher for the Regional Adult
Education Program, for the City of
Fredericksburg, Virginia

RESEARCH QUESTION: How would a prospective employer
perceive the presentation of a
portfolio of Job related skills in
determining suitability for employment?

QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW:

1. Do you know what a portfolio is?
2. What would you like to see in a portfolio?
3. What kinds of jobs are within your company/business?
4. What information would you like to ascertain about an applicant that is currently not available on an application?
5. Do the jobs in your business require additional education?
6. In your opinion, what is the economic climate of the Greater Fredericksburg Area?
7. Would you be able to supply basic facts about your company?
 - a. age range of employees
 - b. age of business
 - c. length of time an employee stays on the Job
 - d. Job status: full time and/or part time
 - e. the turnover of employees
 - f. hiring of family members
8. Could you recommend anyone else I could speak to?

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ADULT EDUCATION FOR THE NIGHTSHIFT WORKER

Cheryl Spainhour

Introduction

In the predawn hours, a nightshift nurse checks the pulse of a critically ill patient in the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital where he works. On the outskirts of town, the driver of an 18-wheeler hauling perishable food climbs down out of his rig, after driving 300 miles on starlit highways, to drink a cup of coffee and chat with fellow drivers at his favorite 24-hour truckstop diner. Above him, a commercial airline pilot wings a silver jet through the sky by the light of the moon, carrying some 200 passengers from San Francisco to New York. And as the sun finally rises, a third-shift employee clocks out of a manufacturing plant and heads to school, where she's studying to prepare for the GED test.

Night employment is very much a part of the American work world in this century. Introduced in North America during World War II because of increased production demands, night shiftwork has since become more prevalent in many of our work organizations due to rising consumption. A recent CBS news special reports that the "graveyard" shift is the fastest growing shift in the United States (*48 Hours*, June 8, 1994). Jamal (1992) estimates that 17% of the full-time labor force and 50% of the part-time labor force on this continent alone are employed in night shiftwork. Some fields of work have even higher overall percentages of night work, such as health care (36%) and food services (46%).

With this established -- and growing -- trend in round-the-clock employment in our society, it is surprising that very little research has been conducted in North America about the ramifications shiftwork has on peoples' lives; instead we import most of our inferences from European studies (Jamal, 1992), where there is an abundance of research as well as specific work policies implemented for night shiftworkers. For example, in England night shiftworkers receive 25% more pay than day workers, as opposed to their counterparts on this continent who only receive 7-10% more.

One area that night shiftwork research needs to more thoroughly address is its effect on educational programs for adults. In a speculative article on the links between education and employment in the 1980's, Bengtsson (1979) notes the existing incompatibility in the relationship between night shiftworkers and adult education programs and predicts that shiftwork "is of undoubted relevance to the success of any adult education strategy." The Commonwealth of Virginia's Adult Education program is evidently heeding this suggestion in the 1990's, with approximately 80 ABE/GED programs for night shiftworkers already in operation across the state at workplaces (see Appendix A).

The following literature review will examine the significant findings of studies devoted to night shiftworkers. The purpose of this general, though by no means exhaustive, review is to provide more insight into the lives of shiftworkers in order to serve them better.

The literature review will be followed by the results of a case study of night shiftworkers enrolled in an adult education program who were surveyed and interviewed by the researcher.

Review of Literature

Two landmark research reviews written in the 1970's draw on many previous studies conducted to describe the shiftworker's world, and raise questions which later researchers have sought to answer. While Brown (1975) focuses on the social psychological and sociological research approaches, Dunham's review (1977) encompasses the physical effects shiftwork has as well.

Sleep -- or lack of sleep -- is a focal point of study in night shiftwork research. Dunham sites studies in which researchers found that night workers not only get less sleep than day workers, but they also experience more frequent disruption of sleep. Staines and Pleck (1984) cite research that finds shiftworkers sleep one to two hours per 24-hours less than day workers. Some night shiftworkers have difficulty sleeping during the day because of the lack of a sleep routine. Although some researchers attribute this lack of routine to rotating shiftwork where a person never fully adjusts to the

ever-changing work schedule, Brody (1994) states that human beings' "biological clocks, which are set by daily cycles of light days and dark nights, never adjust to night work." Other researchers who study the rhythmic functions of the body argue that adjustment does take place for most people, requiring between four days and two weeks "for adequate rhythmic changes to a new work schedule" to take place (Dunham, 1977). Daytime (and early evening) sleep is often disrupted because most households and communities operate during the same hours. According to a sleep specialist, because of sleep deprivation, "an estimated 75% of night workers experience sleepiness on every night shift, and for 20% sleepiness is so severe that they actually fall asleep" (Brody, 1994). One sleep specialist makes the more extreme claim that all night workers fall asleep once a week on the job (*48 Hours*, June 8, 1994). However, some research suggests that there are individuals who are more alert in the night time hours, and thus are more acclimated to night shiftwork than standard day work (see Malaviya, 1976; Harma, 1993; Brown, 1993; and Wedderburn, 1993). But those who do not adapt to nightwork and do not develop regular sleeping habits do not recover from fatigue and the "general psycho-physiological state needed for the exertion of mental and physical activity of the person working in abnormal time-schedules, most likely will be sub-optimal: not only during nightshifts, but probably during other shifts as well" (De Vries-Griever, 1987). Thus, night shiftworkers who have not adapted and are enrolled outside of work in educational courses, where new information is regularly introduced, probably have a more difficult time processing new information than those who have adapted or those who are day workers.

Dunham (1977) and others also document that night shiftwork can cause appetite and digestive disorders, particularly if the employee's shift is not stable. Harma (1993) cites one study conducted in London that revealed that 20% to 30% of shiftworkers resigned within two to three years because of chronic medical problems. Still, the debate continues among researchers because there is no general consensus that night shiftwork causes more health problems than day shiftwork, although Harma (1993) strongly recommends that shiftworkers over age 40 should receive frequent medical check-ups and that night work should be voluntary for them because of possible adverse effects it can have over long periods of time.

Night shiftwork appears to have an adverse effect on social integration. Dunham's review (1977) notes that shiftworkers spend less time with friends and participate in fewer organizations than day workers. Dunham and Brown (1975) state that the night shiftworker is out of synch with the established "common time schedule" in our society, and thus, is excluded from the opportunity to participate in many activities. Studies show that some night shiftworkers compensate by creating an occupational community, spending more time outside of work with fellow shiftworkers (Brown, 1975). Others spend more time in solitary activities, including extra time on housework (Staines and Pleck, 1984). Brown (1975) argues that most communities view night shiftwork as less prestigious than day work. Dunham (1977) supports this prevailing attitude, noting the majority of communities are not oriented to shift schedules. Shiftworkers in one study he reviews complained "they felt like outsiders in their own communities due to work schedules." (In this current study, 82% of the shiftworkers said they would not take a shift job if they had it to do over again.)

There have also been many studies showing the negative impact of shiftwork on the family. In an empirical study, Staines and Peck (1984) conclude that "shiftwork is associated with lower quality of family time" because it creates continuous conflict in family members' schedules, particularly between parents and children where the parent works second shift, but also between spouses who work different schedules. The night shiftworker is thus, "out of phase with the family, which subsequently causes the family to be out of phase with the community" (Dunham, 1977).

However, there are researchers who challenge this view of a shiftworker as an unhappy social outcast with strained family relations. Wedderburn and Scholarios (1993), in studying the response to recommended guidelines for shiftworkers at two manufacturing factories, found that the majority of the shiftworkers reported overall positive attitudes toward shiftwork. Wedderburn (1993) quotes shiftwork researcher Sergeant's conclusion that "personal, social and organizational factors interact to an extent which makes generalizations about attitudes to shiftwork dangerous." Wedderburn believes most shiftworkers, through personal experience, "have accumulated considerable wisdom about how to manage their lives against the backdrop of unusual hours of work. For each individual, a delicate

balance has to be found between the demands of work, the needs of home and family, and their varied social and personal interests, in an enormous variety of contexts . . ."

Case Study

This case study was conducted in a Virginia Adult Education program (presently in its third year) co-sponsored by a major manufacturing industry in southern Virginia. The two GED preparatory courses, one of which the researcher is the instructor, are held at the workplace for the industry's employees. Because of production demand, shiftwork was first instituted around 1930 with two 12-hour shifts. Later, workshifts were divided into three 8-hour weekday shifts and a weekend shift. The industry employs about 4900 people, and approximately two-thirds of its employees work a night shift.

The Survey

The survey instrument (see Appendix B) was specifically developed for this study by the researcher. (Please note all results are reported in numbers, versus percentages, because it is such a small sampling. Also, the researcher had originally intended on surveying a group of first-shift students for comparison purposes, but there were not enough students enrolled in the corresponding GED course to do so.) Thirteen of the 15 surveys distributed were completed and include five former students of the class, four who took and passed the GED test. All 13 students work a regular shift (as opposed to rotating shifts). Five work second-shift (4 pm - midnight) and eight work third-shift (midnight - 8 am). Six of the participants are male and seven are female. Ages range from 27 to 55; the average age for the group is 43.

Five of the students have worked less than five years for the industry; the other eight have worked 5-20 years; and none of the students have worked more than 20 years. Seven of the 13 students elected to work night shift and said they prefer night work over day work. However, only four of the seven perceive themselves to be "night" persons (as opposed to "morning" persons) and the remaining nine respondents were a mixture of the two. Three of the four students who have taken and passed the GED test perceive themselves to be "night" persons, although the researcher doesn't place too much significance in this finding because there are other variables that could be factors in their success.

The sleeping habits of the students vary, depending on the shifts they work. All five students who work second-shift sleep far into the mornings. (One reports sleeping into the afternoon when possible.) Six of the eight students who work third-shift split their sleeping hours into mornings and evenings. One sleeps in the morning and afternoons and the other sleeps in the evenings.

When participants were asked how much nightwork affects their family life, the majority (seven) responded it only affected it "somewhat," while five answered "not at all," and one stated "a lot." The response was slightly different to the question of how much night work affects the students' social life: eight stated "somewhat," two stated "a lot," and three stated "not at all." It is noteworthy that the responses to these two questions do not appear to correlate with the individual's preference for night or day work.

The GED class which all 13 students attend or have attended meets year-round on two weekday mornings each week at the industry's recreation center. Each session lasts two and a half hours, but third-shift students can choose to come directly from their shift to class before it officially begins and then leave earlier. All 13 students said on the survey the morning class schedule suits them best. (Some third-shift employees are enrolled in the evening on-site course.) Only seven of the 13 students said they would prefer the courses be run during workshifts; however the researcher did not specify whether or not employees would be paid while attending class during working hours.

Ten of the 13 students stated in the survey that they grow sleepier as class goes on; six of the ten that reported this work third-shift and the other four work second-shift.

When students were surveyed about what methods of learning they prefer in the GED class, they overwhelmingly chose small groups and one-on-one with the instructor over lectures, video

presentations, pairing up with another student, and "other" methods. In hindsight, the researcher should have specifically listed computers as a learning tool on the list, since their use is well-established in many adult education settings.

Patterns of study outside of class appear to coincide with work schedules. Ten of the 13 students report studying on their days off. Six of the eight third-shift students study in the evenings on workdays and three of the five students who work second-shift study in the mornings on workdays. Only one reported studying at the workplace.

Six of the 13 said they study 1-2 hours per week outside of class, two study 3-5 hours, and three study 6-10 hours. Two students reported they hardly ever study and no one said they study over ten hours per week. All four students who have taken and passed the GED test reported that while they were enrolled they regularly studied outside of class.

Finally, only three of the 13 students said they study with others outside of class, but nine of the 10 who studied alone said they would study with others outside of class if they had the opportunity.

The Interviews

Eight of the 13 participants were interviewed by the researcher after completing the survey. All four students who took and passed the GED test were interviewed. The questions focused on sleep habits and the affects night shiftwork has on family and social life and education. The following excerpts have been organized according to these three categories. (Students selected pseudonyms for this report. An asterisk appears by the names of the students who have passed their GED test.)

■ Sleep

Third shift takes my life -- all I can think about is the bed when I get off work -- the more I sleep, the more I want.

Faith, 3rd shift, age 40

I sleep six, seven hours a day. Anymore sleep and I'm worse off. But sometimes, when I don't get enough sleep and I go to work, I'm in a daze.

Raine, 3rd shift, age 55

That's the thing about second-shift -- you get off work, you can't unwind. You go to bed and feel the same way when you wake up. But third-shift's no better -- you sleep two different times during the day -- that's no life.

Sam, 2nd shift, age 50

I usually sleep in the evenings -- I feel better if I can do that, instead of splitting it up.

*Jean, 3rd shift, age 52

On second shift, I just don't have no time, and on third shift, most of the time I'm off, I'm asleep.

*Anne, 2nd & 3rd shift, age 42

■ Family and Social Life

Time I get to bed, I get up at 10 or 11 (am), eat dinner, mow the lawn, and go to work. I see my wife mainly on weekends and she fusses about the schedule, especially now that I'm working a lot, because I'm always tired, I don't feel like doing anything. My wife won't go to sleep until I come home [from work], which messes up her schedule, especially when I'm working over.

Rob, 2nd shift, age 27

My husband is retired and my children are grown so it [third-shift] works well. I used to work first-shift, but I switched to third because it worked out better for my weekend business. Now, I have more time to myself and more time to get my housework done.

Raine, 3rd shift, age 55

Every piece of time is precious -- it's rush, rush, rush all of the time -- I'm never caught up. But third-shift is the best [night] shift to work when you have a family. I used to be on second-shift and I didn't get to enjoy my daughter's childhood.

Faith, 3rd shift, age 40

I don't have a social life with the shift [third] I work, six and seven nights a week. When my husband wants to go out at night to eat, I can't because I've got to go to bed. The other night my [grown] son invited me to go to a ball game with his family and I couldn't go because I had to get some sleep before I went to work. I miss out on a lot.

*Jean, 3rd shift, age 52

■ Education

I liked coming to class straight from work -- night classes don't suit my life. I was all right for the first hour [of class], then I would go blank. My mind worked better after I had a little sleep. I'd study during the day when my husband was at work and I'd get up at four or five in the morning [on days off] when I couldn't sleep and study.

*Jean, 3rd shift, age 52

I'm sleepy when I first get to class, but later in the morning, I'm wide awake and I can figure out everything. I study in the afternoons before work, and when I work over, I study at the office.

Rob, 2nd shift, age 27

I do my housework in the morning, then go to bed around 9:30 or 10 [am]. Then I study in the afternoons, sometimes two or three hours, then I nap in the evening before work.

Raine, 3rd shift, age 55

If I go home tired [from work], I don't study -- and other things in my life keep me from studying, too. In class, I get sleepier the longer class goes on, and it makes it harder to learn.

Faith, 3rd shift, age 40

Most of the time, I studied in the afternoons during my grandbaby's naptimes, right before I went into work.

*Anne, 2nd & 3rd shift, age 42

It was good to start class at 9 [am] so it didn't break my day up.

**Matt, 2nd shift, age 36*

Discussion

Much of what the researcher learned from the case study results confirms existing research on night shiftworkers. The interviews clarified some of the survey findings that seemed to contradict other research. Most of the participants reported some sort of sleeping problems, either not getting enough sleep or having their rest disrupted. Yet, the morning GED class schedule unanimously met with the students' approval, even though with one exception, the time it is offered interferes with the student's normal sleeping hours and attendance is clearly affected by sleep. In the follow-up interviews, several students explained they would rather sacrifice sleep time to meet their educational objectives than spend less time with their families. Although furthering one's education usually does entail making personal sacrifices, this researcher believes there are higher sacrifices for night shift working adults who are sleep-deprived before they even begin studying for their GED. "The most successful programs are built into the shifts," comments Barry Buchanan, Virginia Adult Education Regional Administrator for the Norfolk planning district, where there are approximately 22 adult education programs (the largest number in the state) in operation for night shift employees. Even though the results reported in this survey indicated only slightly more than half would like the classes held during shifts, follow-up questions showed the majority would take the classes during work hours if they received regular pay. It is our responsibility as educators to persuade employers that allowing their employees to participate in basic educational programs five hours a week during shifts will benefit both employer and employee.

One of the findings that surprised the researcher was that the majority of students, regardless of which shift they worked, reported growing sleepier as the class progresses. (There did not appear to be a correlation between this finding and students' self-perception of whether they were "morning" or "night" people.) The researcher had originally hypothesized that third-shift students would grow sleepier and second-shift students would become more alert as class went on, and thus, it would follow to introduce new material to third-shift students early in class time and later to second-shift students. Future empirical research might reveal this finding to be the exception rather than the rule. However, until then, the researcher believes highly individualized plans for students be developed based on their "peak" learning times by interviewing and observing each student during class time.

There was a mixed response to how shiftwork affects the students' social and family lives, which in turn, impacts on the students' educational plans and progress. On closer examination of the individual students, it appears that the students who felt most strongly about the negative effects night work has on their lives are the ones with the most family demands and social obligations. For example, Faith has a husband who works first-shift and a 12-year-old son who regularly participates after school in organized sports. The family is socially active and attends church services twice a week. All of these activities outside her work are geared toward a first-shift person's lifestyle, and Faith sacrifices sleep in order to participate. Hence, the stress she is already experiencing by this schedule is intensified by her decision to take a GED course. And, although she has one of the best attendance records in the class, her progress is impeded by both her weariness and the lack of time she has to study outside of class. In contrast, Jean, who also works third-shift, has far fewer family demands and is resigned to a less active social life (which can also have consequences). Her sons are grown and her husband worked first-shift during the time she attended the GED class, so she was able to sleep during the day and spend her evenings with him before going to work. She also had more time than Faith to regularly study outside of class, usually when her husband was asleep. But notice again, it is the night shiftworker who makes the concessions in order to fit into the dayworker's schedule. (Since taking the class, Jean's husband has been laid off from his job, and she now splits her sleep between mornings and evenings, which in turn, she says more greatly affects her family and social life than her previous sleeping schedule.)

In further study of the nightshift worker's educational progress, two factors should be examined: 1) What variances occur based on the time and amount of outside study? and 2) Does a person's perception of being a "day" or "night person" have an influence?

One thing is evident -- nightwork affects nearly all of these students' family and social lives to some degree. And even though shiftwork has a long tradition in the community where they work, almost all of the community's activities continue to revolve around the standard workday schedule. Perhaps Dunham's (1977) suggestion that children's schools in communities with large numbers of shiftworkers operate around-the-clock to accommodate their parents' schedules is extreme; however, communities, including adult educators, should more closely examine the special needs of night shiftworkers, and work harder toward meeting those needs.

The following two suggestions might prove helpful:

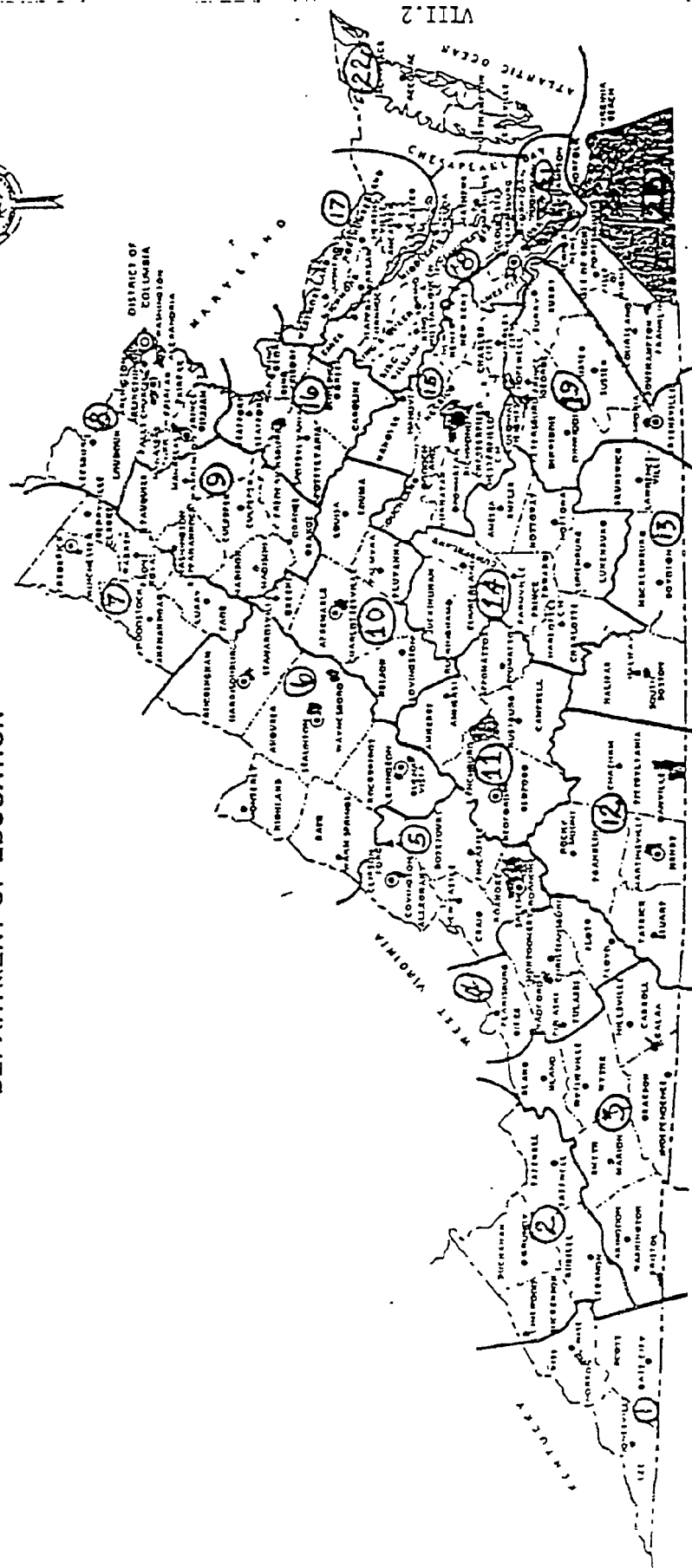
1) Adult educators and industries employing night shiftworkers should develop tailor-made educational programs for these employees. "No two workplaces are alike," says Program Planner Dale Temple of Planning District 19, which has approximately 12 such programs in operation, the second largest number in the state. The key to successful programs, she says, is "good public relations: coordination, collaboration, and cooperation." Where possible, education courses for night shiftworkers should be held on-site, during shift hours, which could prove to be an excellent incentive.

2) Instructors need to be sensitive to night shiftworkers' special needs, for example, sleepiness in class. He or she should establish effective learning methods for individual students (i.e., methods appropriate to learning styles, as well as tuning into productivity peaks). Where possible, instructors should serve as the students' advocates, as well. For example, one second-shift student was re-taking two of the five GED tests, and was supposed to report at 8:30 am, when the testing began. The student felt anxious about testing at the early hour, so the instructor requested permission for the student to report for the test later in the morning.

Appendix A: On-Site ABE/GED Adult Education Programs for Night Shift Workers

Appendix B: Student Survey

APPENDIX A
PLANNING DISTRICTS
ADULT EDUCATION SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



PLANNING DISTRICTS' ON-SITE ABE/GED ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR NIGHT SHIFT EMPLOYEES¹

(1) None	(5) None	(9) None	(13) Two	(17) None	(21) Twenty-two
(2) None	(6) Ten	(10) One	(14) None	(18) None	(22) One
(3) Four	(7) Two	(11) Two	(15) Twelve	(19) Twelve	
(4) None	(8) None	(12) Five	(16) Two	(20) Five	

¹ Figures are approximate and based on numbers given to the researcher by program planners and specialists in April/May, 1994. Figures do not include public courses available in each district where scheduling accomodates night shiftworkers as well.

APPENDIX B

EDUCATION FOR ADULTS ON NIGHT SHIFT WORK SCHEDULES Research Project by Cheryl Spainhour -- Chatham, Virginia

SURVEY QUESTIONS

FOR STUDENTS WHO WORK NIGHT SHIFT:

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions to help me learn more about the educational needs and wants of people like you who work night shifts. You DO NOT need to put your name on the survey. THANKS for your help!!!

____ Male ____ Female

AGE: _____

WORK SCHEDULE: ____ 3 - 11 p.m. ____ 11 p.m. - 7 a.m.
(Other -- please write in hours _____)

DO YOU REGULARLY WORK THE SAME SHIFT? ____ yes ____ no

If NO, please note here if you work:

____ swing shift; ____ rotating shift; ____ other

1) How long have you been working night shift?

____ less than 5 years ____ 5-20 years ____ 20 or more years

2) Did you choose to work nights? ____ yes ____ no

3) Do you prefer night shift over day shift? ____ yes ____ no

4) When do you normally sleep? (You may check more than one answer.)

____ mornings ____ afternoons ____ evenings

5) Working nights affects your family life:

____ a lot ____ somewhat ____ not at all

6) Working nights affects your social life:

____ a lot ____ somewhat ____ not at all

7) When does your class meet? (Please write in day(s) of week, time of day, and length of class.) _____

8) Does your present adult education class schedule suit you?

____ yes ____ no

9) If you had the choice, would you prefer to have class during work hours? ____ yes ____ no

10) What method of learning do you like best? (Please number them in order of preference with #1 being your top choice:

____ lectures by instructor

____ small groups

____ individual (one-on-one with instructor)

____ video presentations

____ pairing (working with one other student)

____ Other method, if not listed (please specify here:)

(MORE QUESTIONS ON NEXT PAGE)

- 11) During class time, do you
 ___ grow sleepier or ___ become more alert?
- 12) When do you usually study outside of class? (Please check as many answers as apply to you.) ___ during breaks at work
 ___ mornings ___ afternoons ___ evenings ___ days off
- 13) On the average, about how much time do you study outside of class per week?
 ___ hardly ever ___ 1-2 hours ___ 3-5 hours
 ___ 6-10 hours ___ more than 10 hours
- 14) Do you ever study with others outside of class? (for examples, other adults or your children) ___ yes ___ no
- 15) Would you study with others outside of class if you had the opportunity? ___ yes ___ no
- 16) Which do you consider yourself (regardless of your work schedule):
 ___ a "morning" person
 ___ a "night" person

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LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN MULTILEVEL-CLASS ACTIVITIES

A Study Examining Intrinsic and Extrinsic Variables Affecting Student Participation in Multilevel-Class Activities

Ellen Grote

Introduction

Multilevel adult ESL classes are generally offered in response to the needs of the students and to accommodate the financial limitations of educational programs. Most adult ESL classes are non-homogenous. Students' backgrounds vary regarding their native language, culture, nationality, education, age, home situation, economic situations, and personal goals. But what makes multilevel classes uniquely challenging for teachers is planning lessons with activities which will meet the needs of students with a wide range of language abilities.

The purpose of this study was to find out how students and teachers perceived the effects of variables on student participation in English in multilevel class activities. These variables included both those intrinsic to the activity, such as the game-like quality of an activity, as well as those variables which are extrinsic to it, such as the language proficiency of the individual students participating in a multilevel class activity.

In this paper, I will briefly summarize an approach to teaching multilevel ESL classes as presented in the current literature. I will then relate the problem of facilitating successful learner-centered pair or group activities, which is the focus of this paper. The research question, method of data collection, and analysis will be presented; a summary and discussion of the results will follow. I will conclude with suggestions for further research.

Current Approach to Teaching a Multilevel Class

Assumptions. The current approach to teaching multilevel classes is based on one-room schoolhouse pedagogy and makes two basic assumptions: (1) that students at all levels feel that they are part of the class as a whole; and, (2) that classroom activities must be learner-centered (Berry & Williams, 1992; Bell, 1991; Bowman et al, 1992; Ramirez, 1992; Helgesen, 1982). Class activities are language-learning communication exercises in which the communication process is more important than the end product. In a learner-centered class activity, the students must accept the responsibility of the learning that goes on in their group.

A Multidimensional Lesson Plan. A typical lesson plan would begin with a whole-class activity, followed by learner-centered paired, grouped, or self-accessed activities. The teacher would assemble groups and pairs with respect to their language abilities, i.e., equal-ability or mixed-ability groupings, based on the objectives of the learning task and the nature of the activity. With learner-centered activities, the teacher would be free to float from group to group assisting those who needed guidance or working with literacy students. The final activity would unite the students once again in a whole-class wrap-up activity. (Bell, 1991; Berry and Williams, 1992)

The Problem. This type of multidimensional lesson plan served the needs of most of the students in the multilevel class that I was teaching, but I noticed that students did not always participate in English or would not adhere to the guidelines of the activity. The level of participation seemed to depend on the type of activity and the characteristics of the groupings. As facilitators of such group activities, teachers tend to instinctively experiment with different grouping techniques. The purpose of this study was to systematically gather information from students and teachers who participate in this

process, and to discover which variables they feel have the most positive effect on participation in multilevel-class activities.

Related Research. Research examining the variables which specifically affect learner participation in multilevel-class activities could not be found. Studies have been conducted, however, to investigate deterrents to participation as well as motivations to participation in adult education programs. One study examined deterrents affecting the participation of Hispanic adults in adult ESL programs (Hayes, 1989). This study was modeled after a series of studies investigating the participation of students in adult education programs in general. Some studies examined deterrents, or barriers, to participation (Darkenwald & Valentine, 1985; Hayes, 1988a; Hayes & Darkenwald, 1988; Scanlan & Darkenwald, 1984), while other earlier studies examined motivations to participation in adult education courses (Boshier, 1971; Burgess, 1971). While there is no precedence for the study of *motivation for participation* as a construct in relation to multilevel-class activities, there is precedence for the investigation of the construct in relation to adult education programs in general. Because the communication process of a class activity is paramount to language acquisition, the topic of participation in class activities is worthy of inquiry.

Research Question. The construct that this study examined was student motivation to participate in learner-centered multilevel-class activities. For the purpose of this paper, learner participation is defined here as student engagement in the communication process in English in order to achieve the objectives of the task. The research question that is the focus of this paper is: Which variables do teachers and students believe have the most positive effect on the level of learner participation during multilevel-class activities?

Method

Subjects

With the cooperation of the Fairfax County Public Schools Adult Education Program in Fairfax County, Virginia, a list of multilevel adult ESL classes in the program was provided. Sixteen of the 17 teachers agreed to administer the questionnaires to their classes in April, 1994, a few weeks into the spring quarter. The total enrollment for the 16 participating classes was 275; 173 student questionnaires were filled out and returned.

Students. The student participants represented 27 countries and 22 languages. The mean age of the students was 35.7; they averaged 13 years of education; and the average length of stay in the U.S. was 3.3 years. The English language proficiency levels were self-rated and ranged from beginner to advanced. Although literacy-level and low-beginner students were part of the make-up of the multilevel classes, they did not participate in the study. The low proficiency level of some of the students and absenteeism accounts for the difference in the enrollment number and number of student participants in the study.

Teachers. The 16 teachers that participated in the study were all currently teaching multilevel classes in the Fairfax County Adult ESL Program. Teaching experience with multilevel classes ranged from one term to more than 32 terms, averaging at 13 terms of teaching experience. The mean enrollment was 17 students per class, while the average class size on a typical day was 13 students.

Procedures

Questionnaires. Students and teachers filled out questionnaires which asked them to evaluate the effects of different variables on student participation. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with a series of statements on a 5-point bipolar scale: strongly agree = 2.0, agree = 1.0, neither agree nor disagree = 0.0, disagree = -1.0, strongly disagree = -2.0. (See Appendix A for format of surveys.) The variables included on both the students' and teachers' surveys were initially identified through a review of the literature, discussions with fellow teachers, and from personal experience.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts: *Part A* included statements regarding the variables intrinsic to the activities themselves; *Part B* and *C* included statements about extrinsic factors which may affect participation in pairwork and small group activities, respectively. *Part D* of the students' form asked for demographic information, while *Part D* of the teachers' form asked for information about the classes they were currently teaching. In an attempt to make up for the low number of teacher participants in the study, *Part D* of the teachers' questionnaire also included an open-ended question asking them to comment on their experience with multilevel classes.

A pilot study was conducted to assess the viability of both student and teacher questionnaires as instruments of data collection. Minor adjustments were made.

Administration. Prior to handing out the questionnaires, the teachers gave students a handout listing the key vocabulary words which appeared on the questionnaires. The handout also included sample questions in the same format as it appeared on the questionnaires. Students were encouraged to ask questions and to use their dictionaries when needed. They were told that their responses were anonymous, and instructed to express their own opinion. The students worked on the questionnaires in class for at least 15 minutes, and then took them home to complete. The teachers and students were given three weeks to complete and return the questionnaires.

Analysis

The students' and teachers' responses were collected and coded; the mean and standard deviation for each variable was calculated for students' and teachers' responses. The scores, means, and standard deviations of each variable for Section A, B, and C are presented in Table 1 (*Ranking of Variables*). Comparisons of the teachers' and students' responses for items in each section are illustrated in Figures 1, 2, and 3. The mean scores for the students' responses and teachers' responses were correlated for each section. (See Figures 4-6.)

Results

Intrinsic Variables

Student and teacher participants gave the majority of the intrinsic variables higher scores than the extrinsic variables (see Table 1). There were four items with mean scores above 1.0 in the students' responses and six items with mean scores above 1.0 in the teachers' responses. No scores in the pair work and group work sections received mean scores of 1.0 or higher.

When the items were ranked by students' scores, *interesting topic*, *practicing useful language*, *exchanging information*, and *clarity* were the top four factors positively affecting student participation. Teachers ranked *clarity*, *interesting topic*, *exchanging information*, and *practicing useful language* as their top four factors. As illustrated in Figure 4, there was a high positive correlation ($r=0.893$) between the responses from students and teachers regarding the variables intrinsic to the activities themselves.

Extrinsic Variables

Although a few extrinsic variables scored close to 1.0, neither students nor teachers ranked any of these variables higher than 1.0. Students and teachers concurred that *same language proficiency*, *different L1* (first language), and *same education level* had positive effects on both pair work and group work. They also agreed that the *same L1* and *same culture* did not affect participation positively.

Students and teachers disagreed about the effects of *different ages* and *different levels of education* in both pair work and group work. Students felt that these factors had positive effects on participation, while teachers did not. In pair work students felt that *different sexes* had a positive effect, while teachers did not. Although teachers agreed with students regarding the positive effect of *different proficiency levels* in pair work, they disagreed with students about the effect in group work. Teachers felt it did not have a positive effect on participation, while the students felt that it did.

Table 1

RANKING OF VARIABLES

STUDENTS (N=173)

Variables Intrinsic to Activity

Rank	Variable	Score	SD
1	Interesting Topic	1.33	0.61
2	Practicing Useful Language	1.21	0.78
3	Exchanging Information	1.13	0.70
4	Clarity	1.12	0.78
5	Problem Solving	0.98	0.84
6	Purpose Understood	0.97	0.83
7	Language Game	0.59	0.91

Variables Affecting Pair Work

1	Friends	0.81	0.87
2	Different Culture	0.67	1.36
3	Same Lang. Proficiency	0.64	1.02
4	Different L1	0.57	1.18
5	Same Education Level	0.55	0.95
6	Different Lang. Proficiency	0.43	0.89
7	Close in Age	0.34	0.97
8	Not Close in Age	0.28	0.96
9	Different Educ. Levels	0.27	0.86
10	Different Sex	0.25	1.00
11	Same Sex	0.09	1.06
12	Same Culture	-0.07	0.89
13	Not Friends	-0.08	0.97
14	Same L1	-0.15	0.97

Factors Affecting Group Work

1	Different Cultures	0.89	0.77
2	Different L1	0.61	0.97
3	Same Lang. Proficiency	0.60	0.91
4	A Friend in Group	0.49	0.91
5	Same Education Level	0.45	0.90
6	Mixed Sexes	0.43	0.85
7	Different Proficiency Levels	0.42	0.93
8	Different Levels of Education	0.34	0.84
9	Not Close in Age	0.25	0.90
10	Close in Age	0.12	0.93
11	Same Sex	-0.22	0.92
12	Same Culture	-0.28	1.01
12	Not a Friend	-0.28	1.00
13	Same L1	-0.34	1.10

TEACHERS (N=16)

Variables Intrinsic to Activity

Rank	Variable	Score	SD
1	Clarity	1.75	0.43
2	Interesting Topic	1.63	0.86
3	Exchanging information	1.25	0.75
4	Practicing Useful Language	1.44	0.49
5	Purpose Understood	1.25	0.75
6	Problem Solving	1.06	0.97
7	Language Game	0.56	0.79

Variables Affecting Pair Work

1	Same Language Proficiency	0.94	0.9
2	Same Education Level	0.63	0.78
3	Different L1	0.56	0.86
4	Same Sex	0.50	0.71
5	Friends	0.38	1.17
6	Close in Age	0.31	0.68
7	Different Lang. Proficiency	0.13	0.78
7	Different Cultures	0.13	0.48
7	Not Friends	0.13	0.99
8	Same Culture	-0.16	0.66
9	Same L1	-0.19	1.29
9	Not Close in Age	-0.19	0.63
10	Different Sex	-0.25	0.56
11	Different Educ. Levels	-0.31	0.68

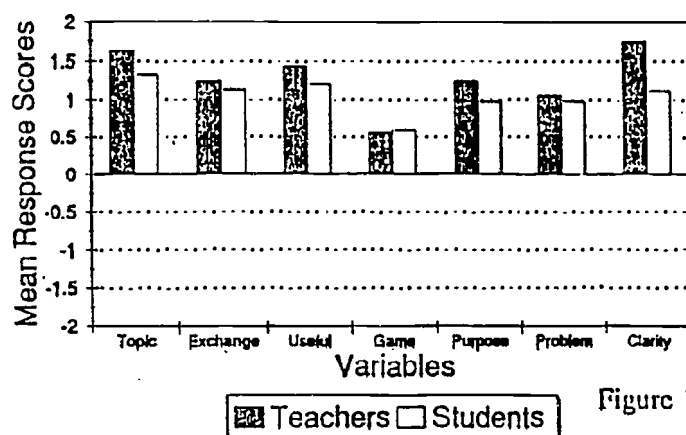
Factors Affecting Group Work

1	Same Level of Education	0.81	0.53
2	Different L1	0.63	0.93
3	Same Lang. Proficiency	0.38	0.93
4	Different Cultures	0.31	0.58
4	Friends	0.31	1.04
4	Close in Age	0.31	0.68
5	Mixed Sexes	0.20	0.83
5	No Friend in Group	-0.13	0.70
5	Not Close in Age	-0.13	0.48
6	Different Lang. Proficiency	-0.25	0.75
7	Same Culture	-0.27	0.68
8	Same Sex	0.00	0.79
9	Different Levels of Education	-0.50	0.50
10	Same L1	-0.56	0.93

Scores: 2.0=Strongly Agree; 1.0=Agree; 0=Neither Agree Nor Disagree;
 -1=Disagree; -2=Strongly Disagree

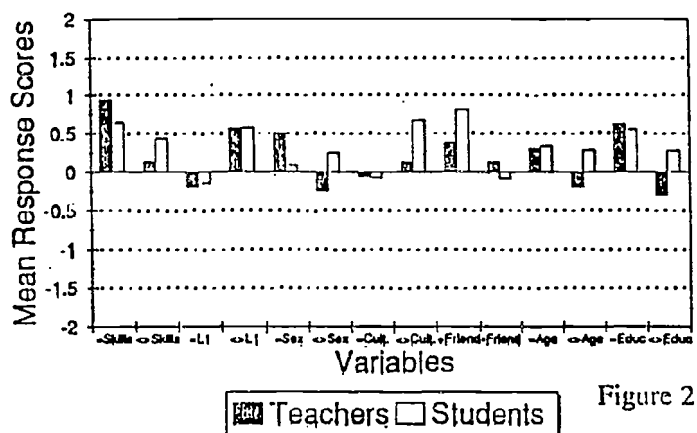
RESPONSE SUMMARY

Section A: Class Activities



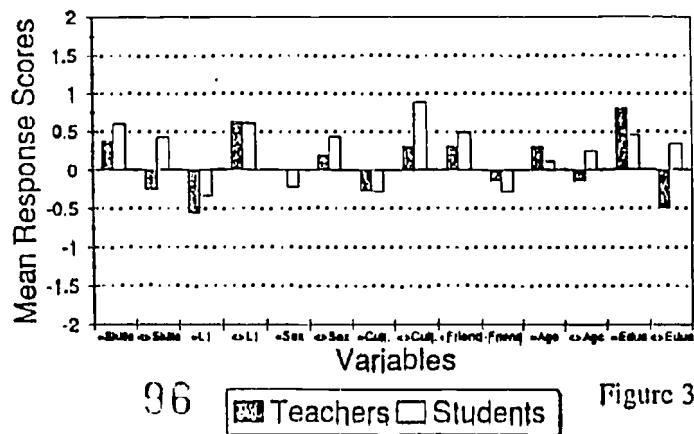
RESPONSE SUMMARY

Section B: Pair Work



RESPONSE SUMMARY

Section C: Group Work



SECTION A: INTRINSIC VARIABLES

Teacher/Student Score Plot, $r=0.893$

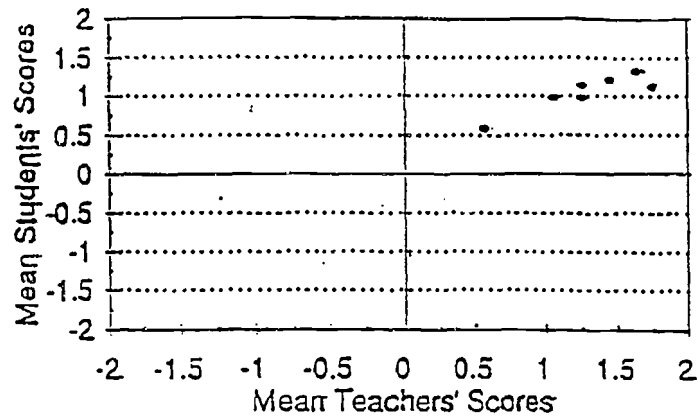


Figure 4

SECTION B: PAIR WORK VARIABLES

Teacher/Student Score Plot, $r=0.541$

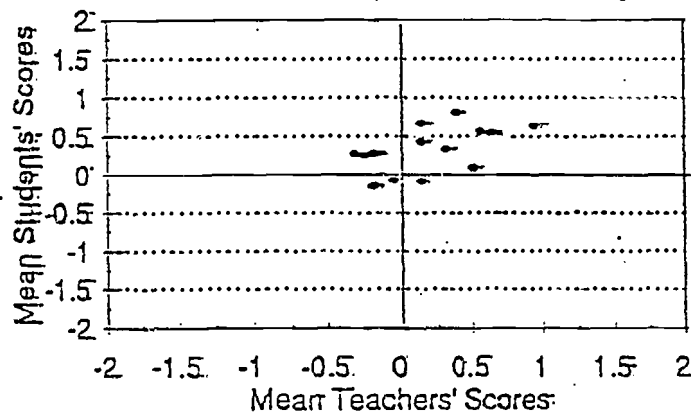


Figure 5

SECTION C: GROUP WORK VARIABLES

Teacher/Student Score Plot, $r=0.602$

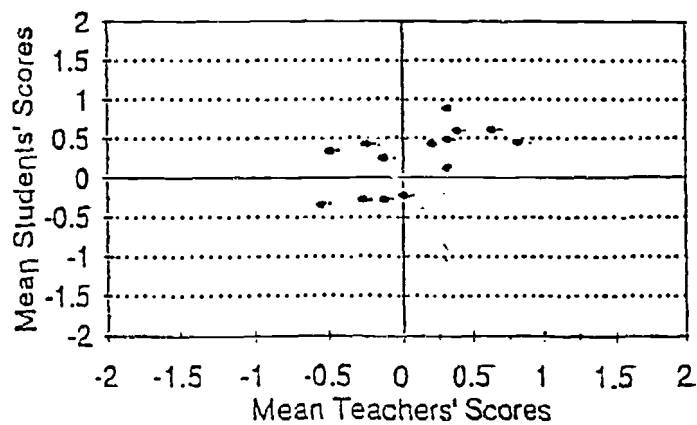


Figure 6

Figure 4-6: Correlation of Student and Teacher Responses

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There was a slightly higher positive correlation between the students' and teachers' mean scores in the group work set of variables ($r=0.602$) than the pair work set ($r=0.541$), but neither correlation was as strongly positive as between the intrinsic variables sets of scores ($r=0.893$).

Discussion

The variables which both students and teachers perceived as having the most positive effect on student participation are those which are intrinsic to the activities themselves. They are, therefore, the variables which the teacher can control when designing activities and preparing lesson plans. Although these intrinsic variables are important, as shown in the data, they are not the only variables affecting participation. Pairing and grouping arrangements also affect participation. This could explain why an activity might work well with one group and not another.

In the open-ended question on the survey several teachers raised the issue of the individual personalities of students. In a group where one student may have a dominant personality, others may not participate as much. One teacher used this to the group's advantage by appointing that person as the group leader whose task it was to get the activity going and make sure everyone contributed.

Teachers also reported that students tended to cluster with other students who spoke the same native language, but in order to facilitate more successful pair and group activities, they often separated the same native language speakers into different groups. But despite the observations that students tended to sit with others who spoke their native language, the data collected from the students' responses indicated that they are just as aware as teachers that diversity in pair work and group work is conducive to participation in activities.

Another issue raised by many of the teachers was the importance of the students feeling comfortable and feeling a part of the community of the classroom. This is not only one of the assumptions of current multilevel classroom methodology, but it is also the fifth element of Krashen's Input Hypothesis, referred to as the "low affective filter," defined as a mental block to language acquisition. Krashen argued that in order for acquisition to take place, the "affective filter" must be low (Krashen, 1985, p.3). When students feel relaxed, they can acquire language. Although students feel strongly about working with a *friend*, they also recognize that *different cultures* and *different first languages* are important variables affecting participation. In a multilevel classroom diversity and a sense of community in the classroom are recognized as important by both teachers and students in the multilevel classroom.

Further Research

This quantitative study sought to determine how students and teachers perceive the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic variables on student participation in multilevel-class activities. Because of the nature of the instrumentation, the study was limited to sampling the views of students with a proficiency level of beginner and above. In order to collect data on literacy students and low-beginners, and to gain more insight into the dynamics of the entire multilevel class, a qualitative study is suggested. A study including classroom observations, supplemented by teachers and student interviews would be helpful to gain further insight into the dynamics of the entire multilevel classroom. Another area worthy of inquiry would be to compare the responses of members of different ethnic groups. Although most of the multilevel classes included in this study were ethnically non-homogenous, ethnically homogenous multilevel classes are not uncommon. Research in this area of study would be useful for teachers in both homogenous and non-homogenous classes when grouping students for class activities.

Appendix A: Sample Student & Teacher Surveys

Appendix A Sample Surveys

Sample Student Survey

During a class activity, I usually participate the most in English when...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. ...I am interested in the topic					
2. ...I must exchange information with someone. (give or receive information)					
3. ...I know I will need to use the language we are practicing outside the classroom.					

Sample Teacher Survey

During a class activity, students usually participate the most in English when...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. ...they find the topic interesting.					
2. ...they must exchange information.					
3. ...they are practicing language that will be useful in their lives.					

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WHY DID I DROP OUT OF SCHOOL? An ABE/GED Project

Ophelia C. Bragg and Yvonne R. Harris

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Introduction

This research project is based on the fact that many persons, young and old, are in need of their GED. The idea of finding out "why" a person wouldn't continue his/her education was a mystery to us since we both graduated from college.

It is stated by Horace Mann: "As an apple is not in any proper sense an apple until it is ripe, so a human being is not in any proper sense a human being until he is educated." According to *Compton's Encyclopedia and Fact Index* (1984 Vol. 7), education is the process through which man endeavors to pass along to his children his hard-won wisdom and aspirations for a better world. This statement is so important because a "teacher" is someone who communicates information or skill so that someone else may learn. Parents are the first teachers. Just by living with their child and sharing their everyday activities with them, they teach him/her their language, values and mores, and their manners.

Information and skills are taught in a school by a person whose special occupation is teaching. Before 1830, most teachers were men. A century later, there were many women teaching, and the elementary school had become a woman's world. The original shift in the ratio between men and women occurred partly because educational leaders urged that, in the interest of simple justice, qualified women be employed. Another reason for the shift was the grouping of children by age in the graded schools that replaced the ungraded common school. In the ungraded school, where the students ranged from small children to adolescents, a female teacher was often faced with the problem of disciplining unruly boys who were bigger and stronger than she.

If one truly had to deal with disruptive arrangements in order to get a "formal education," then perhaps you can see why many students "dropped out" of school. This type of situation and classroom setting could and did cause many people to quit school with a "closed" mind to any type of further education.

Research Question

As stated before, it has been a mystery to understand why people dropped out of school since public education is "free." This project topic was chosen to help us understand as well as become more open-minded to the reasons why anyone would stop school. We wanted to get reasons from both sexes, as well as from different cultures and different ethnic groups.

Data Collection

The following methods were used to collect our data:

Written Questionnaires - See Appendix A
 Telephone Polls
 GED participants "passing the word" and flyers
 Church announcements
 Newspaper
 Video and written interviews
 Polling of 3 counties' ABE/GED programs (Amelia, Nottoway, and Prince Edward)
 Participant essays

Data Analysis

When we started compiling our data, it was fascinating to see the many reasons why the participants dropped out of school. We must say that the students' personal comments on the video showed their hurt from not having their diploma, as well as their eagerness to get their GED. (See Student Responses, Appendix B.) We were surprised to see that more women dropped out than men, more Blacks than Whites. The most common age for drop outs was 16.

The most frequent reason was that of being pregnant. Most people would assume that all of this responsibility would fall on the female; however, I found two young men who dropped out of school to support their responsibility - having a child.

We were surprised at how many students listed "teacher" as their reason. Most of the students felt like the teacher was against them in every way; therefore, they couldn't do anything to please her. You can see they would feel very frustrated with school and would lose any type of interest in it.

It was surprising to see that not as many of the students left school because of family problems, marriage, sickness, suspension or other type of reasons. It is very interesting to note that in the earlier years (1950-70's), not one of the reasons for dropping out was drug-related. It is a new problem that is appearing more and more in the 1990 years and is showing signs of the future drop-out rate.

We would also like to comment on the "no-school" response to the questionnaire, because this was a shock to us. We weren't aware of this situation that has caused much embarrassment for many adults. For a period of time, the Prince Edward County schools were closed rather than integrate them. Some students were able to complete their years in private schools, but many were not. Refer to *The Farmville (Virginia) Herald*, May 20, 1994 for details. Listed in the bibliography are several books or resources that give additional information about the closing of Prince Edward County schools.

Many of the participants hesitated before they would even attempt to fill out the questionnaire. Only by using words of encouragement did we get them to fill out the form as well as join the program.

Data:

		Ages:	
		13	1
Female	40	14	1
Male	17	15	5
		16	11
Black	31	17	6
White	26	18	6
		19	3

Reasons Given for Dropping Out:

Pregnant	12
Teacher	8
Marriage	4
Financial	3
Sickness	3
Family	3
Suspended	2
No School	1
Harassed	1
Drug Charges	1
Run Away	1

Summary

At this time, we would like to give suggestions for the schools at present as well as those yet to be built. Change to meet the needs and demands of a changing society. The young people in school today aren't interested in much of the past 200 year history, but are more into the technology of computers and things happening now. Since "pregnancy" was the most common reason given, we would advise all ABE/GED programs to open their doors to participants as well as provide a place for child-care, for those who may need to bring children with them.

There is so much one could say and quote from, but we think that the best thing anyone could do for all ABE/GED students is to have them recognized in a graduating ceremony; so that they can feel that sense of self-worth and happiness like any other graduate of a school or college.

In our own program, we have tried to encourage each participant to continue to strive for further education. To encourage the participants in our program to become more self confident and to continue believing in a dream, the poem "Believe in Yourself" was given to each one.

Believe in Yourself

*If you think you are beaten,
You are:
If you think you dare not,
You don't,
If you'd like to win, but think you can't,
It's almost a cinch you won't.
If you think you'll lose, you're lost.
For out in the world we find...
Success begins with
A woman/man's will;
It's all in a state of mind.
Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger or faster woman/man:
But soon or late
The woman/man who wins
Is the one who thinks she/he can!*

1988 Kalan, PA 19151 LC 19

Should anyone be interested in doing a follow-up or more in-depth research on this topic, we would suggest the following:

Study the people who were caught up in the Prince Edward County school closing. In what grade did they drop out of school? How old is the participant at the time of your research project?

"It's never too late to learn."

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Appendix B: Student Responses

Suggested Reading

Farmville (Virginia) Herald. 20 May 1994.

Pearson, Roy R. *Setting Up Private Schools*. Farmville, VA: Prince Edward School Foundation, 1961.

Smith, Robert C. *They Closed Their Schools*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1965.

WHY DID I DROP OUT OF SCHOOL?
ABE/GED - RESEARCH PROJECT

Name _____

Maiden Name _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

Date of birth _____ Sex _____ Race _____

Last school attended _____
city state

How old were you when you stopped? _____

Reasons for leaving school _____

Briefly describe the best year in school. Why? _____

The worst year in school. Why? _____

Would you like to join the ABE/GED program? _____

I'm already enrolled in the program. _____

*As a participant in this research project, your name will not be used
in anyway.

Sincerely,

Ophelia C. Bragg

Yvonne R. Harris

Appendix B Student Responses

We encouraged students to write about their GED experience after they completed the questionnaire.

The first think about being in the GED class that I have learn is that I know that I can be successful in any thing that I do. I have learned about Math, Spelling, Science, and a lot of other things that is important to me. Also being in the GED class have help me learn how to use the computer. I came to realize that being out of School for so long it help me to see my self in a different way. I needed to come back to school for myself because I wanted to better myself and to make my daughters proud of me and to let them know that any thing is possible If you believe in yourself. I really like to thank both of my teachers they both have been a big help to me and I thank them and I thank God.

My advice to someone that is plaining on dropping out of School is Don't, because a good education is the most important thing that you can have. Stay in School and be all that you can be.

My thoughts about GED. It is a very good program that ever came about. It has help me a lot. I hate to read, but I have began to read a little more now. I have came a long way. We need 225 points to get the GED. Now I only need 12 points. Reading with understanding is a good thing to do. The GED program helps you to move on with your education, better jobs, more money. To any one who maybe think about dropping out of school. DON'T DO THAT. STAY IN SCHOOL.

hope i can better myself work wise.

i hope kids now know they have it better than we did ten years ago your not pushed has hard.

The thing I like about the GED class is that when I ask for help I know I can get it and no question about it. When I am aggravated the teacher will talk to me for a minute and I am fine. And I like the people.

I would tell the kids that would drop out of school not to do that because it is very hard to get a job out in the big world. And the GED classes is fine but you need the High school diploma.

i came back to learn what I didnt learn the first time.

You don't want to have the feeling of lost time so do it the first time.

why i decide to return back to class to complete my ged as of now i owe to myself it has been my dream to better myself to reach this I'm willing to go the extra miles.

IF i could in anyway tell a young people today to stay in school and be all that you can be used your head i mean you brain learn all you can today because tomorrow is not promise what you learn today will last you a life times so take it from some ones who knows be smart and study hard and thank god for mother and father

I would like me to get my ged because i quit in the nine grade and i would like to learn more skills on how to get better jobs also learn how to do math again.

you will be sorry, high school education means so much these days. hang in there

My thoughts on going to my GED is the best thing that has happened education wise that has happened to me. I am hoping that I will be able to pass my test. So that I can do better for my children and to go to college. to make a better life for my children I lost my first chance by quitting High School and this my last chance. This will be the time for me to prove to my self

I think that this is a good chance for people to better their self so that people can start to hold their head up and know they have made the first step on having a better chance in the real world.

PERCEPTIONS OF A FAMILY LEARNING PROGRAM

Muriel M. Howard

Demographics

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is a unique geographical entity. It consists of two counties, Accomack in the north and Northampton in the south. These two counties are separated from the rest of Virginia by the Chesapeake Bay on the west and south and the state of Maryland on the north.

Accomack County comprises 476 miles of flat and fertile land. Its population is 31,703 (1990 census). The per capita income is \$13,066 (1990 census).

Northampton County comprises 209 square miles including ten barrier islands. Its population is 13,061 and its per capita income \$12,145 (1990 census).

The largest employers are two poultry processing plants, the National Aeronautical and Space Administration/AEGIS Combat Systems Center, federal installations, and the local hospital. The area is economically dependent on these employers, tourism, agriculture and seafood harvesting/processing. Most employment opportunities are low skilled and low paid. Agriculture and seafood industries are seasonal. The unemployment level is 8.3% for Accomack and 5.5% for Northampton County (12/90 Virginia Employment Commission) compared to statewide figures of 4.9%.

According to the Eastern Shore Literacy Council (1990), 8,000 individuals are illiterate. The average educational age for individuals over 55 years of age is 4th grade and for those under 55 years of age is 9th grade. The school drop out rate is 4.8% in Accomack and 4.9% in Northampton.

There is one main highway, Route 13, running north and south. Most businesses are clustered close to this highway. Many residents live in small communities and "necks." There is no public transportation and many individuals lack reliable private transportation.

History of this Program

The Family Learning Program began in Northampton County in 1989 as a pilot project when the Eastern Shore Community College received a \$5,000.00 one-year grant.

The statement of need for the program said:

Northampton is one of two poor rural communities on Virginia's Eastern Shore where intergenerational illiteracy is common-place. The county has a population of about 15,000. There are an estimated 2,400 families, 800 headed by women with no husbands present. Thirty-five percent of all births are to women under age 20 - the second highest percentage rate in the state. Twenty-one percent of families live below the poverty level - the highest percentage in the state - and 51% of the female headed households have incomes below the poverty level - the highest rate in the state.

A recapitulation of these figures is given in Appendix A.

The goals of the program were:

1. Improve the educational level of the parents.
2. Enable parents to become comfortable with their children's teachers and in the school environment.
3. Increase the fluency of literacy in the home and improve parenting skills.

At the conclusion of the 1989-1990 school year the Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) decided to continue the program by providing an instructor and some materials. Since then, the program continues with a flux in attendance ranging from two or three to as many as ten. Membership has fluctuated because several students became employed, several moved to other areas and several

were no longer able to attend because their hours of work conflicted with the days and hours of class time.

The students are mothers, fathers, grandmothers and/or grandfathers ranging in age from 18 to 77. There is no formal curriculum. Class activities are determined by the expressed needs of the members, e.g., if a parent says his child needs help with adjectives, the instructor teaches a lesson(s) about adjectives and shows the parents techniques to use with the child. This might be finding adjectives in newspaper articles and/or practice sheets. Members have their own instructional materials such as ABC books, sandpaper letters, behavior charts, etc.

Class discussions address any subject members propose. We have discussed child abuse and neglect, sex education, pros and cons of having additional children, the stock market, AIDS, ADHD, drugs, enuresis, good nutrition, diet and exercise, and a wide range of other topics. Any needs parents express are addressed. This may include help/advice on health, housing, finances, etc.

There are fun activities: shopping trips, seasonal art projects which are done in class and can be done at home with the children.

There is a tremendous emphasis on reading. Parents are given at least one book a month. The instructor demonstrates reading techniques to involve the children. Students practice reading in class and then read in their children's classrooms.

The class attempts to address all needs of the parents through the use of the instructor's knowledge, resource persons and materials, and referrals to appropriate sources.

Methods

I wanted to find out how the parents/caregivers participating in the program perceived it. I also wanted to learn the perceptions of the principal at whose school the program originated and took place as well as the perceptions of some of the teachers. In addition, I wanted to learn how the children of the program participants were doing academically.

The current students were surveyed for this paper. The survey consisted of taped interviews addressing previously presented questions. There were two exceptions. The African American father (designated MA) wrote his answers. When the son of MA and the mother (designated C) heard his parents discussing the project, he said he wanted to answer the questions. The researcher felt the son's interest should be pursued and he dictated his answers to C.

The students are:

- An African American mother, (C), age 32, two children.
- An African American mother, (M), age 39, one adopted child.
- An African American grandmother, (G), age 77, grandmother of adopted child and mother of M.
- An African American mother, (B), age 32, mother of three children.
- An African American grandmother, (E), age 61, with one grandchild for whom she has primary care and several other grandchildren whom she cares for intermittently.
- An African American father, (MA), age 39, spouse of C and father of child whose responses are included.
- An African American child, (CH), age 10.

The researcher also interviewed the principal at whose school the program took place and solicited comments from teachers who taught the children of the parents involved in the program.

The research was a project to look at a Family Learning Program and evolved into asking the following questions:

Who Are We?

Teachers, parents, grandparents, and children involved in a small Family Learning Program in a small rural community dedicated to improving the quality of life by providing skills needed for success in life.

What Have We Done?

Provided books to share at home and read to classes in school.

Helped parents develop improved parenting skills and class members feel comfortable in the school setting and made them allies in their children's education and school activities.

What Are We Doing?

Planning on-going Family Learning Activities for present students and out-reach programs to attract new students.

Findings

Student Interviews

The questions and some of the responses follow:

1. How did you become involved in the program?

I found that the participants became involved in two ways: by responding to a flyer from the community college which was sent home via the children and by being recruited by a family member who was attending. The responses were equally divided.

M: My child came home with a paper telling about the class. Everybody is always sending something home, so at first I decided I would not go. Then I changed my mind and decided to try it and see what it was like. I went to class, enjoyed it and stayed. The teacher explained what the class was about and it sounded interesting.

G: I am the grandmother to T. My daughter asked me to come. I thought about it. I wanted to help my grandchild, so I came.

2. How long have you been involved in the program?

I learned that three participants had been in the program five years and three had been in three years.

3. Do you believe your child/children benefitted from the program? How or how not?

Most parents stressed two benefits to the children: the reading books sent home to be read, shared, and kept; and the skills papers provided for the children. When parents said a child needed help in a certain areas, the teacher taught that skill to the parents, had them practice the skills on practice sheets, and then sent sheets home for the children.

C: Yes. Through materials sent home to help him with his work, especially the reading books. He is more eager to read.

M: Yes. When the teacher gave T papers in class and she didn't understand them, I'd tell you about it in class. We would discuss it. You'd give us other papers. I'd work with her at home. By her practicing at home, when she was retested or asked questions, she knew it. It got to the point where she would ask for papers. Test times were a whole lot easier. There were times I would forget to tell her I brought papers home and she would ask for them.

Then she would say, "Let me pick through them and choose" instead of me passing them to her.

- B: Yes, most definitely. When I first started attending class the parents introduced themselves to the class and we told stories about our children. I watched my children closely to see if this class was for me, and it most definitely was. My children were not progressing like they are now. Sometimes they had problems in areas of reading, math, spelling. Now that they have been helped through this program, they are making the honor roll every nine weeks. If it wasn't for this program and the teacher my children wouldn't accomplish anything like they have accomplished. The papers help them a lot. The other activities help also.*

4. Has the program helped you? How or how not?

Most responses fell into five areas: 1) Parents said the program helped them by providing instruction for discipline and motivation, 2) providing information related to parenting skills, 3) helping them deal with personal problems, 4) making them partners in their children's education, and 5) enhancing their own academic learning.

- C: Yes. I often asked the question "What kind of parent would I make"? Believe it or not, I had doubts and fears. I feel stronger as a parent. Even Start [program's original name] is like having a manual. You get instructions on how to discipline and motivate your children.*
- M: Yes. As a parent I've learned to put more responsibility on T. I let her face the consequences if she doesn't do something she is supposed to do. For example, studying for a spelling test. I used to hound her. It's taken some doing but I finally got to that point. I tell her, "Well, if you get it wrong you get it wrong. If you have to stay back you have to stay back." I'm not going to try to find out why, because at times she gets a little lazy along the way and she's just going to have to face the consequences. I let her face up to her consequences.*
- G: Yes. I enjoy learning to do things. I enjoy the explanations. I have learned to write and count better. I was 50 years old and couldn't spell. I regret I never received much schooling. I never went to school on a regular basis. I was an only girl of 12 children. I never went to school a whole session. Each time my mother had a baby I was kept home to do the housework. Then mother worked in the fields and I had to take care of the children. I was never taught how to figure. Mr. W. taught me how to sing the five tables when I was seven years old.*
- B: The program has helped me. By coming to class every week and talking about my personal problems, I learn how to deal with them. When I have problems, I learn how to deal with them. When I have problems concerning myself and/or my children that I can't solve, I would discuss them in class - like how to cope with sickness in the family and my circumstances before my mother died, and when children don't understand - you feel better taking to an older person.*
- E: Yes. I became a partner in my grandson's education. I became more aware of the need to praise my grandchildren every day. I became able to help them with their work.*

5. What are the effects of your being part of this program?

Parents stated effects such as: 1) learning more about themselves as parents and people, 2) developing more patience with their children, 3) learning to take time for themselves, 4) learning to function as a team so that the child could no longer play one parent against the other, and 5) learning coping skills.

- C: I have more patience with my children. We are listening and sharing experiences.*

M: The hardest thing of all was learning to take time for myself. It seems like a luxury.... I wouldn't give her the responsibility to do what she can do. I just did it. And it seemed like it was more and more.

I've learned a few more parenting skills. As you know, we had special problems and you first mentioned going to the guidance counselor, which I did. She told me she thought it was the adjustment problem in the transition from Head Start to Kindergarten because the hours were different... Then you suggested, after classes, outside help so I contacted the mental health clinic.... Dr. B. diagnosed that she was ADHD. So, now knowing that, it wasn't just ordinary child stuff. It was because she just couldn't control herself. So now I have to unlearn some of the bad habits you might say I responded with. I have to relearn how to respond - some of them I've already learned - how to deal with that. The class has been helpful because she had gotten to the point her work wasn't as good as it could have been. I know she has the potential but she couldn't sit still long enough to really do her best and she was always needing improvement in everything. Starting with the class as well as the Ritalin, she has improved in everything and she's right up there with satisfactory and outstanding from behavior on down to all of her work. Of course, she gets a little lazy sometimes.

E: I am more patient with my grandchildren. We work together on various projects. My grandson enjoys our special times together.

MA: Learning to cope with problems arising with children and school.

CH: My self esteem [encourages me to do my best]. Parents coming to read. Pictures and materials to help us.

6. What are your suggestions for this program?

Parents stressed publicity and availability. They suggested various types of publicity such as PTA, media, and word of mouth. They also suggested increased parent involvement (participation), staggered class times, and having a summer program that would include parents and children.

C: Continue to tell parents about the class. Have two classes - one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Provide transportation, if needed. Advertise in the PTA and on Cable TV. Send flyers home with children - do this in both counties.

E: Increase parent involvement. Schedule day and evening classes, possibly rotate them. This might give people who work a chance to come.

MA: Summer program where both parent and child participates. Videotaping of different events. This gives the child something to look at and boost them to do more.

Interview with the Principal

The principal felt that the program was a plus and definitely worthwhile because the parents: 1) "exemplified the best form of public relations," 2) learned about curriculum and test scores (standardized), and 3) became more actively involved in the life of the school.

Questions and responses follow:

1. How did the program originate?

Mrs. Dooley [AE Specialist] presented the school with a rough draft of the program and the Principal and Assistant Principal made suggestions. Letters were sent to the parents of the Junior Kindergarten class. Then it was expanded and the faculty and PTA made referrals. Mrs. Dooley made the contacts.

2. How long have you been involved in the program?

Five years.

3. What are your perceptions of the program?

I see the program as a plus. The parents felt welcome and comfortable in the school. The parents exemplified the best form of public relations. Because of their involvement in the program, they knew what was going on. If someone in the community "bad-mouthed" the school, these parents advised them to go to the school and learn first hand what was going on. By doing this, they were able to dispel lots of rumors and innuendos.

People in the program learned a lot about the curriculum and test scores and were therefore not intimidated by them. They served as good school resources by reading to classes, volunteering for field trips and helping in the classroom. They became more actively involved in the life of the school.

They were kind of like an extended family and talked about their child's class as though they were part of it. They were well accepted by the staff and students. When members of the class made classroom observations, they were perceived as wanting to help rather than finding fault.

4. What are the effects of the program on the school?

It was definitely worthwhile because the perceptions of the parents had a positive impact in the community. Their positive perceptions were passed on to others in the community thus mushrooming and enlarging good feelings about the school.

5. What other comments would you like to make?

The program is definitely worthwhile, even if working with only a handful of students. Negatives - Lack of space in the school. Had to contend with the moving location of the class. However, everyone did well!

Parent Comments

Parents said the program was worthwhile because it made it easier for them to deal with parenting issues. One parent said, "Parenting is hard, especially in the nineties and this program is like having a manual [for parenting]." They were strong in their opinion that the program should be continued.

- C: *The program should definitely be continued and, hopefully, more parents will become involved because it's worth the time.*
- B: *Get more parents involved! The parents don't know what they are missing. If we had more parents to participate in things like this program, I think it would be easier on the parents to cope with their everyday problems. I have given talks at PTA meetings with Mrs. D. This program could be more helpful, exciting and delightful if we had more parents involved.*
- E: *The papers you gave us were very helpful. I was able to use them this summer. I was able to teach the little children some of their colors and letters. I taught my left-handed grandchild how to cut and color.*

Teacher Comments

Teachers felt the program has a positive impact because it enabled parents to do a better job of helping their children at home. Parents were more aware of what went on in the schools, both academically and socially. They saw that the students were proud of their parents' participation.

- SJ: The parents developed an understanding of the school program and what the teacher/school was trying to accomplish. Because of their understanding, parents were able to do a good job of helping their children at home. Many parents want to help, but don't know how.*
- SC: The program worked tremendously well because it helped the parents understand and they were able to help their children. The parents were more aware of the school's happenings. The students self-esteem increased because of the pride they felt when their parent read to the class.*

Test Results

I wanted to determine the academic performance of the children whose parents were in the Family Learning Class. She further wished to compare the children's scores with those of their peer group (all county students at their grade level).

The parents were assured names would be confidential and they readily gave written permission for the researcher to receive and use copies of the children's standardized test scores. The Assistant Superintendent for Northampton County Public Schools was advised of the nature of the research project and he readily provided the relevant county test scores.

These test scores and a brief analysis of each child follow in Appendix B. (Note: GE = Grade Equivalent, which is self explanatory.)

The Percentile scores reported are "National Percentile Rank" scores and indicate the performance of a "typical student" in the relationship to the performance of other students in the same grade in the nation. For example, a percentile score of 55 should be interpreted as indicating the typical (or "average") student in the group did as well as or better than 55 percent of comparable students in the national norm reference group.

The school principal advised that a consultant at a recent in-service meeting said to look at Grade Equivalent scores to determine academic growth.

Comments

I found that parents, principal, and teachers had a very positive view of the program and are eager for it to continue. They would like to see more parents become involved. There were no negative comments even though they ere verbally solicited.

The children's test scores show academic growth and a gradual climb toward the scores of their peers. All the children, with the exception of T, show an increase in performance on standardized test scores. (T was recently diagnosed ADHD and this affects ability on standardized tests.) All the children profiled were considered "at risk" children when they entered school. They were/are all eligible for Chapter One services. Three children N, W, and M have scores indicating that they are within range for their grade level. I believe the children's achievement on the test scores is indicative that literacy within the family is improving.

The class has become a support group and has "been there" for members during trying times such as illness and deaths of family members, divorces, etc. The class has become responsible for its own learning. Parents are bringing in newspaper and magazine articles and taped videos to share and use for discussion.

Good things happened. Parents and children shared and enjoyed experiences together. Parents and caregivers are learning to work as a team. Several parents participated in the school savings plan to save for their children's education. Class members continue to try to recruit new members to the class.

I found that as time went on and parents returned each year, learning appeared to be exponential and that having parents participate more than one year appears advantageous to parents and children

This project was also a real learning experience for the me. I learned that I need to develop better interviewing skills and would suggest the addition of a course in interviewing techniques and skills at a VAILL Conference or other professional meeting.

I also learned the advantages and limitations of the computer, i.e., I wanted to prepare bar graphs showing the standardized test scores by having pupil score and the county score side by side but was unable to do this.

Both the parents and I were intimidated by the tape recorder. Parents said, "I don't mind, if you don't make me listen to myself." As a result, I will use a tape recorder during some class sessions to help overcome fears.

Recommendations

I can make the following recommendations based on this study:

Find sources of funding to establish more family learning classes to help overcome the educational deficit if at risk children.

Find ways to get more parents involved in classes. Look for incentives, perhaps through social services programs.

Find modes of transportation for parents in small, isolated, rural areas and areas lacking public transportation.

Consider making family learning an integral part of children's education by providing funding and space for programs.

Appendix A: Northampton County statistics

Appendix B: Student Test Results

Appendix A
Northampton County Statistics

Population	15,000
Families	2,400
Female-Headed Households	800

<u>Item</u>	<u>Northampton Co. %</u>	<u>State %</u>	<u>Rank</u>
25 yrs. & older, less than 12 yrs.in school	60.1	37.6	31st
Families in poverty	20.9	9.2	1st
Female-Headed Households in poverty	50.9	29.5	4th
Children in poverty	33.4	14.9	1st
Births to mothers under 20	35.3	15.5	2nd

Ranks are of all cities and counties in Virginia. Source: County and City Data Book, 1983 U. S. Bureau of the Census

APPENDIX B
COMPARISON OF STUDENT LEVEL VERSUS COUNTY LEVEL
TEST SCORES FROM IOWA TEST BASIC SKILLS
GRADE EQUIVALENT

STUDENT T

GRADES	1ST			2ND		
SUBJECTS	S	C	D	S	C	D
LISTENING	0.9	1.3	(0.4)	1.6	2.6	(1.0)
WORD ANALYSIS	0.8	1.2	(0.4)	1.8	2.2	(0.4)
VOCABULARY	0.7	1.3	(0.6)	1.8	2.3	(0.5)
READING COMP	1.1	1.4	(0.3)	1.7	2.5	(0.8)
SPELLING	1.0	1.6	(0.6)	1.6	2.6	(1.0)
CAPITALIZATION	2.1	1.5	0.6	1.8	2.8	(1.0)
PUNCTUATION	0.9	1.8	(0.9)	1.1	2.8	(1.7)
USAGE & EXPRESSION	0.8	1.4	(0.6)	1.4	2.8	(1.4)
TOTAL LANGUAGE	1.2	1.4	(0.2)	1.8	2.8	(1.0)
VISUAL MATERIALS	1.1	1.2	(0.1)	0.6	2.3	(1.7)
REFERENCE MATERIALS	1.1	1.3	(0.2)	2.1	2.4	(0.3)
WORK STUDY TOTAL	1.0	1.3	(0.3)	1.4	2.4	(1.0)
MATH CONCEPTS	0.8	1.4	(0.6)	2.1	2.6	(0.5)
PROBLEM SOLVING	1.6	1.2	0.4	1.2	2.4	(1.2)
COMPUTATION	1.3	1.5	(0.2)	1.7	2.6	(0.9)
MATH TOTAL	1.3	1.5	(0.2)	1.7	2.5	(0.8)
BASIC COMPOSITE	1.0	1.4	(0.4)	1.7	2.4	(0.7)
COMPLETE COMPOSITE	1.0	1.4	(0.4)	1.6	2.5	(0.9)
SOCIAL STUDIES						
SCIENCE						

S = STUDENT SCORE

C = COUNTY SCORE

D = DIFFERENCE

**COMPARISON OF STUDENT LEVEL VERSUS COUNTY LEVEL
TEST SCORES FROM IOWA TEST BASIC SKILLS
PERCENTILE RANKING**

STUDENT T

GRADES	1ST			2ND		
SUBJECTS	S	C	D	S	C	D
LISTENING	20	34	(14)	15	44	(29)
WORD ANALYSIS	17	31	(14)	20	33	(13)
VOCABULARY	14	34	(20)	20	34	(14)
READING COMP	24	36	(12)	17	43	(26)
SPELLING	22	46	(24)	13	49	(36)
CAPITALIZATION	68	42	26	18	54	(36)
PUNCTUATION	16	55	(39)	4	52	(48)
USAGE & EXPRESSION	22	35	(13)	13	50	(37)
TOTAL LANGUAGE	24	47	(23)	4	52	(48)
VISUAL MATERIALS	25	28	(3)	3	35	(32)
REFERENCE MATERIALS	16	31	(15)	28	40	(12)
WORK STUDY TOTAL	19	31	(12)	10	39	(29)
MATH CONCEPTS	6	31	(25)	23	44	(21)
PROBLEM SOLVING	47	28	19	7	38	(31)
COMPUTATION	28	44	(16)	7	47	(40)
MATH TOTAL	21	30	(9)	7	41	(34)
BASIC COMPOSITE	18	36	(18)	12	40	(28)
COMPLETE COMPOSITE	17	34	(17)	8	40	(32)
SOCIAL STUDIES						
SCIENCE						

S = STUDENT SCORE
C = COUNTY SCORE
D = DIFFERENCE

GRADE EQUIVALENT TABLE FOR "T"

Grade Level	Number of areas that student reached or exceeded County level.	Total County Areas tested
1st	2	18
2nd	0	18

A comparison of G.E Scores from grade One and Grade Two show the following growth:

GROWTH TABLE FOR "T"

Amount of Growth	Area(s) of Growth
2 months	Punctuation
3 months	Math Concepts
4 months	Usage and Expression Work Study Math Computation Total Math
6 months	Reading Comprehension Spelling Complete Battery
7 months	Listening Basic Battery
1 year	Word Analysis Reference Materials
1 year, 1 month	Vocabulary

Decline Table for "T"

Amount of Decline	Area of Decline
3 months	Capitalization
4 months	Problem Solving
5 months	Visual Materials

PERCENTILES OF "T"

Grade Level	Number of areas that student reached or exceeded County Percentiles	Total County Areas tested
1st	2	18
2nd	0	18

Note: T was only recently diagnosed ADHD (early 1994).

The school guidance counselor concurs with me that being ADHD has an effect on standardized test scores.

A survey of T's report cards show better performance than indicated on the standardized test.

**COMPARISON OF STUDENT LEVEL VERSUS COUNTY LEVEL
TEST SCORES FROM IOWA TEST BASIC SKILLS
GRADE EQUIVALENT**

STUDENT N

GRADES	1ST			2ND			3RD		
SUBJECTS	S	C	D	S	C	D	S	C	D
LISTENING	1.8	1.3	0.5	1.4	2.4	(1.0)			
WORD ANALYSIS	1.3	1.3	0.0	2.4	2.2	0.2			
VOCABULARY	1.5	1.1	0.4	2.1	2.2	(0.1)	3.3	3.2	0.1
READING COMP	1.1	1.2	(0.1)	3.0	2.2	0.8	3.5	3.3	0.2
SPELLING	1.1	1.3	(0.2)	3.5	2.3	1.2	3.3	3.5	(0.2)
CAPITALIZATION	0.8	1.6	(0.8)	5.5	2.4	3.1	3.7	3.8	(0.1)
PUNCTUATION	1.5	1.5	0.0	4.8	2.9	1.9	3.1	3.7	(0.6)
USAGE & EXPRESSION	1.7	1.3	0.4	4.5	2.7	1.8	2.3	3.3	(1.0)
TOTAL LANGUAGE	1.3	1.5	(0.2)	4.6	2.6	2.0	3.1	3.6	(0.5)
VISUAL MATERIALS	1.9	1.2	0.7	2.2	2.2	0.0	2.8	3.2	(0.4)
REFERENCE MATERIALS	0.1	1.4	(1.3)	2.5	2.3	0.2	4.0	3.3	0.7
WORK STUDY TOTAL	1.3	1.3	0.0	2.4	2.2	0.2	3.4	3.3	0.1
MATH CONCEPTS	1.7	1.7	0.0	3.4	2.5	0.9	4.0	3.5	0.5
PROBLEM SOLVING	1.0	1.3	(0.3)	2.5	2.3	0.2	4.0	3.2	0.8
COMPUTATION	1.6	1.6	0.0	3.8	2.7	1.1	5.1	3.7	1.4
MATH TOTAL	1.4	1.5	(0.1)	3.2	2.5	0.7	4.4	3.5	0.9
BASIC COMPOSITE	1.3	1.3	0.0	2.8	2.3	0.5	3.6	3.4	0.2
COMPLETE COMPOSITE	1.4	1.4	0.0	2.7	2.4	0.3	3.5	3.4	0.1
SOCIAL STUDIES									
SCIENCE									

S = STUDENT SCORE

C = COUNTY SCORE

D = DIFFERENCE

**COMPARISON OF STUDENT LEVEL VERSUS COUNTY LEVEL
TEST SCORES FROM IOWA TEST BASIC SKILLS
PERCENTILE RANKING**

STUDENT N

GRADES	1ST			2ND			3RD		
SUBJECTS	S	C	D	S	C	D	S	C	D
LISTENING	57	35	22	11	37	(26)			
WORD ANALYSIS	34	35	(1)	38	32	6			
VOCABULARY	43	27	16	28	30	(2)	50	33	17
READING COMP	24	27	(3)	63	34	29	32	39	(7)
SPELLING	26	36	(10)	74	35	39	78	44	34
CAPITALIZATION	13	47	(34)	99	39	60	16	52	(36)
PUNCTUATION	43	43	0	91	54	37	61	50	11
USAGE & EXPRESSION	50	39	11	85	49	36	70	41	29
TOTAL LANGUAGE	30	42	(12)	93	47	46	59	47	12
VISUAL MATERIALS	60	27	33	32	31	1	69	36	33
REFERENCE MATERIALS	10	34	(24)	42	34	8	73	38	35
WORK STUDY TOTAL	32	31	1	40	34	6	74	39	35
MATH CONCEPTS	49	46	3	78	41	37	43	41	2
PROBLEM SOLVING	23	34	(11)	43	37	6	5	36	(31)
COMPUTATION	51	52	(1)	92	50	42	82	55	27
MATH TOTAL	32	39	(7)	74	41	33	31	44	(13)
BASIC COMPOSITE	31	33	(2)	55	33	22	51	40	11
COMPLETE COMPOSITE	35	33	2	51	36	15	52	41	11
SOCIAL STUDIES									
SCIENCE									

S = STUDENT SCORE
C = COUNTY SCORE
D = DIFFERENCE

GRADE EQUIVALENT TABLE FOR "N"

Grade Level	Number of areas that student reached or exceeded County level.	Total County Areas tested
1st	11	18
2nd	16	18
3rd	10	16

A comparison of G.E. Scores from grade One through Grade Three show the following growth:

GROWTH TABLE FOR "N"

Amount of Growth	Area(s) of Growth
6 months	Usage and Expression
9 months	Visual Materials
1 year, 1 month	Word Analysis
1 year, 6 months	Punctuation
1 year, 8 months	Vocabulary Math Concepts Total Language
2 years, 1 month	Work Study Complete Battery
2 years, 3 months	Basic Composite
2 years, 4 months	Reading Comprehension
2 years, 9 months	Capitalization
3 years	Total Math Math Problem Solving
3 years, 3 months	Reference Materials
3 years, 5 months	Math Computation

Note: N showed a 4 month decline in listening between grades one and two.

PERCENTILES OF "N"

Grade Level	Number of areas that student reached or exceeded County Percentiles	Total County Areas tested
1st	8	18
2nd	16	18
3rd	12	16

**COMPARISON OF STUDENT LEVEL VERSUS COUNTY LEVEL
TEST SCORES FROM IOWA TEST BASIC SKILLS
GRADE EQUIVALENT**

STUDENT W

GRADES	1ST			2ND			3RD		
SUBJECTS	S	C	D	S	C	D	S	C	D
LISTENING	1.1	1.3	(0.2)	2.6	2.4	0.2			
WORD ANALYSIS	1.0	1.3	(0.3)	2.4	2.2	0.2			
VOCABULARY	1.0	1.1	(0.1)	2.3	2.2	0.1	3.3	3.2	0.1
READING COMP	0.8	1.2	(0.4)	1.8	2.2	(0.4)	3.5	3.3	0.2
SPELLING	0.5	1.3	(0.8)	1.2	2.3	(1.1)	3.3	3.5	(0.2)
CAPITALIZATION	0.7	1.6	(0.9)	2.6	2.4	0.2	3.7	3.8	(0.1)
PUNCTUATION	2.2	1.5	0.7	2.5	2.9	(0.4)	3.1	3.7	(0.6)
USAGE & EXPRESSION	1.5	1.3	0.2	2.0	2.7	(0.7)	2.3	3.3	(1.0)
TOTAL LANGUAGE	1.2	1.5	(0.3)	2.1	2.6	(0.5)	3.1	3.6	(0.5)
VISUAL MATERIALS	0.2	1.2	(1.0)	1.1	2.2	(1.1)	2.8	3.2	(0.4)
REFERENCE MATERIALS	0.9	1.4	(0.5)	1.2	2.3	(1.1)	4.0	3.3	0.7
WORK STUDY TOTAL	0.1	1.3	(1.2)	1.2	2.2	(1.0)	3.4	3.3	0.1
MATH CONCEPTS	1.3	1.7	(0.4)	3.1	2.5	0.6	4.0	3.5	0.5
PROBLEM SOLVING	1.2	1.3	(0.1)	2.7	2.3	0.4	4.0	3.2	0.8
COMPUTATION	1.4	1.6	(0.2)	3.2	2.7	0.5	5.1	3.7	1.4
MATH TOTAL	1.3	1.5	(0.2)	3.0	2.5	0.5	4.4	3.5	0.9
BASIC COMPOSITE	0.9	1.3	(0.4)	2.1	2.3	(0.2)	3.6	3.4	0.2
COMPLETE COMPOSITE	1.0	1.4	(0.4)	2.2	2.4	(0.2)	3.5	3.4	0.1
SOCIAL STUDIES									
SCIENCE									

S = STUDENT SCORE

C = COUNTY SCORE

D = DIFFERENCE

**COMPARISON OF STUDENT LEVEL VERSUS COUNTY LEVEL
TEST SCORES FROM IOWA TEST BASIC SKILLS
PERCENTILE RANKING**

STUDENT W

GRADES	1ST			2ND			3RD		
SUBJECTS	S	C	D	S	C	D	S	C	D
LISTENING	26	35	(9)	45	37	8			
WORD ANALYSIS	23	35	(12)	38	32	6			
VOCABULARY	22	27	(5)	34	30	4	37	33	4
READING COMP	13	27	(14)	20	34	(14)	45	39	6
SPELLING	6	36	(30)	6	35	(29)	38	44	(6)
CAPITALIZATION	9	47	(38)	45	39	6	32	52	(20)
PUNCTUATION	68	43	25	41	54	(13)	32	50	(18)
USAGE & EXPRESSION	44	39	5	32	49	(17)	20	41	(21)
TOTAL LANGUAGE	24	42	(18)	27	47	(20)	31	47	(16)
VISUAL MATERIALS	6	27	(21)	9	31	(22)	24	36	(12)
REFERENCE MATERIALS	16	34	(18)	6	34	(28)	61	38	23
WORK STUDY TOTAL	7	31	(24)	6	34	(28)	43	39	4
MATH CONCEPTS	26	46	(20)	66	41	25	61	41	20
PROBLEM SOLVING	31	34	(3)	50	37	13	62	36	26
COMPUTATION	35	52	(17)	77	50	27	95	55	40
MATH TOTAL	26	39	(13)	66	41	25	80	44	36
BASIC COMPOSITE	14	33	(19)	26	33	(7)	47	40	7
COMPLETE COMPOSITE	17	33	(16)	29	36	(7)	44	41	3
SOCIAL STUDIES									
SCIENCE									

S = STUDENT SCORE
C = COUNTY SCORE
D = DIFFERENCE

GRADE EQUIVALENT TABLE FOR "W"

Grade Level	Number of areas that student reached or exceeded County level.	Total County Areas tested
1st	2	18
2nd	8	18
3rd	10	16

GROWTH TABLE FOR "W"

Amount of Growth	Area(s) of Growth
8 months	Usage and Expression
9 months	Punctuation
1 year, 4 months	Word Analysis
1 year, 5 months	Listening
1 year, 9 months	Total Language
2 years, 2 months	Visual Materials
2 years, 3 months	Vocabulary
2 years, 5 months	Complete Battery
2 years, 7 months	Reading Comprehension Basic Battery Math Concepts
2 years, 8 months	Math Problem Solving Work Study Spelling

GROWTH TABLE FOR "W" CONT.

3 years	Capitalization
3 years, 1 month	Reference Materials Total Math
3 years, 7 months	Math Computation

PERCENTILES OF "W"

Grade Level	Number of areas that student reached or exceeded County Percentiles	Total County Areas tested
1st	2	18
2nd	8	18
3rd	10	16

**COMPARISON OF STUDENT LEVEL VERSUS COUNTY LEVEL
TEST SCORES FROM IOWA TEST BASIC SKILLS
GRADE EQUIVALENT**

STUDENT M

GRADES	1ST			2ND			3RD			4TH		
SUBJECTS	S	C	D	S	C	D	S	C	D	S	C	D
LISTENING	0.6	1.4	(0.8)	1.4	2.5	(1.1)			0.0			0.0
WORD ANALYSIS	0.8	1.3	(0.5)	2.4	2.4	0.0			0.0			0.0
VOCABULARY	0.8	1.3	(0.5)	2.5	2.3	0.2	3.4	3.0	0.4	3.4	4.0	(0.6)
READING COMP	1.3	1.4	(0.1)	2.2	2.3	(0.1)	3.4	3.1	0.3	4.8	4.1	0.7
SPELLING	1.6	1.5	0.1	2.3	2.6	(0.3)	4.2	3.3	0.9	3.7	4.2	(0.5)
CAPITALIZATION	1.7	1.8	(0.1)	2.4	2.8	(0.4)	3.9	3.8	0.1	6.4	4.5	1.9
PUNCTUATION	1.9	1.7	0.2	1.8	2.9	(1.1)	2.1	4.0	(1.9)	4.1	4.6	(0.5)
USAGE & EXPRESSION	1.3	1.4	(0.1)	1.4	2.9	(1.5)	2.7	3.5	(0.8)	2.5	4.3	(1.8)
TOTAL LANGUAGE	1.6	1.6	0.0	2.0	2.8	(0.8)	3.2	3.7	(0.5)	4.2	4.4	(0.2)
VISUAL MATERIALS	1.3	1.2	0.1	2.5	2.2	0.3	2.0	3.2	(1.2)	4.7	4.3	0.4
REFERENCE MATERIALS	2.0	1.4	0.6	2.0	2.3	(0.3)	0.4	3.2	(2.8)	4.5	4.3	0.2
WORK STUDY TOTAL	1.6	1.3	0.3	2.2	2.3	(0.1)	1.2	3.2	(2.0)	4.6	4.3	0.3
MATH CONCEPTS	2.4	1.6	0.8	2.7	2.6	0.1	1.9	3.3	(1.4)	5.0	4.6	0.4
PROBLEM SOLVING	0.5	1.2	(0.7)	1.2	2.4	(1.2)	3.2	3.2	0.0	4.5	4.4	0.1
COMPUTATION	1.4	1.6	(0.2)	2.4	2.8	(0.4)	2.9	3.5	(0.6)	4.0	4.5	(0.5)
MATH TOTAL	1.4	1.5	(0.1)	2.1	2.8	(0.5)	2.7	3.4	(0.7)	4.5	4.5	0.0
BASIC COMPOSITE	1.2	1.4	(0.2)	2.3	2.4	(0.1)	3.4	3.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
COMPLETE COMPOSITE	1.2	1.4	(0.2)	2.1	2.5	(0.4)	2.8	3.3	(0.5)	4.7	4.2	0.5
SOCIAL STUDIES										6.5	4.3	2.2
SCIENCE										7.2	4.4	2.8

S = STUDENT SCORE

C = COUNTY SCORE

D = DIFFERENCE

**COMPARISON OF STUDENT LEVEL VERSUS COUNTY LEVEL
TEST SCORES FROM IOWA TEST BASIC SKILLS
PERCENTILE RANKING**

STUDENT M

GRADES	1ST			2ND			3RD			4TH		
SUBJECTS	S	C	D	S	C	D	S	C	D	S	C	D
LISTENING	12	36	(24)	11	42	(31)						
WORD ANALYSIS	17	34	(17)	38	38	0						
VOCABULARY	16	34	(18)	42	33	9	40	28	12	74	31	43
READING COMP	32	35	(3)	33	36	(3)	42	32	10	54	36	18
SPELLING	47	41	6	36	47	(11)	64	39	25	25	38	(13)
CAPITALIZATION	52	55	(3)	38	54	(16)	56	52	4	86	44	42
PUNCTUATION	59	50	9	18	56	(38)	9	57	(48)	34	45	(11)
USAGE & EXPRESSION	38	41	(3)	17	54	(37)	28	46	(18)	11	40	(29)
TOTAL LANGUAGE	48	49	(1)	23	54	(31)	34	49	(15)	36	42	(6)
VISUAL MATERIALS	32	30	2	43	33	10	11	34	(23)	51	40	11
REFERENCE MATERIALS	65	35	30	24	34	(10)	1	36	(35)	46	39	7
WORK STUDY TOTAL	45	33	12	32	34	(2)	1	36	(35)	49	41	8
MATH CONCEPTS	83	46	37	49	44	5	2	34	(32)	60	48	12
PROBLEM SOLVING	7	33	(26)	7	38	(31)	35	35	0	45	41	4
COMPUTATION	35	51	(16)	34	57	(23)	16	44	(28)	22	45	(23)
MATH TOTAL	32	37	(5)	20	44	(24)	13	39	(26)	45	45	0
BASIC COMPOSITE	26	37	(11)	34	40	(6)	40	32	8	0	0	0
COMPLETE COMPOSITE	26	36	(10)	25	40	(15)	19	35	(16)	52	37	15
SOCIAL STUDIES										78	42	36
SCIENCE										85	45	40

S = STUDENT SCORE
C = COUNTY SCORE
D = DIFFERENCE

GRADE EQUIVALENT TABLE FOR "M"

Grade Level	Number of areas that student reached or exceeded County level.	Total County Areas tested
1st	7	18
2nd	4	18
3rd	6	16
4th	12	18

GROWTH TABLE FOR "M"

Amount of Growth	Area(s) of Growth
8 months	Listening
1 year, 2 months	Usage and Expression
1 year, 6 months	Word Analysis
1 year, 7 months	Spelling
2 years, 2 months	Punctuation Basic Battery
2 years, 5 months	Reference Materials
2 years, 6 months	Total Language Vocabulary Math Concepts
3 years	Work Study
3 years, 5 months	Reading Comprehension Complete Battery

GROWTH TABLE FOR "M" CONT.

Amount of Growth	Area(s) of Growth
3 years, 6 months	Math Computation
4 years	Math Problem Solving
4 years, 7 months	Capitalization

PERCENTILES OF "M"

Grade Level	Number of areas that student reached or exceeded County Percentiles	Total County Areas tested
1st	6	18
2nd	4	18
3rd	6	16
4th	12	17

ADULT EDUCATION NON-PARTICIPATION

Suzanne Cockley

Introduction

Recent census information indicates that 25% of adults in Virginia over 25 years of age might benefit from adult basic education, including literacy classes, either because they did not stay in school, or did not perform well enough while there to earn their high school diploma. Many organizations have sprung into action to provide educational services to this population, most notably public school systems, community colleges, libraries, volunteer tutoring agencies, various institutions associated with the prison system, and private businesses. At present, there are more than 1500 ABE teachers and volunteer tutors in Virginia, offering classes and tutoring in every county. Despite these efforts, Adult Basic Education programs have succeeded in attracting only 5% of the adults who lack a high school diploma. Situational and dispositional barriers may keep many adults from filling the classroom (Quigley, 1990). Still, the contrast between the number of potential adult learners and the actual number enrolled suggests a more complex interpretation.

Attempts to define cultural literacy generally include language about skills and applications of skills. They often go on to incorporate suggestions that context, dignity and political control be part of the discussion. Fingeret (1989) asks, "Where is the dignity of illiterate people?" She notes that when we speak of functional skills for the workplace, it is as if we assume the workers live only for their jobs, that their lives are one-dimensional. Across the board, adults lead complicated, multi-faceted lives. We know from our own personal experiences that we feel, think, speak and act differently around different people and in different settings. Literate people must be able to perform literacy tasks (not limited to reading and writing) in all the settings they live in - work, home, community, church, welfare system, government, school, etc. This means that adult education must be equipped to address the needs of whole people in the varied life situations through which they move. Adult educators cannot limit their attention to specific job skills or tasks if they are to serve whole people.

This way of conceptualizing literacy education is consistent with Hunter and Harman's Social System Approach (1979). This is one of four approaches Hunter and Harman describe.

The *Schools* approach views the problem of adult illiteracy as a failure of the school system. Proponents of this approach are concerned about low reading levels and high school drop out rates. They point to cuts in public education funding and poor urban resources as major contributions to adult illiteracy. Their goal is to enable those who fail in school to learn within the educational system. They do not question the underlying assumptions of the system. They suggest remedial, competency based skills programs.

The *Adult Education* approach considers the problem to be within adult education. Supporters of this approach are concerned about ineffective teaching methods in adult education classes and inadequate delivery systems. They are concerned about teacher training and the efficient dissemination of new teaching techniques. They worry about retention. The goal of this approach is to help adults with educational deficiencies become contributing members of the mainstream society, by means of more accessible adult education programs and better teaching methods.

The *Educational System* approach views education as a life-long process. Proponents of this approach are concerned about student-directed learning. They identify the problem as too few appropriate learning opportunities for adults. Their goal, as stated officially in Public Law 94-482, is to make these opportunities available "without regard to restrictions of previous education or training...social or ethnic background, or economic circumstances." They propose to reach this goal by marshalling learning resources, both public and private, in every community to supply the needs of its members.

Finally, the *Social System* approach expands the focus of concern beyond just K-12, or Adult education, or even the entire life-long learning system. Proponents of this approach, Hunter and Harman among them, see education as a part of a larger social system. This social system affects

individuals in many different areas, education being only one. Supporters of this approach claim that the public schools (K-12 and adult education) serve the more controlling purposes of the social system. The problem of adult illiteracy is that the social and economic structures of dominance, perpetuated in the school, make it hard for many to learn. Under this approach to adult literacy, educators are concerned about the relation between individual adults and the social system, the relationship between work and education, and the relationship between educational structures and political structures.

Hunter and Harman specifically describe the goal of this approach "to develop economic structures that are more responsive to human values and forms of governance and work that are more democratic and participatory." This does not represent a change within adult education (how we teach, schedule classes, etc), but more a change in how education is used within the larger social context. This approach sees the acquisition of reading skills not as an end in itself, but as a tool for making a better society - improving living and working conditions. This improvement would come about through direct participation by the poor and others generally excluded from decision-making in the construction of solutions to major problems, including (but not limited to) educational problems. The placement of adult education in the larger social context is consistent with theories of cultural and contextual literacy.

This study was initiated in order to better understand the nature of non-participation in adult literacy education. During the research process, the link between adult education and the realities of current economic structures emerged as a pervasive issue. Hunter and Harman's social system model provides a way to think about the relationships between literacy and economic structures that is described by many informants.

Methods

After preparing a preliminary literature review, I met with the project advisory committee in April, 1993. At their suggestion, I decided to conduct a series of two, possibly three, group interviews at two low-income housing units in the Harrisonburg, Va. area (Deer Run and Mosby Heights) and a group interview with residents in the Goshen, Va. area. I chose to interview in Goshen because of its rural nature and, since taught an ABE class there, I already had some contacts in that area.

I encountered a lot of difficulty with the housing project groups. I managed to speak to several individuals at each site about helping me pull together a group to interview, but everyone said that they knew none of their neighbors. They were also reluctant to talk with me themselves, saying that they had learned it was better to "keep your opinions to yourself."

I did manage to conduct one group meeting at Deer Run, but no one came back to the second meeting. At this point, I decided to lengthen the interviews to cover all my questions in one meeting. I was not permitted to distribute pamphlets or go "door to door" to recruit interview participants at Mosby Heights, so I put a poster up in the community laundry room, asking for volunteers. I got one response, Connie, whom I interviewed the next week.

By following up on leads from the ABE teachers at Dayton Learning Center, I learned of a woman at Mosby Heights who might be willing to help me find other people to interview there. She was unable to find anyone, but she agreed to let me interview her. I interviewed this woman, Beth, later that week.

Working with Mabel, a former student as a contact person in Goshen, I conducted a 2 1/2 hour interview over supper in Mabel's home.

After meeting once again with some of my advisory committee members, I arranged to conduct a group interview at a homeless shelter in Harrisonburg.

All of these interviews took place from April through July. At each interview I directed the conversation around these general questions:

- What was your public school experience like? What is your story?
- Is education important today? Why or why not?
- Would you go back to school now? Why or why not?
- What sorts of things have you learned since you left school?
- How have you learned these things?

DEER RUN

We met outside, at a picnic table, for about 1 1/2 hours. There were three participants, plus various young children playing nearby. The mother and daughter pair obviously knew each other, but they did not know the third woman, who just happened to wander by. They felt a bit uncomfortable with this woman at first, but when the conversation ended, they all said that they had enjoyed talking together.

Ginny: Ginny is a black woman in her 50s. She finished high school in New York state and is now a secretary at a local family literacy program. She is the mother of Donna, who lives with her. Ginny is looking forward to moving back to New York later this month.

Donna: Donna is a black woman around 20 years old. She left school in 10th grade, to be "on her own." She has a child of her own and two step-children from her current boyfriend. She is very quiet.

Kara: A white woman in her early 30's, Kara labels herself a "bad kid" in school and says she has been in rehabilitation for drug addiction. She left public school before graduating, but indicates that she finished in another setting. She works, or volunteers, at a local rehab center now. She says she is a loner at the housing project, that she lives an "optional lifestyle." She didn't elaborate too much!

MOSBY HEIGHTS

I was unable to gather a group at this low-income housing project. I did conduct two individual interviews there, however.

Beth: Beth is handicapped. I didn't ask any specifics about her condition. She is hump backed with very small feet which makes it difficult for her to walk. She is a chain smoker. She is in a local GED class. She recently took the GED and is waiting for her scores to come in the mail. She is worried that she didn't pass some of it. She seems thoughtful and not panicky, just realistic. She was tutored at home as a child for her first four grades. Then she attended public school until 7th grade. She was having difficulty keeping up with the other children and her medical condition worsened. After a corrective operation, she attended a rehabilitation center where she improved her academic skills some and learned trade skills.

She said she loved the rehab center because there were other handicapped kids there and the teachers were comfortable around them. She learned she could do things that before she could not. She was impressed that people with greater handicaps than hers could do so much.

Beth is divorced and has a teenage son, who does not appear handicapped.

Connie: Connie is a nervous, round lady. She has a BA in Business Administration, which she doesn't use because "her nerves are too bad to work." She is divorced and has a daughter who recently finished high school. She would like to see her daughter go to college, but it's too expensive and her daughter isn't interested.

Her apartment is very neat and well furnished. Connie called and volunteered to participate because she said she knows how important education is these days.

GOSHEN

Goshen is a small rural community in Rockbridge County. There are no large industries or employers in the area. Up until several years ago, the community had a high school. The school was very small and eventually it was consolidated with the Lexington High School. Lexington, the county seat, is a small city with a varied income level population. Home of two small but very competitive universities, Lexington attracts many retired military officers, academicians, and alumni.

Two years ago I taught an ABE class for Aid for Dependent Children (ADC) recipients in the Goshen area. The class consisted of three women who were working towards a GED. The class ended in May and met again the following September with another teacher. Some of the students stopped coming and the class dwindled away.

Mabel, one of the original students, has stayed in contact with me since I taught the class and she was willing to help me get a group together to interview.

I arrived at Mabel's house around 6 pm with food for supper. The others were waiting in her living room, chatting. They obviously knew each other and didn't seem particularly nervous. Mabel and I set out the food and invited people to fill their plates. We sat in the living room and ate. The talk skipped from jobs to housecleaning, food, foreign items in soda cans (a recent news item on TV), hot weather and the terrors of babysitting. Those present, all white women, were:

Mabel: Mabel is around 50. Mabel left school in the 7th grade to get away from home. Of the three women in my class, she had been the best reader and caught on rather quickly to algebra, although she perceived herself as slow and unable to learn.

Tish: Mabel's daughter, Tish is about 16 years old. She quit high school just this past winter, during the 10th grade. She says she quit because she didn't want to go to her integrated school, where students of various races and economic levels attended, in Lexington.

Dot: She is about 18, but she seems older. Tish and Dot are friends and went to school together. Dot quit school in the 9th grade to get married and to get away from her step-father. She is still married and has 2 children. Tish babysits for her now while she works at a local factory. The older women in the room praise her ability to budget and manage her children.

Pearl: At 63 years old, Pearl is the primary caregiver to her school age grandson. She lived in Maryland most of her life and left school there in the 10th grade. The others in the room are acquainted with her.

HOMELESS SHELTER

I arranged to conduct a group interview at a local homeless shelter. The group that operated the shelter asked me to come to their next monthly "community meal" (when all residents are required to attend) and speak to the group. I arrived, with covered dish, in time to eat with the group and then talked a little about what I was doing and invited anyone interested to stay and talk with me. Three women came out on the porch after the meal. We sat on the steps while their children played in the yard. Our conversation was interrupted several times by one of them yelling at the kids to get out of the street, and a trip inside to find a band-aid. While Arlene told about how she had left her husband and was homeless, she began to cry. A Mexican-American woman, who didn't speak English, came up on the porch to hug and comfort her. There was a sense of community among these women, as there had been in Goshen. This sense seemed to be missing among the women at the housing projects.

Linda: Linda is probably in her late 30s. She is muscular and tanned, and she speaks as though she always says her mind. She is a single mother with two children. She has a MA in Abnormal Psychology and is presently working at dry-wall installation and farm work. She arrived at the homeless shelter after being released from a prison in Florida where she served a sentence for possession of marijuana. She would like to go to adult class for welding, and at one point in the conversation was encouraging Arlene to look into school also.

Arlene: Arlene says she is 45, but looks much older. She has very bad teeth, which makes her self-conscious. She left school in 10th grade, but later got her GED and took several college level business courses. She has four children, three of whom are grown. The youngest is in 7th grade and lives with her. She left her husband in West Virginia when she discovered him abusing her son. She said she had worked for many years to help pay off their mortgage, but he had kept the house and she had nothing. She and her son were living in her truck when someone told them about the shelter. She wants a retail job (she used to work at a discount department store), but she doesn't think anyone would hire her to "be out with people" because of her teeth. She covers her mouth when she speaks.

Cleo: Cleo is about 45 years old. She is divorced and has two children of her own plus a niece and nephew. She chose to take in her relatives because she felt they were being abused by their parents. The rest of the family is angry with her for this. She graduated from high school and had an apartment-finding service in Dallas, Texas. She left the business for her bookkeeper to take care of while she went to real estate school. When she returned with her real estate license, she found that the bookkeeper had stolen money and customers and that her business was bankrupt. She is pursuing legal action, but she has lost everything in the process. She is quiet and seems self confident.

Follow Up Interviews

In response to an advisory group meeting in October, I conducted three additional interviews. My advisory group suggested that I re-interview two or three people from previous sessions. I went back to Goshen and interviewed Mabel, Tish and Dot. In this second interview I concentrated on adult education, asking them how education could benefit their lives. We discussed how they defined success in life, and how adult education might contribute to success. We also discussed the importance of education in the job market, as well as the possibility that one could get "too much learning."

All of the interviewees up until this point had been low income adults who were not enrolled in adult education programs. The advisory group suggested two interviews with students in such programs. They also suggested that I interview the friends and relatives of these students about the same issues. I conducted a group interview with a family literacy class (see IMPACT Interview) and with a workplace class (see VDOT Interview). At the end of each of these interviews I asked the participants if they could help me set up interviews with their acquaintances outside of class. Although all the interview participants were very willing to speak with me, no one volunteered to be a "go between" to help me set up additional interviews.

The workplace class was an all male group. All other interviewees were women, and I wanted to interview some men for contrast. My findings and conclusions are drawn from the women's responses except for a discussion of the differences in the end of the Findings section.

IMPACT

IMPACT (Intergenerational Parents And Children Together) is located at the Dayton Learning Center in the Shenandoah Valley. Parents (mostly, but not all, mothers) bring their pre-school children for a full day of learning - adult education with tutors and instructors, pre-school for the children, mothers together talking in groups, and parents and children together to learn about parenting. I interviewed eight mothers about their experiences in the class, their reasons for coming, what they hoped to accomplish in life, and how the class was helping them. They ranged in age from 18 to 42. All were hoping to receive a GED and get a job to support themselves and their families.

VDOT

There are several adult education programs sponsored in part by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). These classes usually run on a 10-week schedule, with VDOT giving a certain number of hours off each week and the employee contributing time also to class. The employees are encouraged to attend class if they have not finished high school, or if they need to improve their basic skills. The class I interviewed was in Page County. Nine men took time out from class to speak with me. They had left school as early as 6th grade, and as late as 11th grade. Harry was barely reading when he arrived, but some of the other men were close to passing a GED and needed only some review.

All data collected from these interviews were kept in the form of hand written notes. These notes were typed into a computer soon after each interview. All statements from the interviews were coded and arranged by content. Data were then analyzed inductively, to identify trends.

Findings

I. Past School Experiences

Those who finished school with a diploma were neutral or positive about their experience, while those who quit early were mostly negative. It's important to note that, with the exception of the Goshen group, they were not critical of the actual education program at the school, nor the teachers. Their dissatisfaction was due to their experiences of "getting off the track" through involvement with drugs, alcohol, and "the wrong crowd." Pregnancy and wanting to move away from parents were mentioned as reasons they left school. The adults who were interviewed didn't think school had prepared them for the lives they were leading, but they also did not blame the schools for this. Several had strong memories of personal relationships with teachers. They spoke of these relationships with more detail and animation than they did about academics. Lastly, interviewees all agreed that schools are different now, and gave several examples to support this opinion.

How School Made Them Feel

The Goshen group said they hated reading out loud. Three of the participants in that group said that they were embarrassed to read oral reports (which they had written) out loud in class. They were unsure why they felt that way, but after some thought said that they were certain they would be laughed at.

We had to do these oral book reports. Even if you got an "A" for your report, if you didn't read it out loud, you'd get a "B". I was just scared to read it in front of everyone. I'd sooner take the lower grade. Don't really know why.....I ain't shy.

Dot

Spelling was also disliked.

We'd have a spelling bee, not with the whole school - just our class. I can't spell at all. I'd mark my spelling book and when someone missed a word, I'd look it up right quick and study it. Then [I] raised my hand and spell it right!

Mabel

Well I just missed the first word on purpose, so I could sit down.

Dot

Impressions and Memories of Teachers

There were many positive comments about teachers in every interview. Participants said that good teachers encourage, support, and challenge their students.

The students are more likely to try hard, if a teacher encourages them.

Ginny

On two different occasions, teachers were compared to bosses. That is, good teachers and good bosses share certain characteristics - both are encouraging and fair, and both are human and fallible. One participant said that she didn't know how teachers managed to teach anything at all, what with all the drugs, violence, etc. in school.

One who cares and provides encouragement....same as a good boss.

Ginny

Most of the teachers are pretty good, but they're human. They got troubles too. [My grandson's] teacher had trouble with her man, so she took it out on the kids. It's just like your boss, if he has a bad day, everybody does.

Pearl

It's not their [teachers'] part to do a lot of discipline. It's not their problem. They're there to teach. They've got to watch out for themselves, now. Don't blame the teachers, they didn't go to college all that time for that.

Kara

Several participants spoke of the teacher-student relationship in terms of a special bond. Particularly in the Goshen group, this was almost a social grouping, like a family relationship. They respected their teachers, especially the ones who treated them with respect. They said their best teachers knew their subject matter and cared about their students. Participants in all groups had pleasant memories of particularly good teachers.

My social studies teacher was really good. He took time out a little bit when I was having trouble with social studies. [She had mentioned this as her most difficult subject.] A good teacher is someone who will listen, pat on the shoulder.

Kara

Mabel told a story about her third grade teacher and how their relationship developed.

We lived in Alabama, and I had to help Dad cut pulp wood. The kids at school made fun of me. Said I stank. The teacher made it worse, she brought in soap and towels and underclothes for me and made me stand in front of everyone to give them to me. She embarrassed me.

School weren't bad after Daddy went and bawled out that teacher, the one who give me the soap. He stomped into that room and said "If you ever embarrass Mary like that again, I'm a-taking her out." He was a migrant worker and a pulp cutter.

After that, teacher was pretty good to me. She'd take me into the closet when I was bad and say, "Now I'm a-going to hit the wall with this ruler, and when I do, I want you to holler real loud." She banged the wall and I hollered. Then she told me to stay in the closet for a while and drink this chocolate milk she give me. I could come out then. She was good to me then.

Mabel

The participants in Goshen considered some subjects practical and useful in their lives today - reading, writing, and math specifically. However, some subjects were considered irrelevant.

Science is not real practical. Well, maybe some people use science, but not social studies!

Dot

Several students in the VDOT class said that there was quite a bit of pressure on male students in the area to excel in sports. When a young man was talented in athletics, the school often passed them along regardless of their learning, in order to keep them on the school's teams.

I graduated from school; because I was in sports they pushed me through. We was cheated. My father and mother paid for me to go to school, but I didn't get nothing from it.

Louis

It's like that everywhere. You can't eat sports, but when you're out of sports, what are you gonna do? You can't read and write. Someone could come along and cheat you out of everything.

Rob

School as Preparation for Life

When asked if their schooling prepared them for life, almost everyone answered that no, it didn't. Those who said this were generally quick to point out that they didn't think it was possible for school to prepare them for life. They said that life (especially economic life) was very different now - that when they went to school it wasn't so necessary to have a diploma or go to college. Kara and Linda, who had said that drugs and bad friends had hurt their schooling, both blamed themselves for not being prepared for life when they left school. Several participants were philosophical on this point and questioned whether anyone could prepare another person for life.

My friends got me into drugs, and I started doing what all the other creeps were doing. It was stupid.

Kara

I guess I wasn't really prepared. Sometimes you got to put it all on yourself, you can't blame nobody else. You got your own life. I just gave up [in school]. But you have to try to want to learn. If you want to, you will.

Ginny

I thought I knew it all then [when I quit school]. I found out I didn't when I got out on my own, got married, being responsible, budgeting.

Dot

No, but I can't blame the school. I stayed home. If I had [stayed] it could have helped. I could have been a nurse or a teacher. Something I really wanted to be.

Pearl

No, but I don't see how it could have prepared me. School can't teach you everything. You have to experience some things yourself. You've got to live your own life. As rough as my life's been, I wouldn't turn it around.

Mabel

School past and present - How it is different today

In every interview, someone said that "math is different today." This was usually discussed in connection with helping children today with their homework.

School today is more complicated.....more in-depth. They teach things differently now, phonics and math. My kids have things in math at an earlier grade than I did. I think it's very good.

Cindy

In a reference to the importance of discipline, one woman spoke of the difference in years past.

They really learned in my day, the teachers MADE you learn.

Pearl

There were a couple of comments about the benefit of keeping "slow kids" in the regular class - they remembered when these students were put in a separate group, and said it was humiliating.

Teachers long ago took time with the whole class, kept slow kids in class and helped them there. Didn't separate them.

Ginny

II. Current Opinions About Schooling

The comments in this section reveal the interviewees' attempt to place their ideas about school - and the value and relevance of school - in the context of their adult lives as workers, parents, and spouses.

Value of Education

Those interviewed mentioned many times that education was necessary for a job now. Some of the participants were not happy with schools today - mostly due to the lack of discipline discussed in

other parts of this summary. In the Goshen group, all the participants, except Pearl, said that they would not force their children to stay in school, but they hoped they would. Everyone else was assuming or at least hoping that their children would graduate from high school and did not think they would let their children quit. None of the Goshen group, except Pearl, finished high school and they all have numerous family members who have not finished high school.

School is good for the kids, and I hope they'll go, but I won't force them. I hate to think what the school will be like when they go. School gets worse and worse every year.

Dot

I was pushing my son, trying to get him to see the importance of education. Then I realized...was I believing what I was saying? I wished I'd got my diploma.

Beth

(Sue: Have any of your husbands finished school?)

No, Jeff only went to 3rd grade, he can't read. You know, I've been thinking, ain't none of us finished school. We all left early.

Mabel

Most kids today are under their parents' table, they just fool away. It's like a vacation. So when you leave, you get in the school of hard knocks. When I was in school, all I thought about was tractors. It don't take no smart person to drive a tractor.

Rob

Discipline

All of the interviews contained segments on the importance of discipline. Most of the respondents believed that students who misbehave should be punished. All said that this punishment should not be too violent, but the definitions of "too violent" varied. The Goshen and Deer Run groups were particularly concerned that discipline be fair. They both told stories of teachers punishing an entire class because one or two students "acted up". In Goshen, the participants felt that students from Goshen, who tended to be poor and white, were more often punished than students from Lexington, who were middle or upper class, even when it wasn't their fault. They felt that school officials were reluctant to punish black students who misbehaved, but gave unfairly harsh punishments to (poor) white students from Goshen.

Teachers discipline you depending on where you're from. If you're a prep, you get away with anything.

Dot

In the Goshen group, there was a generational difference in the importance of discipline. Pearl, a grandmother, felt that the more discipline ("hide tanning"), the better students learned. Mabel, mother of Tish, shook her head and said that beating didn't seem to do her daughter much good, and Tish, who had just quit 10th grade this winter, said, "You tell me not to do it, and I'll do it out of spite!"

The group at the homeless shelter was the least enthusiastic about discipline. When they spoke of factors which helped students learn, they were more likely to mention "challenging teachers" and "relevant skills." They believed that a teacher should maintain order in the classroom, an atmosphere which is conducive to learning.

Well, I think you have to have the right atmosphere, you can't let some kids always be interrupting or acting up so others can't learn. A lot of behavior is based on the home. Discipline is important, but it doesn't have to be mean. I come from a very abusive family.....Navy boot camp was a piece of cake for me! Much easier than living at home.

Linda

Again and again, participants related discipline to schooling and even to learning. The extent of this relationship varied from discipline being used to keep students quiet enough to concentrate, to "beating it into my head" as a way of learning. Discipline was rarely spoken of in terms of self discipline, but more often as an external force - usually from the teacher or principal, but also supported at home by the parents. Although not articulated, there seemed to be an underlying belief that it is possible (perhaps normal) for teachers to force students to learn.

I couldn't have finished school - I couldn't learn anything, couldn't pound it into my head.

Mabel

Other Factors Affecting School/Learning

The interview participants also discussed a variety of factors which they felt had a negative impact on their (or their children's) education in public school. Only one of the factors - overcrowding - was a direct result of school structure. A second set of factors included family related issues and the effect this has on discipline. Other factors were related to larger social issues, including prejudice, alcoholism, and religion in schools.

Related to school structure: In every interview, someone mentioned overcrowding as a hinderance to learning in school, both in past schooling and in high school today. The problem with overcrowding, according to the participants, was that it made it difficult for any student to get individual help from the teacher.

The school's too big now, too much fighting. The teachers can't give you individual help. I remember asking for help. The teacher just brushed me off. I had a lot of trouble in science, but they didn't have time to help.

Dot

Related to family issues: Participants at Deer Run felt that the growing number of single parent families was making home life difficult and thereby affecting students' performance in school.

There's too much freedom now, parents are not as responsible as they used to be. There weren't so many single parent homes, that's worse now. Single parents can't support kids because you can't discipline, you can't help with everyone's homework and stuff.

Ginny

Several participants said that school discipline needed to be backed up at home, in order to be effective.

But then, the parents didn't tell the teacher to stop disciplining like they do now.

Pearl

In every interview, participants said that a good home life was crucial for students to be able to learn in school. Mabel disagreed on the implied direct connection with happy homes and how kids turn out.

Now I disagree. My kids had a rotten life, but they done good. Jeff [her husband] used to get drunk and we'd have to leave the house. Just run off in the middle of the night. Then, I'd bring them back and try to get them ready for school in the morning. They're doing well.

Mabel

Related to larger social issues: Goshen participants also pointed to racism as a problem, but they defined it as prejudice against whites. As the discussion moved on, it seemed more like prejudice against poor whites. I am using "classism" to describe this situation. The Goshen group spent a lot of time discussing a major historical event which they maintain hurt their school experience and eventually caused them to leave school. Two years ago, the high school in Goshen was closed and consolidated with the Lexington high school. The interview participants talked about the community's loss when this happened. The younger participants, Dot and Tish, said that they were scared of going so far away to school, where there were so many people they didn't know. They reported feeling disliked and looked down upon. This feeling of being a stranger was two fold - whites among blacks for the first time, and poor kids among wealthy.

It was hard going to a school where I didn't know everyone. The principal didn't take up for the white kids, when there was trouble, so the blacks wouldn't get riled.

Tish

Beth, an individual interview participant, reported that her handicap, or rather the teachers' reaction to her handicap, presented a problem for her in public schools.

Teachers in public school were nice, but they weren't comfortable with handicapped kids. They treated me different. Maybe I was too sensitive. A lot of handicapped people don't want to be treated different than others.

Beth

Another factor affecting learning in Goshen was alcoholism in the family.

Mom and I used to fight about Bob [alcoholic step-father] all the time. He'd come home drunk and I'd sleep in my clothes because I knew I'd have to run away from the house during the night. It affected my school. Who wants to go to school after a night like that?

Dot

Several participants, of all ages, said that they felt that the absence of Bible reading and prayer in schools had a negative effect on schools today.

When they took punishment and the Bible out of school....that's when school went down hill. They took the Bible out, that's the problem.. I liked that morning prayer, a moment to get yourself together.

Ginny

III. Attitudes Toward Adult Education

When adults currently enrolled in ABE classes talked about what they liked about class and those not enrolled talked about what they would look for in a class, they mentioned the same things. All adults interviewed want practical skills that will help them in their roles as adults - at work and with their children. They appreciate the opportunity to work at their own pace, perhaps remembering being left behind in childhood schooling. The reasons given to attend ABE classes and not to attend did not differ between students and non-students.

The ABE Experience

When asked what they would like to get in adult classes, all the participants who responded said they wanted practical skills and information which would help them get good or better jobs.

I don't want to get a GED, not just the paper. I really want to know it all. I want to get into computers.

Dot

If they had a computer class here in Goshen at night, people would come. Lots of people would take it, to get a better job, more money.

Dot

How ABE students say class differs from high school: The ABE students who were interviewed said that the classes were smaller in their ABE program than they had been in high school. Most students commented that the teachers were more likely to treat them as individual learners than in high school.

The teachers don't treat you like a problem here, they help you.

Howard

Some students reported that they were being taught "new" things in their adult program which were more appropriate to their lives now, such as parenting skills. One student also said that he was being exposed to skills that his public school teachers had skipped because he was so far behind.

This parenting is different from how I was raised.

Trudy

I never had fractions before now.

Ray

Reasons for Attending Adult Classes These included:

To get job skills in order to get a job, something practical. Most people were not overly ambitious as far as job options. They talked about retail jobs in WalMart, data entry jobs.

I would like to do office work, like I did before. Except now you need word processing and computers. If I went back to school I would want more technical skills.

Arlene

To review and improve academic skills in order to help children with homework. This was particularly true with math skills.

Then you get kids. You don't know their homework and you feel stupid.

Dot

To get a new lease on life. The women at the homeless shelter were very concerned with improving their skills to make a better life for themselves. They generally saw themselves as at a sort of cross roads in their lives. They were primarily interested in practical, job-related skills.

I went back to school to finish it. And to get a good job. You got to, if you want anything in this world. My son was getting older. The older they get, the more they cost! I found out that I'll lose some of his Social Security when he turns 16.

Beth

ABE students reported supportive environment at home and work which encourages their learning. The VDOT class said they felt supported by their families and most of their co-workers.

My wife loves it. She's proud of it. The group I went to school with really put me on the back.

Howard

Reasons for Not Attending Adult Classes

These included:

Inconvenience, particularly lack of transportation. Participants said they were too busy for class and that child care was a problem

It's just too far away, with work and kids and all.

Dot

Discouragement from family members. Some women felt that family members, especially husbands, were often discouraging about their women relatives going back to school.

Lots of women don't come [to class] because their old man won't let them.

Mabel

Their men won't let them come - they tell them they're too stupid and won't amount to nothing.

Lydia

Age. One woman (63 years old) felt she was too old to go back to school. She didn't think she was too old to learn, just that she didn't want to be the only person her age in class.

I'm too old now. I just don't want to. I could if I wanted to, I've learned a lot from helping the kids with their homework.

Pearl

Pride. VDOT students said that some of their co-workers would not come to class because it would be an admission that they had been wrong to leave school. Others said that some co-workers had graduated from high school, but they knew their skills were no better than those who had not graduated and they were embarrassed about this.

It's hard to admit that dropping out was the wrong thing to do.

Lydia

Some of these guys left because they were embarrassed, they knew they didn't know more than us.

George

A lot started and dropped out, because they're too tight to drive down here. Some were too big feeling, thought they were better than us. I'm big, but I'm still here.

Rob

Some of the ABE students who were interviewed told me that they thought many people assumed that they had to pay tuition to come to ABE class. They also said that people thought that adult education was "just like high school had been," with an emphasis on grades, doing homework, behaving in class, etc.

One individual told me at the end of an interview that she didn't really think it was natural for an adult to go to class.

I think it's better to learn on your own after a certain age. I really think that you should learn on your own, by experience after you're older. It's more normal. You need to read, to keep up, but you can get into books too much.

Connie

IV. Learning Projects in Adulthood

Interview participants were asked to describe any recent learning projects, things they had learned since they left school. This was a difficult question for everyone to answer. They had to take some time to figure out what was meant. In the group interviews, once someone talked about a learning project, others followed.

The learning projects were generally undertaken out of necessity.

I learned lots of things.....I learned to fix the refrigerator because there wasn't anyone else to do it and I didn't have the money to pay someone.

Cleo

The women at the homeless shelter said that learning things now helped them to be more independent.

When I was with Earl I got so that I thought I had to depend upon him.....he got me to feel like that. I just don't have any self confidence.....But you're learning all the time. I learned a lot since I left Earl. I had to.

Arlene

Learning is difficult for some people. For Mabel, it has been frustrating and painful, both as a child and an adult.

When I was in class I'd aggravate myself. I'd get so frustrated [frustrated]. I'd cry, I was so frustrated. I felt like I should be able to do it, but I just couldn't do it.

Mabel

While almost all learning projects were oriented towards practical skills, one interview participant, Cleo, had a different experience.

Oh yeah, there was art work.....it just came to me. I never knew I could do it.

(Sue: What motivated you to learn art?)

Oh you'll like this story! I met this man, I only knew him for two weeks and he only kissed me once. I knew he couldn't stay around, but it was wonderful while it lasted. I was in love and lonely at the same time. I was just sitting in my daughter's bedroom looking at the sheets with flowers and butterflies on them. My kids' art stuff was there and I just started drawing. I never knew I could draw.....

Cleo

Participants gave the following examples of topics for learning projects:

managing money

computers

child care

math and other school subjects

fixing appliances

cooking

driving

Participants said they used the following strategies in their learning projects:

reading

helping others

experience

practice

ask kids for help

observation (teachers at daughter's day care)

watching

doing

trial and error

taught by mother

TV (documentaries)

"figured it out myself"

While all of the above learning methods were mentioned, learning by doing and by observing others were the two most often given learning preferences.

They seemed to readily know how they learn, but had trouble thinking of things they had learned. The most frequently given strategy for learning was reading. Those who said they learned something by watching some one else do it first seemed to consider this an inferior method.

Well, I guess I'm kind of backward; I like to see someone else do it first.

Arlene

V. Success in Life

During the second set of interviews, I asked questions pertaining to the interviewees definition of success in life, and about the value of education towards reaching success.

Definitions of success

The first answers from all the respondents to this question had to do with money, jobs, and possessions.

Money, no bills, and money in the bank. A savings account.

Tish

Respondents also gave more intrinsic answers to the question of success in life. In each interview, but more strongly with the women than the men, interviewees said that self-acceptance was an important part of being successful. Women also said that raising a family to live on their own was important.

I'm successful just because I'm Lydia. I'm a stay-at-home mom, and I'm going to school.

Lydia

The value of education for success

Respondents said that education (high school and even beyond) was necessary for finding a good job these days. All the men in the VDOT class agreed with this, and the majority of women in the other groups did too. Most said that a high school diploma or GED was needed to even be considered for a job. Only one or two mentioned that new skills were needed in the workplace, which necessitate further education (computer skills).

You're not getting no good job with just high school.

Rob

Education would help with the family. As of now, you need school for computer skills to get a job.

Dot

On the other hand, many interviewees reported a danger in too much education. Respondents felt that one could get "too much schooling." They identified the major symptom of too much education as a loss of common sense. This was a firmly held and heartily endorsed belief among both men and women, students and non-students.

Education won't change me none! I'm country!

Mabel

Country folks know the easy way to do stuff. Like at work, we have to move a skid. This guy will go all the way around the building when he could just go down the middle. He's got 4 years of college! He does everything the hard way!

Dot

Education dumbs you.

Ernie

We had a guy on our crew. He was real good on a computer, but he didn't know what he was doing with us. You got to have common sense people in the world, too.

Edward

Adult Education and Employment

Many saw computer skills as the link between what adult education could offer them, and what they needed for a good job.

Yeah, I've heard that you can make \$10 an hour on computers. I could work in shipping and get \$7.50, if I knew computers. If you had a class that taught computers, you'd fill it up. Lots of people around here want to get that kind of job.

Dot

When asked specifically if a GED would help them get better jobs, they were less optimistic.

I just want to see if I can do it - get my GED. It ain't gonna help me get a job. There's jobs around here, I guess, but nothing better than I got. (She occasionally cleans house).

Mabel

None of (my daughter's) friends have jobs, not real jobs. Vo Tech grads still can't find work. Even the ones who graduated first in their class. There's not lots of jobs.

Cathy

Trends

Almost all the interviewees remembered school as generally difficult. They talked of peer pressure to neglect school and of being promoted because of their value to the sports program even though they hadn't mastered certain skills. They consistently spoke warmly about their favorite teachers. They frequently described these teachers as supportive and patient. Particularly in Goshen, which is a tightly knit community, a vibrant, intimate relationship between teachers and students was expected and honored. This seemed to be a two-way relationship; adults spoke of their best-remembered teachers with respect and at the same time said good teachers treated students respectfully. The students in the two classes painted a similar picture of their relationships with their current teachers. We may conclude that the essential characteristics of a positive student/teacher relationship within this population may not differ very much from childhood learning through adult education. I was unable to explore this dynamic further, but it would provide some interesting questions for future research. In particular, it would be interesting to know how conducive these relationships are to learning and if there comes a point where an unhealthy dependency is created.

This study confirms all of the reasons for non-participation cited in the literature (Fingeret, 1983; Beder and Valentine, 1990; Thomas, 1990; Quigley, 1990). Interviewees gave both situational reasons and dispositional reasons for not participating in adult education. They gave these same reasons for why others they knew did not participate. Several people spoke of their childhood schooling experiences in ways that are consistent with Quigley's "resisters," notably Mabel and two of the VDOT students. In these last three cases, however, the indications of oppression in past schooling experiences were mixed with situational and dispositional barriers as well.

There was a strong thread throughout the data that school cannot prepare one for life. The non-class adults in particular were very sympathetic to the troubles of the school teacher and did not blame him or her, nor the system, for this lack of preparation. Instead, they expressed their belief that school is not capable of preparing one for life. Mabel in particular believes that her situation has changed - and she has changed - in ways that school could never have predicted; that we learn about life by living it. Many interviewees, both in and out of class, expressed a belief in the limitations of "schooling." Rather than considering education an absolute good, they were a bit more wary in their value of school. The majority of the people I spoke with felt that too much school reduced your "common sense" and actually hindered your ability to solve problems in everyday life. Several people gave examples from work situations where some well-meaning college graduate inevitably did simple things, like moving heavy objects or opening cans of paint, the most laborious way possible. The VDOT class generally felt that there is a place in the world for educated people, but it is crucial to have lots of common sense people around to actually get things done.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the ABE students viewed their learning experience in purely practical terms, and definitely not as academic exercise. Some felt encouraged to enter the class in order to finish up something they had left undone, and some thought they might be able to encourage their own children in school by enrolling, but the strongest incentive to enter an ABE class, the one they made the decision upon, was employment. The adults I interviewed who entered class did so to get

a job, a better job, or to hold on to the one they now have. When I asked for their definitions of success, adults in and out of class always began with financial considerations - to own a home, to be able to save a little, to be able to replace an appliance when necessary, to have a reliable car. Only after students were settled in a class did they talk about increased self esteem as a benefit of adult education.

It was not easy for the interviewees to discuss learning projects in adulthood outside of school. They said they were not sure what I meant by learning projects. Some of the comments I eventually got indicated that learning for these adults was usually out of necessity. Faced with responsibilities of raising a family and living within the expectations of community life, they were forced to learn practical skills. Young women in Goshen were expected to know how to cook and discipline children. The women in the homeless shelter were learning how to do things that their husbands had once done, such as repairing appliances. Much of this learning is done by observation, although several people indicated that they were ashamed of this learning technique because they perceived it as "backward."

Discussion

During data gathering and data analysis stages of this project, I have been struck by the difference between why adults enter adult education, and the benefits they see in it after they are there. Adults enter adult education classes most often for economic reasons, to get a good job. Many are not convinced of the intrinsic value of learning for learning's sake. While educated people declare that education makes you a better, clearer thinker, less educated adults often fear that academic learning will handicap them in the real world of "getting things done." Yet after learners are in a program, they cite increased self confidence and an interest in learning more as products of their experience.

I have also been sobered by the suspicion that the promotion of adult education as a path to a good job and a healthy national economy is not only false advertisement, but a dangerous tactic - focusing attention on an individual symptom and ignoring the underlying economic inequalities.

Adults who are not enrolled in class say they would enroll if they could see a clear benefit, that is if they were fairly sure that a good job will be waiting for them when they finished. They suspect that it is not. In the rural areas where I conducted the interviews, that is a valid suspicion. Two of the most terrifying research questions an adult educator might pursue are, "What really happens to our students after they leave us with their GED in hand?" "How many of them get a significantly better job than they had before?" If the answer is very low, then perhaps we need to stop considering adult education as a national economic panacea. Hunter and Harman tell us:

Research suggests that poverty and the power structure of society are more responsible for low levels of literacy than the reverse. For most persons who lack literacy skills, illiteracy is simply one factor interacting with many others - class, race and gender discrimination, welfare dependence, unemployment, poor housing, and a general sense of powerlessness. The acquisition of reading and writing skills would eliminate the conventional illiteracy among many but would have no appreciable effect on the other factors that perpetuate the poverty of their lives.

My own findings among adults not in an adult education class support this view. Additional research into the economic outcomes of adult education would illuminate the situation further. Hunter and Harman note Collins (1977) as he presents some historical information about this concept:

In the 19th century, people were told that better economic opportunities awaited them if they improved their skills. As the number of those with educational credentials increased, however, so did the basic requirements for the same level of jobs. Each time competing ethnic minorities reached the educational levels they had been told would lead to economic success and prestige, the game rules were changed. Dominant groups in society define job requirements in terms of their own achievements and then impose these as standards for

the society as a whole. Collins points to the resulting inflation of educational credentials and suggests that disillusionment is likely among those who purchase such credentials through school attendance when the promised pay-off fails to materialize. The disappointed groups may drop out of the difficult process of schooling.

This preoccupation with blaming illiterates for not being well employed is especially unfair as we come to see and know the people we are describing. Research by Heath (1983) and Fingeret (1983) portrays low literate adults as intelligent, capable human beings able to function reasonably well in their own social networks. My own findings bear this out as well.

This research project uncovered a need to keep adult education practical and focused on the economic concerns of our students. Many adults are wary of too much academic study as well as promises for jobs that may not exist in their community. They are not willing to accept simplistic responses to this issue. Therefore, adult education programs must do more than help fit people into the few jobs that exist. Adult educators and adult learners will have to collaborate to develop programs which encourage learners to analyze their local economic systems. Then these education programs must go on to create jobs, stimulate the local economy and prepare participants to fill those positions. Adult education and economic development must be linked in new and innovative ways. Finding models for this proposed relationship will not be easy. When they are developed, however, such programs stand a good chance of attracting many of the most difficult to reach adults and truly improving their lives.

We recommend the establishment of new, pluralistic, community-based initiatives whose specific objective will be to serve the most disadvantaged hard-core poor, the bulk of whom never enroll in any existing program.

Hunter and Harman, 1979, p.133

One form of adult education which may serve as a model for this proposed type of program is the community based organization (CBO). According to The Association for Community Based Education (ACBE) (1986), CBOs usually target and serve the most difficult to reach populations - those with the lowest academic skills, the unemployed, the rural poor, the urban homeless, etc. Most CBOs conduct educational activities based on a mission statement. The mission of each CBO is set by its members and reflects a current, often urgent, concern or interest which affects all the participants. Usually the mission is not "literacy," but more a corporate need - saving a local stream from pollution, finding out about the rights of tenants and landlords. Because their mission drives their decisions about objectives, these programs structure their education activities differently from most other forms of adult education. It is because of these differences, they maintain, that they are so successful in attracting and retaining students. A report from ACBE describes the common elements among CBOs which differ from school based adult education. It is helpful to study these characteristics because through this examination, we can better understand the role of education in the lives of adults.

The goal of most CBOs is to work for holistic change. In this sense, "holistic" refers to skill development as well as improved living conditions. Traditionally, adult education has taken its cue from public schools and concentrated its efforts solely on individual development, emphasizing better skills for each student, without a direct concern for the life of the community in which the student lives. School based adult education does not consider itself as serving the community beyond how it may serve individuals who happen to live there. Most adult educators aim to improve the academic skills - and perhaps the self-concept - of their individual students. The life of the learners' community does not often enter classroom conversation, much less affect the curriculum. Facilitating change in the life of the community is rarely an objective of a standard Adult Education class. By contrast, holistic change occurs concurrently within individual learners and the communities in which they live. Holistic education strives for change in the community. In order to increase the capacity of a community for self-change, holistic educators may work with individual adults to improve their skills. However, this skill improvement is not seen as an end in itself. Permeating this preoccupation with the development of community life is the belief that individuals do not live in a vacuum - the quality of each person's life is dependent in part on the quality of the community life. This supports a view of education as

serving the community through individuals, as opposed to the traditional view of education as serving individuals for their own advancement.

The Research Network staff suggests that the Office of Adult Education explore ways to encourage collaboration between adult education programs and existing Community Based Organizations. This collaboration must begin with a dialogue which addresses a shared mission, a shared vision for adult education, shared resources and shared responsibilities. It will require commitment and an ability and willingness to be flexible and creative. Educators in these collaborative programs may find themselves in a less central role than they play in a more traditional adult education classroom. CBO leaders may need to broaden their idea of the value of education and the role it must play in the economic development of their communities.

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