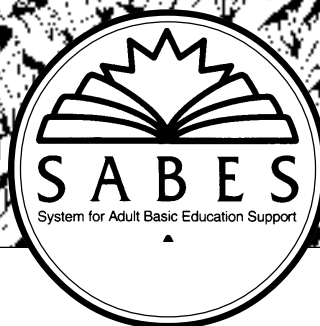


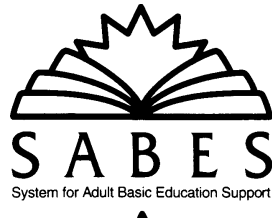
Adventures **in** Assessment

*Learner-centered approaches
to assessment and evaluation
in adult literacy*

Volume 4

April 1993





SABES is the System for Adult Basic Education Support, a comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative for adult literacy educators and programs. Its goal is to strengthen and enhance literacy services and thus to enable adult learners to attain literacy skills.

SABES accomplishes this goal through staff and program development workshops, consultation, mini-courses, mentoring and peer coaching, and other training activities provided by five Regional Support Centers located at community colleges throughout Massachusetts. SABES also offers a 15-hour Orientation that introduces new staff to adult education theory and practice and enables them to build support networks.

SABES also maintains an adult literacy Clearinghouse to collect, evaluate, and disseminate ABE materials, curricula, methodologies, and program models, and encourages the development and use of practitioner and learner-generated materials. Each of the five SABES Regional Support Centers similarly offers program support and a lending library. SABES maintains an Adult Literacy Hotline, a statewide referral service which responds to calls from new learners and volunteers. The Hotline number is 1-800-447-8844.

The SABES Central Resource Center, a program of World Education, publishes a statewide quarterly newsletter, "Bright Ideas," and journals on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals, such as this volume of "Adventures in Assessment."

*The first three volumes of "Adventures in Assessment" present a comprehensive view of the state of practice in Massachusetts through articles written by adult literacy practitioners. Volume 1, **Getting Started**, includes start-up and intake activities; Volume 2, **Ongoing**, shares tools for ongoing assessment as part of the learning process; Volume 3, **Looking Back, Starting Again**, focuses on tools and procedures used at the end of a cycle or term, including self, class, and group evaluation by both teachers and learners. Volume 4 and future issues will either be dedicated to specific topics or a range of interests.*

"Adventures in Assessment" is free to Massachusetts programs; out-of-state requests will be charged a nominal fee, at cost. Please write to, or call:

Elizabeth Santiago
SABES Central Resource Center
World Education
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111
617-482-9485

Adventures **in** Assessment

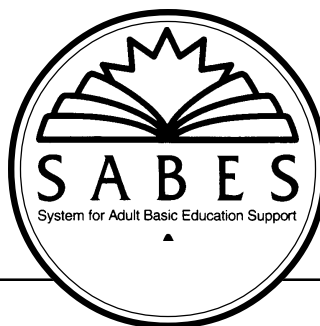
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EDITOR: Loren McGrail

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Rick Schwartz

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Introduction

Looking Back

How to begin? Where to begin? I read back through my other carefully composed introductions for help. Maybe I said something I can use to get me going. No luck. There is no neat, overriding category that I can use to frame the articles I received for this volume of *Adventures in Assessment*. The categories or components: **Getting Started, Ongoing, and Looking Back** still provide a useful framework, but I'm growing bored talking about tools, checklists, questionnaires, and surveys.

I want to talk with you on another level, the level of *why*. I want to talk not from the perspective of what researchers are saying about what learner-centered approaches to assessment are, but what you and I *know*. The authors in these pages are telling us about the teaching/learning process and how assessment either helps or hinders this understanding. If we believe in the validity of teachers as researchers of their own practice, it is time for us to really listen to the voices of these narratives and not just focus on the tools they have developed, adapted, or modified.

As I was reading through the articles for this volume again, for pleasure now, and not for editing purposes, a few voices sang out to me loud and clear. They said, "underline this, this is important, you could build an introduction around this." So, colleagues, I would like to change the format and the nature of what an introduction is supposed to do,

and tell you instead some of the things I learned from listening to what the practitioners and learners in this volume have to say.

The voices from the learners Nancy Venator interviewed in **Through the Eyes of an ABE Interviewer** stand out immediately. "When I could not read and went into stores, there was an animal inside of me (he touched his stomach). As I learned more and more the animal slowly went away (he moved his hand slowly up to his chest) and now it is gone forever (he moved his hand upward and out with a flourish) [*page 44*]." Hearing the way learners actually talk about their own learning process is a baseline for me by which to measure all that we say and do. The "animal inside" reminds me of how little I really know about just what it feels like not to be literate.

I do know, however, what Dulany Alexander is talking about in her article, **The ESL Classroom as Community: How Self-Assessment Can Work**, when she writes, "The kind of evaluation, defined as progress from one level to the next, has meant that if learners don't keep progressing, we don't get paid [*page 34*]." Her voice has a kind of resignation that reminds me of Sally Spencer's words when she remarks, "Passing the GED test, which still tests for 'single correct responses', is the primary goal of the GED student [*page 42*]." I can imagine Eileen Barry joining

by
Loren McGrail
editor





this duet and adding her own complaint about the TABE: “After the students completed the assessment, it was our turn to struggle with it. We felt frustrated as we looked at the answers, both correct and incorrect, because we had no way of knowing why the student chose a particular answer [page 22].”

Missing from this chorus, however, is the Even Start project in Amesbury, which is mandated to use the CASAS for their formalized assessment process. They seem to have managed to include their CASAS assessment in their more holistic intake process. I still wonder how the CASAS results are integrated into the adult learner’s individualized learning plan. Or why they needed to develop another goalsetting tool beyond the CASAS. Is it because their goal sheet offers elements of “affective measurement,” a chance for parents/adult learners to express their dreams and wishes, combined with “felt” or “real” strengths and weaknesses which can later provide learners with an opportunity to “ethically analyze how they perceive themselves, and whether their perceptions have helped or hindered their progress [page 18].”

An aversion to standardized measurements is not all these practitioners have

in common however. In addition to sharing a view of literacy as practice, how learners use literacy in their daily lives, inside and outside the classroom, they share the view that how learners judge their own capabilities and their own progress is also critical. Many of the tools they have developed, whether they are tape journals (page 38), informal reading inventories (page 22), goal-setting activities (pages 8 and 15), or self-evaluation forms (page 34), ask the learners to redraw their image of themselves as learners from a position of strength, not as isolated individuals, but as learners “joining a community of learners who share similar experiences, frustrations, and accomplishments [page 22].”

These are my reactions, dear reader, some intellectual, some gut. I invite you to practice what we preach about reading not being a passive activity, to interact with these articles, to ask questions, make predictions, look for answers and — if you feel like sharing your responses — write to us at *Adventures in Assessment* so we can share your ideas with a growing circle of practitioners committed to participatory approaches to assessment.

If we believe in the validity of teachers as researchers of their own practice, it is time for us to really listen to the voices of these narratives and not just focus on the tools.



Contents

Introduction

Looking Back 4
Loren McGrail, editor, Adventures in Assessment, SABES

Getting Started

Group Goal Setting Activities: An Approach from Youth Service Corps 8
PECE Resource and Planning Guide, Philadelphia

Empowering the Student through Goal Setting 15
Susan Martin, Sandra Hall, Jeanette Bahre, Amesbury Even Start

Informal Reading Inventory: Highlighting Connections and Capabilities 22
Eileen Barry, Workplace Education Project, University of Massachusetts/Dartmouth

Ongoing

The ESL Classroom as Community: How Self Assessment Can Work 34
Dulany Alexander, Operation Bootstrap, Lynn

Tape Journals in the Oral Skills Class 38
Eileen Hughes, LaGuardia Community College, from Literacy Update

What Counts?

Knowing Math and Passing the GED 40
Sally Spencer, Care Center, Holyoke

Voices from the Field

Through the Eyes of an ABE Interviewer 43
Nancy Jane Venator, Massachusetts Department of Education

Publication Review

..... 46
Don Robishaw, World Education, SABES

Letters

..... 47



Getting Started

Group Goal Setting Activities: An Approach from Youth Service Corps

This article is excerpted from Chapter 3 of the PECE Resource and Planning Guide. PECE, Practical Education for Citizenship and Employment, is the name of the education component developed for the Urban Corps Expansion Project (UCEP), a three-year demonstration project designed by Public/Private Ventures, Inc. of Philadelphia.

UCEP is a combination community service/education model now operating at 11 sites nationwide. Each autonomous program serves 50-100 youths, aged 17-23, who are unemployed and out of school. Approximately seventy-five percent do not have diplomas or GEDs.

Corpsmembers (as program participants are referred to) are given paid employment in human services and community service projects, such as rehabbing buildings for non-profit developers, in addition to the program's educational component.

The manual from which this chapter is taken has been written to be useful outside the urban youth service corps, such as in summer jobs programs. It is written for trainers and educators.

Chapter 3 focuses on setting goals and creating learning plans. In this volume of Adventures in Assessment, we focus on group goal-setting. In the next volume, we will continue the part of the chapter which discusses individual goal setting.

The process of setting goals and planning steps to achieve them is ongoing throughout each corpsmember's experience in the program. The way you begin this process with new corpsmembers has a special importance. Many of the young adults who enter the corps are burdened with a history of failure in school and a sense of education as something that has been imposed on them.

But most also enter with the motivation to change their lives. Your early goal-setting activities are an opportunity to build on this motivation and help corpsmembers begin to redraw their image of themselves as learners and to rethink what learning is all about. Through these activities, corpsmembers should discover that they are responsible for defining where they want to go and what they have to do to get there — and that you are going to support them.

SETTING GOALS

Goal setting is really an exercise in problem solving. Corpsmembers have to learn to ask — and try to answer — a series of questions that enable them to define their choices and decide how to get where they want to go. Most simply the questions are: What are my goals? What must I do to reach my goals? To answer these, corpsmembers must work through a series of more precise questions:

excerpted from the
**PECE Resource and
Planning Guide**



for more information:
Michael Sack
Clare Ignatowski
Public/Private
Ventures, Inc.
399 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215-592-9099



- Where do I want to be in five years (or four weeks, or six months, or ten years)?
- What must I know to get there?
- What steps must I take in order to know and be able to do these things?
- What abilities and experience do I already have that are going to help me take these steps?
- What obstacles might be in my way?
- How can I deal with those obstacles?
- What should I do first, second and so on?

These are tough questions for anyone to answer: adults, young adults, college students, at-risk youth. But they are also essential questions to the goal-setting process, which involves defining needs, evaluating one's own strengths and weaknesses, and planning and carrying out strategies.

Group Activities

Goal setting activities that take place in groups during orientation or in the beginning of a program should help corpsmembers identify broad, long-term needs and begin to see them in relation to what they can accomplish in the corps. In almost every case, corpsmembers will end up with a product — a questionnaire, a story, a timeline, a goal chart — that should be placed in their portfolio, where it can be used as a starting point for developing personal learning plans during your one-on-one meetings.

The group activities lay the foundation for the next step in the process, when corpsmembers more precisely define their goals in the corps: in life skills (employment, community partici-

pation, personal development), work, and personal academics.

The group activities are:

Option #1: Thinking about Learning.

Corpsmembers explore their past experiences with education and start to define their learning needs.

Option #2: Guest Speaker. A speaker from outside the corps discusses his or her experiences overcoming obstacles and achieving goals.

Option #3: Goals Questionnaire.

Corpsmembers identify reasons they joined the corps and, in the process, think about potential goals they might not have previously considered.

Option #4: Creating a Future. Corpsmembers make a collage or write a story that describes a potential future for themselves.

Option #5: A Timeline. Corpsmembers create a timeline in order to be more specific about their goals and begin to see the relationship between short- and long-term goals.

Option #6: Goal-Setting Chart. In this follow-up activity to the timeline, corpsmembers look at the relationship between what they can accomplish in the corps and their longer-term goals.

Option #7: Returning to the Corps 10 Years Later. In another way of looking at their long-term goals, corpsmembers imagine themselves 10 years in the future, returning to the Corps either for a reunion or as a guest speaker.

[Editor's note: this excerpt includes Activities 1, 2, 5 & 7.]

The group activities lay the foundation for the next step in the process, when corpsmembers more precisely define their goals in the corps: in life skills (employment, community participation, personal development), work, and personal academics.



Group Goal Setting Activities

Option #1:

Thinking About Learning

This activity allows corpsmembers to explore their past experiences with education: what they remember as positive and negative learning experiences and how they learn best. Corpsmembers also explore their own learning needs: what makes learning comfortable and what makes learning uncomfortable (and, therefore, difficult).

Materials: Photographs and illustrations, readings, newsprint.

1. Start by having corpsmembers look at a variety of pictures of people learning something in school and in other settings (especially work). Include people who are happy, miserable, young and old. Have corpsmembers describe the pictures, then talk about the memories they evoke.
2. Read aloud a few excerpts from descriptions that people have written about their experiences learning and in school. After each excerpt, let corpsmembers discuss what they have heard: How does it connect with their own experiences? Encourage corpsmember to tell their own stories.
3. Divide the corpsmembers into two groups, and ask one group to make a list of phrases that could complete the fragment "It's easy to learn when....." Ask the other group to complete "It's hard to learn when...." When both groups are done, have volunteers copy the groups responses onto newsprint. Here are some possible responses:

It's easy to learn when:

The teacher is good.

We pay attention.

People aren't making fun of each other.

We know why we are learning something.

We understand what's going on.

It's hard to learn when:

The teacher talks too much.

People laugh at you.

We don't understand.

We have other things on our mind.

The teacher thinks we're stupid.



4. Follow up these lists by having the whole group discuss some items more specifically. With the items here, for example, you can ask what makes a good teacher, what makes it hard to understand something, or what they can do to have a group where people aren't making fun of each other. If the corpsmembers have begun keeping journals, suggest possible journal topics. For example:
- An experience (in school or on the job) where they felt good about learning something: What did they learn? Why did it make them feel so good?
 - A description of someone from whom they learned (a teacher, an employer, a co-worker, anyone).
 - A description of a time when someone learned something from them.
 - An experience at school or work that made it hard for them to learn.

You might want to allow time for corpsmembers to write during the activity. Then those who want to can read their pieces aloud.

[Adapted from Andy Nash in Elsa Auerbach, Making Meaning, Making Change: A Guide to Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL and Family Literacy. University of Massachusetts English Family Literacy Project, Boston, 1990]



Group Goal-Setting Activities

Option #2:

Guest Speaker

This activity helps corpsmembers think about the process of setting and achieving goals by listening to someone else speak about his or her experience. The speaker should be someone the corpsmembers can see as a role model.

1. Invite a guest speaker from the community who has “made it”: who has set and achieved goals for herself or himself. Prepare the guest speaker by giving him/her some background about the corps’s goals, and some idea where the corpsmembers are in their own goal setting process. Ask the speaker to talk about his or her own goal setting process and strategies: the goals that he or she has set (and why), the steps needed to achieve those goals, the difficulties encountered and how he or she overcame the difficulties. The speaker may be able to include comments on values, self esteem, sex-role stereotypes, and decision making as well as goal setting.
2. Let corpsmembers know in advance that there will be a speaker and what he/she will be talking about. Corpsmembers should have a sense of what to listen for and how the topic relates to their own lives. They should also think about questions they might want to ask.
3. After the presentation, allow time for discussion and questions from corpsmembers.



Group Goal-Setting Activities

Option #5:

A Timeline

This activity encourages corpsmembers to become more specific about their goals and begin to see the relationship between short-term and long-term goals.

Materials: Newsprint (for you to draw your timeline on as you model the steps in this activity), paper, pens or pencils.

1. Have corpsmembers draw the first part of their timelines: from birth to present. They should write in dates and major events that have happened in their lives (you will want to model this and the next two steps on newsprint).
2. Now have the corpsmember extend their timelines two years into the future and write in events they want to make happen in those years (this will include in and beyond the corps, such as earning their GED, graduating from the corps, joining the Army, getting married, starting college, getting job training, buying a car, etc.).
3. Finally, have them extend their timelines to reach about ten more years into the future. Ask them to add the events they would like to experience during this period (they might include such goals as living in a place of their own, getting promoted, earning a college degree, taking a trip, getting married, etc.).
4. Corpsmembers may want to display their timelines in the room or hold them up to share with the group. Stimulate discussion by asking questions like the following:

How much control do people have over what happens in the early years of their lives — up to age 10 for example? What about during the second ten years: do we get to set goals for ourselves and work toward them in our teen years? What about when we're in our 20s or 30s?

What connections do you see between your goals in the next two years and your goals for the ten years after that?



Group Goal-Setting Activities

Option #7:

Returning to the Corps Ten Years Later

This activity provides another way for corpsmembers to think about their long-term goals: by imagining themselves ten years in the future, returning to the corps either for a reunion or as a guest speaker. In the first scenario, corpsmembers fill out a questionnaire; in the second scenario, they prepare a short speech, which they can present to the rest of the group. Allow corpsmembers to select the choice they feel more comfortable with.

- A. *Corps Reunion*: It's been ten years since you were in the corps, and now you've been invited back for a reunion. The corps has sent you a questionnaire to fill out about what you're doing now. They are going to make all of the questionnaires into a booklet, which they will give to everyone that comes to the reunion.
1. I am _____ years old. (*Remember, this is ten years into the future.*)
 2. My job is:
 3. My responsibilities at work include:
 4. After I left the corps, I prepared for this job by:
 5. My family responsibilities are:
 6. My most important personal possessions are:
 7. Of my experiences in the last ten years, these have been the best ones:
- B. *Returning to the corps as a guest speaker*: You've worked hard and been a big success since you graduated from the corps ten years ago. Now the corps director has invited you back to speak to corpsmembers about how you set and achieved your goals. She/he asks you to talk about what you have done in the ten years since you graduated.

You want to write down notes to prepare your talk and this is how you organize them:

- The goals I set for myself and the work I'm doing now:
- The steps I took to achieve my goals:
- Difficulties I encountered:
- Things I did to overcome those difficulties:
- My goals for the future and how I plan to achieve them:

Write down the notes for your talk. Then, if you wish, give the talk to other people in your group.

The Even Start Model

Empowering the Student through Goal Setting

The North Shore town of Amesbury, Massachusetts is serving as a site of Even Start, a federally funded model addressing the dual issues of parenting and literacy.

The four-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, awarded to the Amesbury Public School system to service 48 target families has two primary goals: supporting adult parenting skills and empowering parents as their children's first teacher by developing literacy skills.

Amesbury Even Start is based upon a case-management model. Each family entering the program is assigned a Home-Based Visitor and a Family Literacy Specialist. The interrelated nature of the program is emphasized by including the Family Literacy Specialist, the Home-Based Visitor, and the parent in the development of goals for the family in each component: adult education, early childhood education, and parenting family issues. These goals are then used to plan that family's involvement in Even Start activities.

The program is organized in eight-week service cycles. At the beginning of each cycle, families set short-term and long-term goals for themselves and their children. Then staff collaborate with parents in the selection of activities to attain individual goals. At the end of the eight-week cycle, the staff meet again with the parent to evaluate progress and possibly to reassess and set new goals.

THE ADULT LITERACY COMPONENT

The adult literacy component of Even Start is a multi-level program aimed at increasing basic skills, improving self-concepts, reinforcing various uses of literacy, maximizing parent involvement in child-centered learning, and creating awareness of career/employment opportunities.

At the most basic level, the program provides an on-site adult literacy program focusing on attaining functional and GED skills. At another level, parents are learning about child development in order to actively participate in their children's learning.

We have recently incorporated the use of small groups into our literacy program. These small groups are planned by staff based on the general goals of the adult learners. The parents can "opt" into any one of these groups at the beginning of a cycle if relevant. The groups have helped build a sense of community within the program and many friendly relationships have formed.

For the adult learner who is considered a lower-level ABE student, one-on-one tutoring is provided. When the parent feels he/she is ready, he/she can opt into a smaller group which consists of students with similar literacy levels and social/group interaction skills. We have found that social contact and acceptance of one's literacy level is

by
**Susan Martin,
Sandra Hall, and
Jeanette Bahre**



Amesbury Even Start



EVEN START'S PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

The philosophical approach to education at Even Start rests under a Whole Language umbrella. We define Whole Language as a belief that language is central to learning, that learning is easiest when it is from whole to part (when it is in authentic contexts), and when it is functional to the learner. Whole Language also empowers the learner, by operating on a belief that learning is both personal and social and that educational settings must be learning communities. This philosophy includes an acceptance of all learners and the languages, cultures, and experiences they bring to their education.

The Whole Language approach for adults is developmental and is driven by the experiences of the adult learner, which means that instruction must build on and connect to an individual's life and language experiences. Oral and written language experiences must be purposeful, functional and real. The four language modes — listening, speaking, reading, writing — are mutually supportive and must not be artificially separated; rather they should be equally emphasized.

The Whole Language approach also invites adults to recognize and build upon strengths. Even Start does not focus on deficiencies. A broader scope of assessment and instruction is incorporated which includes assessing the student's prior knowledge, providing organizational strengths and options, evaluating new learning, and identifying and teaching concepts, relationships and connections.

Students are empowered when they become active agents in their own learning, when they acquire a sense of belonging paired with autonomy, objectivity, and knowing what they say matters. Even Start's curriculum incorporates strategies to encourage self growth and discovery of individual learning styles and preferences.

one of the first steps many lower level students must take to feel comfortable with themselves and be motivated to attend. Additional adult literacy experiences are personalized and based on the goals parents set for themselves.

Initial Assessment and Measurement of Adult Learner Progress

Even Start is an empowerment model, therefore assessment and measurement of adult learners is not based on their weaknesses; rather, it is based upon their strengths and the wealth of knowledge they bring to our program. Accordingly, our assessment tools are non-traditional and seek to empower and strengthen our parents/adult learners from the moment they come into the program by revealing their ability to take charge and

be proud of the lives they are leading.

The emphasis at Even Start is on Family Literacy and the importance of transferring learning from parent to child and visa versa. Therefore, the staff responsible for the initial assessment come from both components of our program. Parent/adult learners who enter the program set goals with, and are initially assessed by, both a Family Literacy Specialist and a Home Based Visitor.

During the intake procedure, the staff informally assess the functional/academic capabilities of the parent/adult learner based on the Amesbury Even Start Goal Sheet (*see sample, next page*) and on a variety of intake sessions. The Goal Sheet uncovers a variety of assessment information, but at the same time



AMESBURY EVEN START GOAL SHEET

Goals: 8 Week Cycle from _____ to _____

Parent Name _____ Date _____

Family Literacy Staff _____ Home-Based Visitor _____

There must be a goal and activities in each of the following areas: **Adult Alone Time** (Adult Literacy Work), **Child Alone Time** (Child Development), **Parenting Support** and **Parent and Child Together Time** (Enhancement of the Parent/Child Relationship).

Adult Literacy Work	Long-Term Goal Get ready for a job	Short-Term Goal Learn about computers Improve writing skills	8-Week Activity Plan Newsletter group: 2-3 p.m., Tues. Introduction to Mac: 1-2 p.m., Mon. Writing group: 10-12 p.m., Wed.
Child Development Related	Understand my child	Learn about 3-year-olds	Find and read 2-3 articles about 3 year olds using the resources of Even Start
Parenting Related	Provide a healthy place for my child to grow	Learn how to have more patience with my child	Attend 2-5 year-old Parent Group 1-2 p.m., Tues.
Parent-Child Together	Do more activities with my child	Participate in activities that Home-Based Visitor brings every week	Home-based visits will happen on Thursdays from 1-2 p.m.



EVEN START IN THE HOME

The Home-Based Visitor for each family ensures the family receives appropriate services. After the full team identifies goals, the Home-Based Visitor reviews the parenting and child development goals, and assists the adults in designing a program to fit the family's needs. Information and referrals to appropriate community services may be offered by the Home-Based Visitors, who can act as advocates for adults dealing with other agencies. Group meetings with providers from these other agencies are common, and are critical to ensure no duplication of service occurs.

Visits to the home, usually weekly, incorporate activities related to various goals. During these visits, the Home-Based Visitor brings a book and often a game or resource from one of the many kits developed by Even Start staff. The Home-Based Visitor introduces the material to the parent(s) and child, demonstrates use of the material while directly interacting with the child, models adult behaviors necessary to facilitate the child's exploration and experimentation, and encourages appropriate parent-child interplay. Visits typically last one hour and include a brief evaluation of the activity and a discussion of how the activity can be replayed throughout the coming week.

On weeks when families participate together, such as in playgroups and workshops, there are no home visits.

acts as an extremely inviting, unintimidating way to assess initial capabilities, attributes and interests. The Goal Sheet is a visual representation of an eight-week cycle. It is broken up into categories representing program requirements at Even Start, including: adult education, parenting skills, child development and parent/child together time. These categories are then subdivided into short-term and long-term goals columns.

Although simple in description, this Goal Sheet provides the case managers with a wealth of initial assessment information without the use of extensive formalized testing or frequently inaccurate initial self-evaluations. Informal skills assessed include communication skills, such as listening to the description of the Even Start program options, and formulating questions about the adult learner's individualized Family Literacy Plan. Both verbal and written expression of goals are used in the initial assess-

ment.

The Goal Sheet also provides information on the critical thinking abilities of the parent/adult learner. For example, questions posed may include: What is the difference between short and long term goals? Are the goals realistic?

The Goal Sheet also provides information on decision-making skills such as the following: what program options will be emphasized during the initial eight week cycle? how do eight-week program options lead to long term goals.

The Goal Sheet offers some elements of affective measurement. Parents/Adult learners often express dreams and wishes, combined with "felt" or "real" strengths and weaknesses. This information is extremely important when it comes to cycle evaluations, because it provides the parent/adult learner an opportunity to ethically analyze how they perceive themselves, and whether their perceptions have helped or hindered their progress.



Parenting and child development goals are also assessed during the initial intake procedure. Information is collected formally through the use of the Parent/Child interaction forms which attempt to uncover issues which may require future support (*see sample at the end of this section*).

Intake Utilizes Many Formats

The intake process allows a variety of information to be gathered in a number of ways: discussion sessions, informal goal-setting sessions, formalized questionnaires, and a formalized adult assessment tool — the California Adult Student Assessment System, CASAS. All Even Start Programs nationwide utilize CASAS, a measure of functional reading ability.

[Editor’s Note: CASAS is “a comprehensive educational assessment system designed to measure competency-based curriculum for all levels of Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language, including a pre-vocational curriculum,” according to the CASAS Overview. According to its developers, it measures functional basic skills in

reading, math, and listening comprehension, and utilizes authentic assessment or applied performance measures on oral proficiency, writing skills, pre-employment and work maturity competence, and critical thinking skills.]

Competencies include the ability to read a newspaper advertisement, to use a telephone directory, or to read the instructions on a bottle of medicine, etc. Results are integrated into the adult learner’s individualized Family Literacy Plan (*see sample at end of this section*).

The initial assessment is a key component of the intake procedure, and takes roughly four hours to complete. Orientation and program description sessions run approximately one hour. The CASAS can take anywhere from thirty to sixty minutes to complete. (There is no time limit.) The questionnaires and goal-setting sessions usually take about one hour to complete. Goals can be analyzed, changed or continued, based on what the adult learner wants to do. The CASAS is administered every six months; each level has a pre- and post test.

Although simple in description, the Goal Sheet provides the case managers with a wealth of initial assessment information without the use of extensive formalized testing or frequently inaccurate initial self evaluations.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Even Start Center provides a comprehensive program for young children. Children spend time in the Center while parents are engaged in adult literacy work, or when goals for the child can best be addressed there. The Center’s program brings together children of varying ages in a safe, accepting environment where they develop and play together. Through developmentally appropriate experiences and activities, children are encouraged to acquire and practice cognitive, language, socialization and motor skills. They also learn to respect each others’ challenges and individuality.

As with all Even Start programming, parents are instrumental in planning and implementing the Early Childhood Program. This supports the parents’ goal of 1) becoming more aware of the needs and learning styles of their own children, 2) successfully communicating with a teacher about their children, and 3) creating a community of adults who are caring for children.

Even Start recently hired an Early Childhood Specialist to plan and implement the Early Childhood Program and to supervise the Child Care Assistant. The program includes two morning playgroups per week. Families sign up for two or three playgroups each eight week cycle.



AMESBURY EVEN START EVALUATION FORM

Evaluation: 8-Week Cycle from _____ to _____

Parent Name _____ Date _____

Family Literacy Staff _____ Home-Based Visitor _____

During the cycle just finished:

WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT MYSELF AS AN ADULT LEARNER?

Computers aren't as hard as I thought they would be. I'm getting the hang of it.

WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT MYSELF AS A PARENT?

Sometimes my child needs my attention and sometimes my child really needs time alone.

WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT MY CHILD?

I feel as if I better understand how my child sees the world, and also that they are very complicated!

DID YOU REACH YOUR SHORT TERM GOALS? Somewhat

IF YES, WHAT WAS MOST HELPFUL IN ACHIEVING THESE GOALS?

The workshop I attended was helpful in working toward my child's development goals. The Resume Group showed me how to sell myself on paper in order to someday get a job.

IF NO, WHAT DO YOU THINK STOOD IN YOUR WAY?

Sometimes I missed a Home-Based Visitor meeting because I had other appointments that I couldn't change but I do think I set aside time to play with my child.

WHAT EVEN START ACTIVITIES WERE MOST HELPFUL?

The parent group was very supportive and I feel like I really learned a lot from the groups that I attended.

BASED ON WHAT YOU LEARNED, WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO FROM HERE?

I would like to attend more workshops.

At the end of each cycle, the individual accounts of each session are attached to that cycle's goals worksheet. The Evaluation Form contains basic information about what went on in each session: the goal of the activity, what materials were used, who led the session, and an opportunity for the parent/adult learner to discuss what he/she learned and how he/she may transfer some idea, attitude or skill to his/her

children. This allows reflection on past goals and related implementation. Changes in adult learner goals are presently ascertained by evaluating the last cycle, e.g. were the goals realistic? New goals are acknowledged on the succeeding 8-weekcycle Goal Sheet.

Measurement: the Portfolio, the Goal Sheet, and More

Parents/adult learners choose their



own Even Start programming; when a parent/adult learner decides their goals, chooses what programming will support that goal, and evaluates their progress during the cycle, they are more likely to be taking charge of their own learning.

An adult learner portfolio is created at initial placement. The folder eventually includes writing samples, math work, and other content area activities. The samples are compared from time to time, and at the end of every 8-week cycle, for differences in quality. Markers are being developed to measure changes in attitudes toward education in general. These markers will help track behavioral changes — such as reading for pleasure, or writing a note to a child's teacher, or choosing one shopping center over another — from applying skills learned in the program. These important behavioral changes are often lost in traditional assessment and evaluation.

The Goal Sheet at Even Start is a multi-level tool. Used appropriately, it empowers the learner by allowing expression and realization of very specific short-term and long-term goals. The system is used in self-assessment as an adult learner builds on the information he/she reflects upon, and as the work is continuously defined and re-defined for the future. Responsibility for the success of the student's program is squarely placed upon the adult learner. There is also ample opportunity for

constructive critical feedback about our program which we value and incorporate into our work.

To strengthen the evaluation, staff observations and participant interviews at the end of each 8-week program cycle also help to determine participants' progress in meeting their literacy goals. Two times per month, families will be asked to complete a short activity evaluation to determine if project activities are meeting their needs and are relevant to their goals/plans, enjoyment, issues critical to them, and their relationship with their child or children.

From the process of on-going assessment by parents at our center has come the stated need for development of skills leading toward employment, so that parents can become, or can continue to be, adequate providers for their children's physical as well as emotional needs.

With this in mind, Even Start has initiated the development of a "Next Steps" program for those parents who may be moving on to a certification program, vocational training, or some other form of continuing education. New legislation for all Even Start programs requires that service be continued for parents/adult learners even if their children no longer fall between the ages of birth to seven years. We have envisioned that when this does occur, many of the continuing parents/adult learners will be in need of academic and counseling support to help them make the transition into their next steps.

Parents/adult learners choose their own Even Start programming; when a parent/adult learner decides their goals, chooses what programming will support that goal, and evaluates their progress during the cycle, they are more likely to be taking charge of their own learning.



The Informal Reading Inventory: Highlighting Connections & Capabilities

Returning to school after many years is a high risk and frightening step for most adult learners. When they make the courageous decision to enroll in classes, it is important to provide initial experiences which are positive and validating. While the learners have skills which require improvement, they also must be reminded of all that they know and are capable of doing already. It is also important that they see they are joining a community of learners who share similar experiences, frustrations, and accomplishments.

For these reasons, we have decided that the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) assessment test, which evaluates reading and math skills, is unsuitable for our program.

The Workplace Education Project offers six GED, Pre-GED, and ESL classes in five different sites in New Bedford and Fall River. Originally, the classes were comprised primarily of Portuguese immigrants who were employed in garment and small manufacturing industries. With the changing economy, however, a growing number are now unemployed.

Previously, when students enrolled in the Pre-GED and GED classes, we asked them to complete the TABE Survey test. Noting the high level of anxiety of new students, however, it always bothered us that we welcomed them to the program with such an intimidating and frustrating tool.

After the students completed the assessment, it was *our* turn to struggle with it. We felt frustrated as we looked at the answers, both correct and incorrect, because we had no way of knowing why the student chose a particular answer.

After scoring the test, the struggle would continue. We would confer with other teachers in the program and determine, based upon the TABE score, whether the learner was better suited for the Pre-GED or GED class. We would make a “good guess” as to which class to place the students and we would watch how they did in class to determine if the level of the class truly met their needs.

Often, we would find that we had misplaced the learners and would move them to a different class. We usually found that the learners’ comprehension skills were much better than the TABE had indicated. When they were in a relaxed setting, reading relevant and interesting material, and explaining their interpretations and reactions, it became clear to us and to them that they possessed many more skills than the TABE acknowledged.

It became apparent to us that it would be necessary to develop assessment tools which better reflect the strengths and needs of the learner. We decided to create an Informal Reading Inventory, comprised of relevant, interesting reading selections followed by questions which enable the learners to realize their

by
Eileen Barry



Workplace Education
Project
Labor Education
Center UMass
Dartmouth



strengths as well as areas which require improvement. A math assessment was designed which focuses on what learners already know and which accommodates the European backgrounds of most of the students. We also created an interest survey to identify learners' goals, interests, and preferred learning styles. While all three tools are important for assessing our learners, this article will focus on the Informal Reading Inventory. [Editor's note: see articles by Kelly and Whiton in Volume One of Adventures in Assessment for more information on Informal Reading Inventories and Miscue Analysis.]

FOLLOWING THE LEARNERS' LEAD

We determined that an ideal source of reading material for the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) was the learners themselves. Previous participants in the program had written and published an anthology of writing entitled *Learning to Fly*. These stories covered a wide range of issues such as families, automobiles, immigration, and learning. [The stories are reprinted following this narrative.] After using the Raygor Readability Formula (see box below) to determine the reading levels of the stories, it became clear that in addition to a wide range of subject

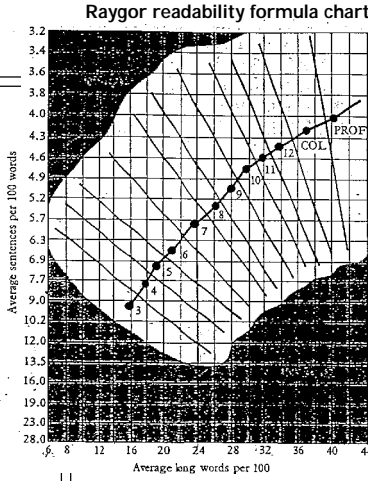
matter the stories also reflected a wide range of reading levels. After supplementing the anthology with a few stories taken from *Sharing Our Thoughts*, the SABES Southeast Writing Magazine, we had stories with reading levels ranging from 2.5 to 10.0. (It is important to note that we used the Raygor Readability Formula to confirm the estimates that we had made about the reading level of the passages. We thought using a standardized measure would add more validity to the IRI, but continue to believe that readability formulas should be used with caution because they fail to consider many factors, such as level of interest and learner background, which have a strong influence on reading comprehension.)

After choosing the stories, we developed questions to accompany each of eleven passages. Some questions require short answers while others ask for more extensive writing. In addition to assessing learners' reading abilities, we then have writing samples to review. This is an added benefit, for we did not get an indication of the learners' writing when we used the TABE test. Since writing is a required skill for the GED test and a focus of the class, the sample offers

We determined that an ideal source of reading material for the Informal Reading Inventory was the learners themselves... we have found that learners are the best judges of their own abilities.

THE RAYGOR READABILITY FORMULA
(Baldwin and Kaufman, 1979)

1. Count out a 100-word passage from the selection or reading you have chosen. If the reading is long, it may be more accurate to choose a passage from the beginning and from the end and to take the average. If they are different, choose a third passage and find the averages. For most low readings, though, one 100-word passage should be enough.
2. Count the number of sentences in each passage. Count a half sentence as .5.
3. Count the number of words in each passage containing six or more letters.
4. Find the points on the Raygor graph.





The learners receive the eleven stories, each copied on a separate piece of paper with a set of questions. We explain that the stories were written by people who were once in the same position as they. The new students are always excited by this and become more interested in reading the material.

important information. Multiple choice questions accompany some of the passages since the learners will eventually be required to answer this type of question, but they are able to choose more than one answer if they wish. If the student answers the question correctly, we know that she or he has understood the passage and is familiar with the multiple-choice format. If the learner chooses more than one answer, we gain insight into his or her thought processes.

The learners receive the eleven stories, each copied on a separate piece of paper with a set of questions. We explain that the stories were written by people who were once in the same position as they. The new students are always excited by this and become more interested in reading the material. We explain further that they should decide which stories they want to read. They are encouraged to read as many as possible, but are assured that if a story is too difficult or of no interest to them, they should not feel required to read it.

Because the Pre-GED and GED classes meet simultaneously and since we do not have a counselor present to administer the assessment, we are unable to listen to the students read the passages and to conduct a miscue analysis. The learners work independently and read the passages silently.

When we review the assessment, we do not use an official scoring procedure and do not determine a grade level. Basically, we use the information and our knowledge of the levels at which the GED and Pre-GED classes are working to place the new student with the group that seems most appropriate. Since we have implemented the use of the IRI, we

have a 99% successful placement rate! (On one occasion, a student's nerves interfered with his ability to read the stories and answer the questions.)

When we discuss our assessment tools with teachers in other programs, they often raise the issue of funders requiring TABE scores or results from other standardized tests. It is important to note that DOE-funded programs are not mandated to use standardized tests. If programs are receiving funds from other sources which do impose this requirement, we feel that it would still benefit the learners and the teachers to use alternative assessment tools in the initial assessment phase. After students adjust to being in class, they could then complete the standardized test. While the scores from the standardized measure would satisfy funders, the results from the alternative assessment can be used effectively in practice.

We have found that learners are the best judges of their own abilities. They read the stories that are written at their level and answer the questions within their capabilities. This provides a positive initial experience because they determine what they are capable of doing rather than focusing on what they don't yet know.

It is also an inspiring experience as they read the words of people who were once in a similar situation and who have now reached their goals or made great progress. Tools such as the Informal Reading Inventory meet our goal to create positive initial experiences for learners so they will begin to feel more confident about their decision to return to school and about their ability to reach their goals.

STORIES

#1. LEARNING TO (FLY) SWIM

Back in the summer vacations of 1986, I used to go everyday to the rocky beach in my little town. I used to go there with some of my best friends that could go with me. They are Gil, Miguel and Alberto. Some of my other friends were not allowed by their mothers. They wouldn't let them go. In the beach we would lie ten minutes in the sun, then after, it was time for the bath in the small tide pools. It was like that every day, even Sundays.

The only problem at those days was I didn't know how to swim. Miguel did, so he was going to teach us, me and Alberto. At first I went from rock to rock, first a few meters in shallow water. After half an hour of lessons we would get tired, so we would explore the pools. Sponges, sea urchins, jelly fish, sea stars, algae and coral were some of the creatures we used to look for. Although we didn't know anything about them, we knew that sea urchins and jelly fish were the ones to stay away from.

Like I was telling... we used to just go from rock to rock. With some patience from Miguel, a month after we already knew our way across larger pools. After that Miguel said that we could swim on the open sea. At that time I felt a new kind of freedom in a new world. but I also thought, "Be careful, this new world is unknown, after learning to (fly) I don't want to fall."

Joao Ferreira

#2. MY TRUCK

It was one of the last ones built in 1950, by the Chevrolet Company. It is a 1950 Chevrolet, half-ton pick up with several 1951 parts. A rugged truck built for work, it came from the factory without turn signals, seat belts, carpeting or a radio.

Bought by a contractor, the truck was put to work right away. Everyday the truck was used to haul tools and supplies to and from different jobs. This truck was worked for nine years without any major problems. In 1959 the contractor gave up his business and sold the truck.

A carpenter who had worked for the contractor, bought the truck for one dollar. He added a few accessories, ladder racks, turn signals and three wooden tool boxes. Now the truck was ready to go back to work. For ten more years the truck was used for work. The motor was worn, the rear springs were shot from being over-loaded. There were dents and rust from years of work and bad weather. Still running, it was taken off the road; replaced by a station wagon in 1969.

I was home on leave when I saw it in the back yard. I looked it over and knew it needed a lot of work. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted it. The last day of my leave I bought it. It was put in a garage for storage.

It was late in 1974 when the truck was put back on the road. Now there was a newer Pontiac motor and transmission under the hood. The rear axle and springs had also been replaced. The electrical system also had to be converted from six volts to twelve volts. It needed some bodywork but that would wait.

Put together, mainly for transportation, it wasn't long before the truck was put back to work. There were moving jobs, runs to the dump and scrap yards. It also did a few tow jobs and hauled a trailer. In 1976 the truck was put back into storage, replaced by a van.



It's now 1991, after 14 years of storage the truck has been brought back to life. This time it has been completely rewired to accommodate all the new accessories. Under the hood is a new 350 cubic inch Chevy motor. In need of some body work and paint, it sits patiently in a heated garage waiting for the day it will again be on the road.

This time will be different. Its working days are over. The next time it sees the road, it will be for cruising and transportation.

Eddie De Mello Jr.

#3. THE FAMILY

The family is a place where people love and feel loved, a place of understanding and forgiving, a place of happiness and sometimes sadness. The family is where everybody feels comforted. It is where sometimes we have discussions to fix things, a place where everybody respects and is respected. Family is a place where we form a small society to go in a big society. I think the family is the most important thing we all have because all of us in the family are loved and feel loved. Everybody helps everybody.

Good things happen like a marriage or a new born child and it makes us happy. Sometimes, when somebody gets sick or dies, sadness invades the family. A family is where parents respect children and children respect parents and grandparents, where sometimes discussions arise because of how children behave, because of money or lifestyles. If we are good families, societies will be good too. In conclusion, family is the best thing everybody has: that goes from love to all other good things that can exist. I don't know what I would be without my family. (I feel very sorry for people who don't have a family, especially the homeless or people who live alone.)

Maria A. Alves

#4. CAR TECHNOLOGY

One of the most competitive sectors of the world's economy is the automotive sector. So companies worldwide are largely tuned into research and technological development. They don't only need technology for quality, but also to be a step ahead of the competition. In the last few years, the most amazing of these developments are active suspension and four wheel steering.

In the case of active suspensions, they are still in the development phase. Some firms are taking the risk to sell them commercially. These are Mitsubishi, Dodge, and Infiniti. There are also the "semi-active" suspension which is standard equipment on all Lincoln models. It has been just a couple of years since Lotus Formula I car used active suspension. Lotus is still one of the technology leaders. Active suspension is one of the most important recent automotive developments, which contributes to a bumpless ride.

Four wheel steering has been a long time dream for major car companies. It was brought to life by Honda, using a simple mechanic system within its model "Prelude SI." Mazda also developed a more complicated electronic system. Both proved to be a big improvement in performance and are also a good selling point.

The list could go on with aerodynamics, alternative fuels, and "Kansei" engineering. But in conclusion, one can say that, "Car industry is the first to work for consumers." Now we can be sure that companies are trying to do the best for us and our environment.

Joao Ferreira

#5. MY FAMILY

We were four brothers in the family. Until I came to the USA, I lived in a city called Curitiba. That's the capital of the Parana's state.

In 1983 we lost our brother and my house stayed sad. We missed him.

In 1984 we adopted a little girl. The happiness came again to us because she is a smart girl.

Now we feel the loss of my brother, but we also have a little girl.

Samuel Sales Pires

#6. WAR

As a child, growing up in World War Two, I found it to be very exciting. Being only six years old, I thought it was great when the sirens went off. We had to shut all the lights off and pull the window shades down.

My sisters and I would run to the windows and peek out at the air raid wardens. They walked up and down the streets protecting our neighborhoods. We were unaware, I know at our ages, of the Jewish people and how they were murdered. Also innocent people who were killed trying to hide them from the German soldiers. We were too young to read a paper or to understand what was being said on the radio.

Today I am reliving another war. This time I am fully aware of what is going on, and I do not find it very exciting. I only hope the young men and women who are in Saudi Arabia know what they are fighting for.

It is sad that we have to go to war in other countries to help them fight for their freedom. At the same time people in the United States take their freedom for granted. We are lucky to be living in a democracy where we are free to speak out for what we believe in, to go to the church of our choice, many of us are never satisfied. We should look around us and see how other people live, and we would appreciate what we have.

Betty Coderre

#7. HARBINGER

Jon could still see the mynah, his mind still heard its piercing cry. Jon had seen this self-same four previous times in his life. Four dreams that he could never forget, and now for the fifth time he did it. Invaded his dreams. Another nightmare that would haunt him throughout his days.

He was ten the first time the dream appeared to him. He wakes up screaming and his mother comes in to comfort him. She tells him it was only a bad dream. The next day Jon's grandfather died of a heart attack. It was a bad dream, nothing more.

At 14, the dream returned. Once again Jon was terrified and he somehow remembered having seen that bird some other time. The next day there was a substitute teacher at school. His class was told that their teacher had passed on. No further explanation was given the students. Jon knew when he had seen the mynah before, and he was scared.

Once more did Jon dream of the damned mynah. He was 19, and in college now when he was called in to identify the body of his roommate. His best friend's cycle had been hit by a truck.

The next nightmare of the bird is the hardest for Jon to accept. For he remembers it with shame. His wife of three years had just given birth to a boy. It was his first child. He was so scared for them, for he knew the meaning of his dream. The shame he recalls is of the relief he felt when his mother called him and his father had just died in his sleep.

And now after six years, the dream again. Jon lay in bed trembling. Someone he loved had died, or was about to die. He knew there was nothing he could do. After having composed himself as best he could, Jon got out of bed, he cleaned up, dressed, and went to his kitchen to have breakfast. He was finishing up his coffee as the phone rang.

Michael Woodmansee



#8. THE DAY WHEN I IMMIGRATED TO AMERICA

It was a happy day thinking that I was coming to America. Every person talked about it as big, rich, and beautiful country. I was anxious to come to see if it was true! Even so, I was very sad to leave my little and beautiful country too.

In my country I wasn't rich and I had to work hard. I left my family, friends, animals, rivers, and springs, the Sundays when we could rest and dress up, the dances where we could find a boy friend.

When at the airport, waiting to leave on the plane, I was sad and happy and scared. When in the plane I was anxious to get to Boston to know how it would be. When still in the air I could see a dark city. Right away I could see the difference from Lisbon to Boston, Lisbon so bright and colorful and Boston so dark.

When out of the airport, my grandfather was waiting with the taxi. I was so happy to see him but that taxi was so old and dirty. Soon I started to look and see that what people there were telling me wasn't true, so many old things, the houses of wood, the food wasn't too good. Right away I started to remember my house and my country where I grew until I came.

It was like I had nothing. Thank God my parents and brothers came with me. I was so sad nothing would brighten me, in part too because I had left my boyfriend. It was so different from what I used to do. Days passed and I went to work. It was so different from what I used to do. Soon I started in piece work. It made me so afraid, seeing the man with the clock taking the time.

Days, months and years passed. I went to school for a short time during the night. It was very difficult, but slowly I learned a little bit, how to speak and read a little. Twenty and five years already passed. I miss my country Portugal, still. Today I love this country, America. I am a happy citizen too. I forgot all the bad things and changed them

for the good it had to offer me.

Maria C. Alves

#9. A TOY

It was long, long ago. I was about five years old. My grandmother was sitting in front of her bedroom's window. She had called for me. When I got there I saw her with her glasses on, holding gently a rag doll. She had just finished it. My grandmother was there, smiling, while holding the most beautiful doll that I had ever seen. She gave me the doll, just like that. It was not Christmas, or any other kind of commemoration, and it was my first and the only toy I had in all my childhood.

My mother wanted to sell the doll to make some money, but my grandmother said there could not be money enough in the world that paid for her granddaughter's happiness, and she reaffirmed her intention that she had made that doll with love to be given to her granddaughter Zana. The doll doesn't exist anymore, but my grandmother's words and the doll image still live in my heart. I can clearly remember it.

The doll body was made from white cloth that my grandmother used to make sheets and pillow cases. Her underwear, little panties, was light pink, the same kind of cloth that my grandmother used to make our own underwear. Her dress was hand-knitted from lamb wool that my grandmother had dyed pink previously. Her socks were hand crocheted from pink cotton thread and her shoes were made from lamb fur. Her hair was made from brown wool and her eye-lashes and eyebrows from black cotton thread and her lips from rep. It was the most beautiful rag doll I had ever seen in my life. I felt fascinated, overjoyed, delighted with my doll; but my attention almost failed on a particularity — my doll was wearing socks and shoes, while I was barefoot.

Maria Z. Santos

#10. GED

I quit school when I was 16 years old because of financial reasons. I had to help my mother with the bills and my two younger brothers. I had many different jobs. My last job lasted for 22 years. I would like to have stayed there until I retired but plant closure took that dream.

When I was younger, I could walk across the street and get a job. That's how easy it was. If I didn't like that one, I could just as easily go somewhere else and would get hired on the spot.

Now plants, corporations, and companies want high school diplomas and if you don't have one, most good paying jobs won't even consider your application. Some places won't even tell you that's why you didn't get hired. There are a few places left that don't require a diploma, but they are getting fewer and farther apart.

I was a stitcher, driller, solderer, tire builder, supervisor and injection molder to name a few. I have learned a lot up to this point. When I think about my life and past jobs, there have been a lot of things accomplished and one or two failures along the way.

Getting a GED is not as easy as it sounds, for my anyway. Through the classes I am learning all over again and I am determined to get my diploma..

Marie Lucas

#11. THE WISH

Arthur had always been fascinated with the past. As a young boy, he used to collect old stamps and coins. Strange pieces of metal and rock he would scrounge in his neighborhood were precious Indian relics or stone age tools to his young imagination.

Now he was in college studying ancient history. For the summer, he was lucky enough to be included in the field trip to Israel to work at an archaeological dig.

It was uncomfortably hot the day that Arthur, carrying his shovel and camera, climbed down into a newly excavated dwelling. He welcomed the cool air in the dim interior. After working carefully in the north corner for an hour, he was scraping his shovel through the sand when he heard it clink against metal. His heartbeat increasing with excitement, he bent down to examine his find. It was an old brass lantern, rather sooty near the lip.

Pulling out his shirttail, Arthur started to buff the grime off his lantern. Immediately, he began to feel light headed and dizzy; the room grew darker and an unsettling feeling of spinning passed through him. He found himself surrounded by greenish vapors that congealed into the shape of a man. "I am the genie of the lamp," the voice boomed. "You have awoken me from my eternal slumber; your wish is my command!"

Arthur almost fainted from the shock. He sweated and trembled. Finally he managed to speak in a high nervous voice. "I wish to go back in time and witness the construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza!"

No sooner than the last word left his lips, he found himself in the desert. He looked down and saw that he was wearing a long white robe. He looked up and saw a half built pyramid. Nearby were men also dressed in long white robes. They were straining to push a huge stone block along little wooden rollers. Arthur looked desperately for his lamp, but it was nowhere to be found. The crack of a whip behind his right ear startled him into awareness. Approaching was a heavily armoured Egyptian soldier flailing his whip. "Get back to work," he commanded, "or you will be thrown to the jackals!".

Timur Turkdogan



QUESTIONS

Story #1. Learning to (Fly) Swim

1. The author of the story probably lived in
 - a. New York City
 - b. Portugal
 - c. New Bedford
2. Miguel taught the author to
 - a. fly
 - b. explore pools
 - c. swim
3. What do you think is the main idea of this story?

Story #2. My Truck

1. Which alteration or alterations came first?
 - a. ladder racks
 - b. carpeting
 - c. turn signals
 - d. both a and b
 - e. both a and c
2. It is clear from the story that the author
 - a. is a carpenter
 - b. has just bought a truck
 - c. is proud of his truck

Story #3. The Family

1. The author believes that good families
 - a. don't have arguments
 - b. are important for society
 - c. live together in one house
2. What would be a good title for this story?
3. On another piece of paper, write your own description of "a family."

Story #4. Car Technology

1. According to the author, one of the most important advances in car technology is
 - a. alternative fuels
 - b. electronic systems
 - c. four wheel steering
2. The author believes that the car industry spends a great deal of time on research due to
 - a. consumer complaints
 - b. competition from other car manufacturers
 - c. governmental regulations
3. The author says that car companies are trying to do the best for us and our environment. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Story #5. My Family

1. The author of the story was sad because
 - a. he moved to the USA
 - b. his brother was lost
 - c. his brother died
2. What made the author happy?

Story #6. War

1. The job of the air raid warden was to
 - a. protect neighborhoods
 - b. fight in World War Two
 - c. turn sirens off
2. As a young girl, the author thought war was exciting because
 - a. innocent people were killed
 - b. she thought it was a game
 - c. she could listen to war stories on the radio



3. Some examples of democracy mentioned in the story are
- freedom of religion
 - freedom of choice
 - freedom of expression
 - both a and b
 - both a and c

4. The author believes that
- people in the United States take their freedom for granted
 - it is good to fight for the freedom of other countries
 - life was better when she was younger

Story #7. Harbinger

- A "mynah" is a
 - nightmare
 - story about death
 - bird
- Jon was ashamed when his father died because
 - he dreamed that his father died
 - he was glad that his baby did not die
 - he had an argument with his father
- What do you think happens after the phone rings at the end of the story? (use another paper if you'd like)

Story #8. The Day When I Immigrated to America

- The author was excited to come to the U.S. because
 - she expected a beautiful, rich country
 - she wanted to find a job
 - she didn't like her country

- How did the author feel at work?
 - excited
 - nervous
 - fortunate
- How did the author describe the U.S.?

Story # 9. A Toy

- From the story we learn that the little girl
 - was very poor
 - had many toys
 - sold the doll to make some money for her family
- The doll was important to the little girl because
 - the doll wore shoes
 - it was a gift of love
 - the doll was worth a lot of money
- Describe the doll in your own words.

Story #10. GED

- Why does the author want her GED?
- Why do you want your GED?

Story #11. The Wish

- What is the theme of "The Wish?"
 - Exploring is dangerous.
 - Be careful what you wish for.
 - It's better to live in the present.
- Write what you think will happen to Arthur next.



SAMPLE ANSWERS TO STORIES 10 & 11

**Sample Answers to
Stories 10 & 11**

So she can get a job.

2. Why do you want your GED?

*So I can further my education and
become a Medical Secretary.*

Story #11 The Wish

1. What is the theme of "The Wish?"

Be careful what you wish for.

2. Write what you think will happen to
Arthur next.

*He will be put to work to help build the
Great Pyramid a Giza, before he real-
izes that he can wish he was back in the
present.*

SAMPLE ANSWERS TO STORIES 10 & 11

**Sample Answers to
Stories 10 & 11**

For finicial reasons

2. Why do you want your GED?

*I want my GED becouse today
company's want people who has it.*

Story #11 The Wish

1. What is the theme of "The Wish?"

Be careful what you wish for.

2. Write what you think will happen
to Arthur next.

*i don't know what is going to happen,
I don't tink he'll have fan.*



Ongoing

The ESL Classroom as Community: How Self Assessment Can Work

I teach English as a second language at Operation Bootstrap in Lynn. Our population is mostly Hispanic adults. We have three levels, with about 75 students per year enrolled. One-third of our students are welfare recipients, one-third are funded under our Department of Education grant, and one-third are funded under JTPA monies. This means that our funders mandate the BEST test for measuring both student gains and our program's performance.

This definition of progress as "moving from one BEST level to the next" can mean, that for learners who don't keep "progressing," we don't get paid. It can also leave little room for learners or teachers to assess learning as it relates to learner goals or interests or to how the curriculum or instruction meets these goals or interests.

It is for all these reasons and more that we decided to focus on developing assessment tools that would help us and our students look at what and how they were learning.

WHY WE TOOK A NEW LOOK

Some time ago, we noted a pattern in our student enrollments and "terminations." Students who entered the program at Level 1 were likely to advance to Level 2, yet few of them advanced to Level 3. Level 3 was largely comprised of students who entered at Level 3 or who had spent only a brief time in Level 2.

One of the factors at work was discouragement. After the dramatic learning curve that is almost certain to result from attending class for 20 hours a week, the normal leveling of the curve at Level 2 felt to the students like failure, either theirs or ours. Ours is a student centered program; the students can see that their choices determine what is taught in class. Yet we were failing to help students gain control over what and how they learned.

In an attempt to start thinking about the what and how of learning, I devised a weekly evaluation form to use within our program. Some of my goals were:

For Me:

- To have a better sense of what's happening in the students' lives so that we can build on that in class
- To know which activities engage them
- To address short-term problems
- To understand each student's measure of success.

For the Students:

- To see the week as a collection of activities
- To recognize how and when English is used outside of class (and how to extend those activities)
- To separate personality (notably the teacher's) from classwork, to be able

by
**Dulany
Alexander**



Operation Bootstrap,
Lynn



to critique the activities without anyone feeling defensive

- To help determine the direction of the class
- To isolate problems so they become workable
- To identify individual growth and successes
- To learn to set (and articulate) short term goals.

We used the weekly evaluation form (see appendix) in our program at all

three levels for several months. Although the class time necessary to complete the evaluation decreased as the students became more familiar with it, it was a pretty dry activity that qualified as the week's most boring activity. Gradually, each teacher found other ways to meet her own goals.

GROUP ASSESSMENT

I came to see that my goals could be better served by other means than this form. For example, criticism of the class activities didn't need to be a weekly

Although the class time necessary to complete the evaluation decreased as the students became more familiar with it, it was a pretty dry activity that qualified as the week's most boring activity. Gradually, each teacher found other ways to meet her own goals.

WEEKLY EVALUATION FORM

Name: _____ **# Hrs in Class:** _____ **Week Ending:** _____

1) In class or out:

I learned these new words: _____

I practiced this grammar: _____

My biggest problem was: _____

My biggest success was: _____

2) What/where/when/how often:

I read: _____

I spoke: _____

I wrote: _____

I listened: _____

3) Class activities this week:

The most fun: _____

The most boring: _____

The most helpful: _____

The most confusing: _____

4) I need help with: _____



What is indispensable is that the classroom activities include asking each student to focus on his or her specific learning process: what's working, what's not working, how are you attacking the problem, and how can you be helped?

event or done individually. It is easily done as a group activity. We now periodically brainstorm a list of the week's activities and the students "vote" with one of four descriptors that the group chooses (fun, helpful, interesting, confusing...). The vote invariably shows that every activity suits some students and not others.

What is indispensable is that the classroom activities include asking each student to focus on his or her specific learning process: what's working, what's not working, how are you attacking the problem, and how can you be helped? If the student has no clearer idea of his or her own situation than "I need help with English," then the process of learning this language is completely out of his or her control. If it doesn't seem to be happening, the student sees no choices other than to give up or try to find another teacher who can "make it happen."

Few of our students attended college; the majority experienced too few successes to remain in high school until graduation. Now they are adults with other responsibilities. The biggest success may be finding a new apartment; the biggest problem may have been a sick child. These events could certainly overshadow any language acquisition goals. If that is the reality of the student's life, student and teacher need to realize that language learning can not always be the highest priority. Some weeks, intentionally exposing oneself to English reading/writing/speaking/listening wherever possible is all that can be done.

SELF-ASSESSMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

But in a more ideal week, the student needs to know how to advance the overall goal of "learning English." The process starts with a self-assessment exercise. Most students have a pretty good sense of how they compare to their classmates at a particular skill. For most students, it follows that each has strengths and each has weaknesses. In my class, I begin by asking each student to name which is the hardest and which is the easiest for him/her: reading, writing, listening, or speaking.

We work from this crude self-assessment to refine our definition of the problem. For example, if Carmen says that speaking is the hardest for her, does she mean pronunciation, or grammar, or vocabulary, or shyness? If the former is her answer, the group brainstorms ways for her to work on pronunciation in school and at home. If another student's strength is pronunciation, we look for ways to use that student as a resource. We work with a volunteer tutor, if appropriate. Having agreed on what language issue is the special target of each student, we as a group can be ready to offer ongoing suggestions and encouragement. More important in the long run is that the student learns to use self-assessment and goal setting as tools to manage the immense task of learning English.

Language learning is a lengthy process for most of us. None of our students will master English before leaving our program. Some students will leave to work, some because they must move too far from school, some because their families can't afford their time for



school, and some because they've decided that "perfect" English is not a realistic short-term goal. The skills that enable the student to treat learning

English as a personal project, whether in school or out, begin with assessment and goal setting. These are probably as valuable as anything else we teach.



Tape Journals in the Oral Skills Class

This entry on oral skills is from Literacy Update, a publication of the Literacy Assistance Center. It is reprinted with permission. For more information about the Center or Literacy Update, write to them at 15 Dutch Street, 4th floor, New York, NY 10038, or call 212-267-5309.

In an oral skills or pronunciation class, students can be assigned a spoken journal on cassette tape just as they are assigned a written journal in a writing class. The tape journal is as valuable as the written in promoting fluency. It becomes a record of students' individual explorations in English and provides the medium for a dialogue between the teacher and each student.

PROCEDURE

Ask students to purchase a cassette tape. Tell them they are responsible for completing a fixed number of "entries" during the course. Ask them to speak on a given topic for at least five minutes each week and explain that, after they hand in the journal, the teacher will listen to it and respond on the tape. You can suggest that they not read (from printed material), but instead speak spontaneously, stopping the tape where they need to and continuing again.

When you return the tapes, instruct students to listen to their own voice and then to the teacher's comments. Next, they should bring the tape back to the end of their last recording and make a

new entry, taping over the teacher's comments (which may be long-winded!).

If possible, give students access to a tape recorder before class begins or during break-time, in case they do not have a recorder at home.

Try to return the tapes with your comments to the students as soon as possible. (It's a good idea to have the students hand in their tapes on different days. This lightens the teacher's burden.)

ASSIGNMENTS

The first assignment should allow students to relax and get comfortable with the medium. Suggestions: tell me about yourself...your family....your country. Further suggestions include: What makes you laugh? Tell me about something you are good at doing...about a good friend...about a dream you had.

Give assignments focused on improving students' weakest skills. For example, for practice pronouncing past tense endings: Tell me about an experience in the past, either something that happened in your country or something that happened during your first days in New York.

From here, assignments can become individualized; each entry can set the direction that the next one will take.

FEEDBACK

Answer genuinely. Thank the students for sharing their stories, adventures, and often remarkable insights.

by
Eileen Hughes



LaGuardia
Community College



As with a written journal, it can be argued that teachers' comments should focus on content and not point out errors, although the latter is sometimes irresistible!

Note: It's a good idea to make notes as you listen to the students' tapes. This will improve your memory when responding and will also become a useful record of students' needs, interests and history.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Ask students, once they've become comfortable with the medium: Tell me how you feel in the class. What do you like best about the class? Least? How can the class help you more? (Be sure to provide examples: more listening exercises? more homework? less homework? more pronunciation?) Or: Listen to your own voice on the tape. What words are hardest to understand? What are your strongest skills? your weakest skills? (Again, provide examples.)

Elicit from your students (periodically or midway through the course) what

they feel is most valuable about this experience and discuss the tapes in class. Remind students upon completion of the course of the value of the tape journal. Encourage them to continue with it, as they would a written journal, even after the class ends.

USES

- For diagnostic purposes: common and consistent errors can become the focus of future lessons.
- For assessment of fluency of speech and contextualized pronunciation.
- For building students' awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses.

FURTHER USES

- For class evaluation: students often find it easier to make discrete and constructive comments on the tapes than in person.
- For building students' self-confidence: most students respond positively to hearing themselves speaking English.

As with a written journal, it can be argued that teachers' comments should focus on content and not point out errors, although the latter is sometimes irresistible!



What Counts?

Knowing Math and Passing the GED

I have been the math teacher at the Care Center, a school for pregnant and parenting teenage mothers in Holyoke, for a little over a year. This by no means makes me an authority on evaluation in the adult mathematics classroom. But as a member of the ABE Math Team, I've had the opportunity to think about it a lot lately. I'd like to share some ideas and some questions.

In November, the ABE Math Team received a grant from the National Institute for Literacy through Holyoke Community College. The purpose of this grant is to review and adapt the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* (the *Standards*) for the adult education community. To accomplish this, the ABE Math Team has sub-divided into workgroups focusing on either the ESL, the ABE, the GED classroom or workplace education. It is through participating in the ABE Math Team that I have been focusing my attention on the "Evaluation Standards" at the GED level.

The *Standards* were written as a response to the publication in 1983 of *A Nation at Risk* which made it clear that the mathematics education which the nation's students were receiving at that time was inadequate. Over three years, mathematics educators from across the nation wrote, tested, revised and, in 1989, finally adopted the *Curriculum and*

Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics.

The *Standards* reflect a new vision of what it means to "do" and "know" math. In its introduction, the *Standards* lists its societal goals as: mathematically literate workers; a citizenry of lifelong learners; opportunity for all learners; and an informed electorate. For the individual student, that means it is no longer enough to be arithmetically proficient. Instead, the *Standards* hope to ensure that students will: learn to value mathematics; become confident in their own abilities; become mathematical problem solvers; and be able to communicate and reason mathematically. To that end, the *Standards* have reprioritized the emphasis on various topics in math instruction, and stress new methods of teaching and evaluation. The curriculum is separated into three sections: grades K-4, 5-8 and 9-12; evaluation is the final fourth part.

So how can this national mathematical movement be incorporated in the ABE classroom? How does that impact assessment? What does this mean for the adult learner?

Some of the issues which I have been able to identify which make evaluation in the GED classroom distinct from the traditional K-12 setting are:

- > grading is not an issue in the adult classroom;
- > intake evaluation is an essential

by
Sally Spencer



Care Center,
Holyoke



"The vision of mathematics education in the standards places new demands on instruction and forces us to reassess the manner and methods by which we chart our student's progress. In an instructional environment that demands deeper understanding of mathematics, testing instruments that call for only the identification of single correct responses no longer suffice. Instead, our instruments must reflect the scope and intent of our instructional program to have students solve problems, reason and communicate. Furthermore, the instruments must enable the teacher to understand student's perceptions of mathematical ideas and processes and their ability to function in a mathematical context. At the same time, they must be sensitive enough to help teachers identify individual areas of difficulty in order to improve instruction." (NCTM Standards).

component for admission to the GED classroom;

- many adult students bring to the classroom a fairly traditional, narrow and rigid preconception of what it means to "know" math, and a long history and a strong sense of their own abilities (or disabilities) within the context of that definition; and, most importantly,

- the ultimate evaluation for the GED student is successful completion of the state administered GED exam.

How do these differences affect the evaluation standards? I confess, I am one of the converted. I believe strongly in the vision of the math class as advocated by the NCTM. As part of my work with the ABE Math Team, I have adapted from page 191 of the *Standards* the following

INCREASED ATTENTION

Assessing what students know and how they think about mathematics

Having assessment be an integral part of teaching

Focusing on a broad range of mathematical tasks and taking a holistic view of mathematics

Developing problem situations that require the applications of a number of mathematical ideas

Using multiple assessment techniques, including written, oral and demonstration formats in individual and in group contexts

Using calculators, computers and manipulatives in some assessment processes

Using the standardized GED test as only one of many indicators of progress

DECREASED ATTENTION

Assessing what students do not know

Having assessment be simply counting correct answers

Focusing on a large number of specific and isolated skills

Using exercises or word problems requiring only one or two skills

Using only individualized written exercises and tests, because group work is cheating

Excluding calculators, computers, and manipulatives from all assessment processes

Using the standardized GED test as the only indicator of success



What kinds of assessment instruments, both formal and informal, can I find or develop to help bridge the gap between promoting, reasoning, communicating and making connections and “getting-the-right-answer” on the GED test?

NCTM evaluation guidelines for the GED classroom:

Admittedly, while these are worthwhile goals to promote students' growth as informed citizens and empowered mathematicians, it is equally essential that teachers do not ignore their GED student's priorities. Passing the GED test, which still tests for “single correct responses”, is the primary goal of the GED student. The goals of developing a problem solving attitude, being able to communicate in mathematical terms, being able to reason mathematically and being able to see mathematical connections to their everyday life can seem, at best, secondary to the students and, at worst, irrelevant to them.

I believe it is important to allow time in the GED mathematics class to discuss these additional goals so that the stu-

dents have a chance to voice their expectations and identify and incorporate these new ideas of what it means to “know” math, while at the same time acknowledging that passing the GED test is a long-term objective.

I am planning to continue to explore ways to resolve this dichotomy. My next question in this quest is: what kinds of assessment instruments, both formal and informal, can I find or develop to help bridge the gap between promoting, reasoning, communicating and making connections and “getting-the-right-answer” on the GED test?

Editor's note: Please write to Sally c/o Adventures in Assessment your thoughts, ideas, or assessment instruments that explore this dichotomy in teaching math in a GED setting. If you have some experience with math assessment not at the GED level, we welcome hearing from you as well.

Voices from the Field

Through the Eyes of an ABE Interviewer

The GOALS Project is a field test of 10 varied components designed to lead to the development of an accountability system for adult basic education programs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The project was initiated by the Bureau of Adult Education of the state's Department of Education, and has stated its purpose is to "define a set of indicators of program quality which are educationally sound, useful to students, teachers and funders, and not excessively time-consuming."

Volume 3 of Adventures in Assessment included a dialogue between Editor Loren McGrail and Lindy Whiton, who coordinated that part of the project which focused on alternative assessment. This section offers more insight into the GOALS effort.

Component Seven of the GOALS project seeks "to determine what factors adult learners themselves identify in evaluating their goal attainment." My objective, as a Bureau of Adult Education-trained ABE interviewer, was to find this information by asking five questions to students across the state: What brought you here that makes you stay? what would make you leave? if you were in charge of the money, where would you spend more?, and what are your next steps?

With these questions in hand and my note-taking skills primed, my first set of interviews took place in early November, 1992 in Dorchester and my last in early January in Pittsfield. *[Editor's note: The project interviewed 125 ABE and 125*

ESL students overall statewide.]

I completed more than twenty interviews with students from Dorchester, Ware, Orange, Springfield, Pittsfield and Amesbury. Some interviewees were nervous because they did not know what to expect but as word got out, more students wanted to be included. It was true for me, too; the more interviews I conducted, the more at ease with the process I became.

Before each interview I used the first few minutes to establish a comfortable level. I would ask about children and note how I had never visited their program or area of the state before. I would then read all five questions and ask where they would like to begin. Most often, we would start with the first question and proceed in order. Some interviews lasted sixty minutes while others were less than twenty.

My first interviews began in a homeless shelter for women and their children. I interviewed nine women over a three-day period. When the first student came in, I introduced myself, told her that the Department of Education was using these interviews for a report to the federal government. I told her that, since we consider students to be the experts, she was making history. I reassured her that the interview was fully confidential. I told her I would be asking five questions and that there were no right or wrong answers. This became my way of welcoming interviewees.

by
**Nancy Jane
Venator**



VISTA Volunteer
MA Dept. of Educa-
tion
Bureau of Adult
Education



Having a strong follow-up program kept her involved and updated about educational opportunities. Being able to see her child at lunch made taking classes more convenient and stress-free. She liked to learn and wanted to be "somebody."

I tried to prevent my note-taking from being distracting by explaining it and then moving on with the questions.

The first interview went well and took the full sixty minutes. I gathered three pages of notes and lots of inspiration. Her responses were nearly typical of future interviews with mothers but what made her interview so special was how she expressed herself. She told me how having her child say to her in the morning, "We gotta go to school, get up!" on mornings she didn't want to go, encouraged her to earn her GED. Having a strong follow-up program kept her involved and updated about educational opportunities. Being able to see her child at lunch made taking classes more convenient and stress-free. She liked to learn and wanted to be "somebody." She set attainable goals: to attend college and become a nurse because she liked to help people.

My most memorable interview was with a student whose writing had been selected for the "Writing On the Walls" project that I coordinate. ("WOW" is a framed collection of learner-generated writings from ABE and ESL classes from across the state. The collection is displayed along the walls leading into the Bureau of Adult Education.) I was going to wait until the end of the interview to tell him I knew of his writings but in the middle of my introduction about him making history, he enthusiastically interjected, "I already did. My writing was selected for Writing On the Walls!" I was so moved and surprised that I revealed my involvement with WOW. We talked a bit about his writing and then moved onto the questions.

Making that personal connection

made a difference since it established a comfortable conversation level. He then eloquently and dramatically described how he felt when he could not read, "When I could not read and went into stores there was an animal inside of me [he touched his stomach]. As I learned more and more the animal slowly went away [he moved his hand slowly up his chest] and now it is gone forever [he moved his hand upward and out with a flourish]." I will never forget the image. When the interview finished he proudly read to me and showed me around his learning center.

The interview with a "WOW" author confirmed my assumptions about how to boost students' self-confidence, yet, I had had no idea how much having one's writing selected and displayed could increase one's self-confidence.

SOME CONSISTENT ANSWERS

There were some common answers to the five questions. For the question, "What brought you here?" many cited having children as motivating them to return to school so they could provide better for their families. The answer to, "What makes you stay?" is childcare. At centers with on-site childcare, parents talked of how the child could play with educational games and make friends while they studied. Students also spoke of the caring and supportive environment provided by the teachers. While childcare was especially helpful, it was clear that it was the teachers who kept the students coming everyday.

When asked, "What would make you leave?" the students would immediately respond, "Nothing," and then wonder if the school was going to be closed. I



needed to assure them that I was not here to close the school. After they accepted my answer, they would most often respond that a job or getting their GED would make them leave.

The most challenging and difficult question was, "If you were in charge of the money, where would you spend more?" They either responded "I don't know," and then started talking about books, computers, better/larger facilities and childcare, or they would approach the question from a larger perspective and talk about increasing funding nationwide in the areas of education, childcare and homelessness. Few students answered the question from both points of view.

The students were fairly quick to answer "What are your next steps?" as if they had been seriously thinking about it before I asked. Most of the students planned to continue their education by going beyond their GEDs, usually at a community college. The students would often speak of their future careers and how these fit in with their education plans.

I re-read the Component Seven objec-

tive, "to determine what factors adult learners themselves identify in evaluating their goal attainment," after all my interviews were completed and it was time to write this article. I realized that the answers to "what makes you stay?" and "what are your next steps?" were most revealing because they reveal not only personal motivations but also that the student is conscious of her/his best learning environment. As one student said, "I want to learn. I like the teachers and students. I want to go as far as I can go... friends notice the difference." Learning centers that combined a strong commitment to the individual student's learning, a pressure-free environment, and challenging material kept students returning daily to classes.

Asking about next steps allowed the students to discuss their ambitions and goals. A person's realistic individual goals directly reflects the extent to which the student has been encouraged by her learning environment to recognize her/his own achievable potential. One student said it best, "I'm facing forward and taking the biggest step I can."

"I want to learn. I like the teachers and students. I want to go as far as I can go... friends notice the difference."



Publication Review

This is not a test

This is not a test. Dehli, K., Dobbs, G., Dwyer, P., Hilton, D., Horsman, J. & Ingram, L. (1990). Toronto: East End Literacy Press.

This kit for new readers contains many useful tools and exercises for teachers interested in implementing alternative assessment strategies in their respective Adult Literacy programs. It is also a good introduction to the novice of the various options to testing now being developed in the field by teachers.

On the other hand, the kit can also be used by the expert teacher who does not have enough time in their busy day to design their own exercises and assessment instruments. Many of the exercises included in this kit can also serve as a model to those interested in designing their own instruments.

The kit is stored in an attractive, green, 3-ring binder so that each exercise can easily be photocopied. It is also divided into seven units with several subsections:

- 1. Goals**
 - Reading*
 - Writing*
 - Math*
- 2. Tutoring or working in groups**
 - Working with a tutor*
 - Working in a group*
- 3. Skills**
 - Around the house*
 - Getting around, transportation*
 - Shopping*

- Banking*
- Looking after children*
- Health*
- Finding a place to live*
- Jobs*

4. Learning about how to learn

- When, where, and what do you like to read and write*

- How do you learn*

- Thinking about what you read*

5. Reading and writing skills

- Starting to read and write*

- How are you doing at reading?*

- How are you doing at writing?*

- Using the alphabet*

- The sounds of letters*

- The parts of words*

- Punctuation*

- Numbers*

6. Making changes

- Are you changing?*

- Sharing*

- Actions for change*

7. Other stuff

- Further readings*

- Thanks*

- Programs and contacts*

Each unit offers a good transition into the next unit, although I am not so sure that the particular order is the one I would necessarily follow with my learners. But most teachers would not use the whole kit and probably just pick and choose those that seem to fit their learners' basic needs. For that particular purpose, I would highly recommend *This is not a test*.

**Review by
Don Robishaw**



*World Educa-
tion/SABES
Boston*



Letters

TO THE COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER: LOOK AT YOUR STRENGTHS, TOO!

As SABES' Program Development Coordinator, I was thrilled to see Mina Reddy's article, "Program Evaluation at the Community Learning Center," in Volume 3 of *Adventures in Assessment*. The Community Learning Center's experience demonstrates much of the flavor of SABES' Integrated Program and Staff Development Process. The CLC took a systematic approach to assessing its needs and strengths, it involved staff *and* students, and it looked beyond the traditional time frame of one year.

I would like to encourage the Community Learning Center to focus more on strengths — just as it's a good place to begin with learners, it's a good place to begin with programs. The CLC addressed this only briefly, "typing up the separate action plans into one document and prefacing it with a statement of strengths that were identified in the process. Most responses to both evaluations were very positive, and this was not acknowledged anywhere in this process, which focused on needs and areas for development." In SABES' process, both individual strengths and program strengths are identified, to reflect SABES' philosophy of working from strengths, and because we are always seeking to identify and make available to everyone the extensive expertise found in ABE in Massachusetts.

More than 30 programs across the state have been trained in the Program and Staff Development Process, and each one adapts the process to suit its philosophy and needs. The Community Learning Center provided us with a good example of how the process can be modified. The Integrated Staff and Program Development Process Training will be offered in each region again soon; programs that are interested in finding out more about the training process should contact their SABES Regional Coordinators.

Barbara Garner
Program Development Coordinator
SABES

**LETTER FROM URUGUAY**

Ms. Loren McGrail
World Education/SABES
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111
U.S.A.

December 9, 1992

Dear Loren:

You don't probably remember me, except for the fact that you generously gave me an issue of *Adventures in Assessment* in your workshop presentation about "Assessment in the Learner-directed Adult ESOL class" in the TESOL Conference in Vancouver last March.

I remember having promised you some sort of feedback and a copy of possible materials that could be generated as a result of reading your material.

Congratulations on the quality and nature of your perspectives. Your publication has given us a lot of impetus to go on exploring the assessment issues. We have benefitted from materials in the Appendix as well and several workshops have been offered having as backbones your checklist and questionnaires.

I'm sending you three papers that were prepared by teachers in the workshops I mentioned. Feel free to use them if they can be of any help to you.

Sincerely yours,

Maria Elena Perera
Pedagogical Orientator
Alianza Cultural Uruguay – Estados Unidos de America

[Editor's note: The following assessment tools focus on listening skills. We encourage readers to contribute other ESL or adult learning materials on this infrequent but rich topic.]



LISTENING PROGRESS

- Vocabulary** Is the vocabulary new?
Does it hinder your understanding of the whole passage?
- Compensation** Is it difficult for you to guess the meaning of some of the new words?
- Short Term Memory** How many times do you feel you need to listen to a new passage/conversation?
- Grammar/Value of Utterances** After listening to the passage, can you briefly paraphrase it? Or while you are listening to it, can you take some notes?
- Speed** Did the speakers go too fast for you to keep up with their pace?
Did the speed really interfere with your understanding of the whole?
- External References** Were the speakers just informing, or were they also giving opinions (implicitly)?

NOTE: These questions could be answered checking a scale (1 to 5) or checking "Not at all," "Partially," or "Almost completely."

	<i>Not at all!</i>					<i>I got it!</i>				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1. Could you follow the conversation in a successful way?										
2. Were you able to understand most of the words?										
3. How did you do it?										
a. guessing the meaning of unknown words?										
b. guessing the meaning of words you didn't hear?										
c. predicting according to the interpretation of the picture?										
d. other?										
4. How was the speed of the conversation?										
Slow										
Medium										
Medium-Fast										
Fast										



	<i>I got it!</i>		<i>Not at all!</i>		
	5	4	3	2	1
1. Prediction helped me.					
2. I understood:					
a. the general meaning					
b. the details					
c. the purpose.					
3. Because of the speed I could understand.					
4. I could use the context to guess at unfamiliar or unheard words.					



ON PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Thanks for your work on *Adventures in Assessment*. I have been working on a project for the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult and Vocational Education, on portfolio assessment for the past few months. In the course of this project, I've talked with people working in volunteer, adult basic education, state and federally-funded, workplace literacy, English as a Second Language, job training, grassroots community-based, public school and community college, and family literacy programs. I spoke with teachers, volunteers, staff development specialists, program administrators, and state directors. Everyone is excited about the potential of alternative and portfolio assessment, but few feel that they know how to approach it.

I talked with some people who began to implement portfolio assessment as isolated individuals because they had read about it and they were intrigued, or because they used it in their public school teaching with children. In most cases, however, I found that people experienced with portfolio assessment exist in local groups, and were introduced to portfolio assessment through some kind of organized staff development activity.

Many of those I spoke with who are engaging in portfolio assessment know of other practitioners in their local area who are also using portfolios. However, they often were surprised by my telephone call and thirsty for news of how portfolio assessment was being implemented in other parts of the country. They wanted things to read, people to talk to, and other models to look at. Many mentioned *Adventures in Assessment* as one of a very few things available that addresses alternative assessment in adult literacy education specifically. The literature in portfolio assessment for those who teach children is often quite applicable to adult literacy practitioners. However, it still requires some translation process, and it does not help adult literacy educators develop a sense of belonging to a larger group that is struggling with similar issues.

It is clear that we need to develop a number of mechanisms to help practitioners who are implementing portfolio and other forms of alternative assessment in adult literacy education to continue learning and to share their experiences and resources. We need materials that address alternative assessment broadly, placing portfolio assessment and other approaches within a larger theoretical framework. We need how-to's as well as conceptual explorations. We need many more publications that examine and share practitioners' experiences. We also need mechanisms such as computer bulletin boards that encourage active sharing.

Leadership development in relation to alternative assessment has to be a priority; the influence of those who have been providing professional development services in this area can be clearly seen.

All of us have to advocate for the incorporation of portfolio and other forms of alternative assessment into the indicators of program quality currently being developed in each state. *Model Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education Programs*, released by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Adult and Vocational Education (1992), identifies portfolio assessment as a sample measure for showing educational gains (Indicator 1). However, this guide illustrates that portfolio assess-

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ment can make an important contribution to a number of other indicators as well. For example, portfolio assessment has the potential to enable practitioners' development of a much more concrete and comprehensive knowledge of students' goals, interests, and approaches to learning. This can assist in program planning (Indicator 3), curriculum and instruction (Indicator 4), staff development (Indicator 5), and retention (Indicator 8). An article on influencing state and national policy would be very useful.

And, finally we must continue working to improve professional support and working conditions in adult literacy education as a way of supporting innovation. Implementing portfolio and other forms of alternative assessment depends on using whole language, participatory approaches to instruction; instructors must feel comfortable with the teaching and learning process in order to integrate assessment with instruction. Teachers also must have paid preparation time, space in which to store folders and materials, and some job security so that the process of implementing portfolio assessment can be honored.

I know that these ideas are not new; however, I think we need to revisit them continually as we try to move forward. I appreciate your work on *Adventures in Assessment*, and I look forward to a larger continuing conversation.

Hanna Fingeret
Executive Director, Literacy South
Durham, North Carolina

AN INVITATION TO WRITE

Adventures in Assessment accepts articles regarding any of the three components of assessment: *Getting Started*, *Ongoing*, and *Looking Back*, or our other departments: *What Counts?*, *Voices from the Field*, and *Publication Reviews*.

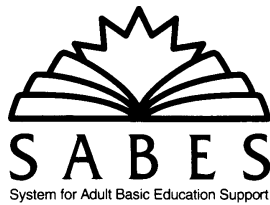
If you would like to submit an article to *Adventures in Assessment*, please contact us at:

Adventures in Assessment
Loren McGrail, editor
SABES
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111
617-482-9485

The next issue of *Adventures in Assessment* will also feature readers' responses to the articles in this and earlier volumes.

Perhaps one of the articles reminded you of a classroom assessment problem you faced and/or solved. Maybe you have questions or additional information about the tools and procedures you read about. Or perhaps you just feel like conversing with other practitioners who are looking at issues of alternative assessment.

We welcome your input and feedback. To be included in the Fall *Adventures in Assessment*, please send your letters no later than July 1, 1993 to Loren McGrail at the above address.



World Education
210 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111