

# Focus on Basics

CONNECTING RESEARCH & PRACTICE

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## Relationships Count

*Transitioning ESOL students into  
community college takes collaboration  
and personalized services*

**by Jeanne Belisle Lombardo**

A major concern in working with students of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is advancing their language skills significantly before they enter community college. They want to enter college at a high academic English as a Second Language (ESL) level or move directly into credit-bearing courses leading towards a certificate or degree. Rio Salado College, one of the ten colleges in the Maricopa Community College District (MCCCD) in Tempe, AZ, administers an adult basic education (ABE) program that serves nearly 5000 ESOL

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**F**ocus on Basics is the quarterly publication of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. It presents best practices, current research on adult learning and literacy, and how research is used by adult basic education teachers, counselors, program administrators, and policymakers. *Focus on Basics* is dedicated to connecting research with practice, to connecting teachers with research and researchers with the reality of the classroom, and by doing so, making adult basic education research more relevant to the field.

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# Welcome!

Few would debate the value of postsecondary education, especially for General Educational Development (GED) credential holders and high-level students of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) who have high school diplomas. Making it happen is the challenge. The sad truth is that many adult basic education (ABE) students don't perceive of college as a place for them. Being an older than average student, often with family responsibilities, creates a social barrier. Those who do enroll often find that their academic skills, while sufficient to pass the GED, or their English skills, while fine for daily life, need strengthening before they can place into courses in which they can earn credits towards graduation. And the cost of college and correlated lost wages is an ever growing — perhaps the greatest — barrier to enrolling or persisting in postsecondary education. Nonetheless, college remains the key to economic opportunity for all students.

It is encouraging, therefore, to find a growing number of ABE providers adding what we call "transition" programs designed to encourage students to enroll and enable them to persist in postsecondary education. These programs usually partner in some way with postsecondary institutions, providing counseling and academic services tailored to the needs of ABE students who are college-bound or enrolled in college. *Focus on Basics* talked to NCSALL researcher John Tyler about why college is such an economic necessity: that interview begins on page 17. For an overview of the growing transition movement and a snapshot of different program models, turn to the article by Judy Alamprese (page 26) and chart by Jessica Spohn and Silja Kallenbach (page 28).

A strong program design is important for a successful transition program, but it is relationships that make it work, found Jeanne Belisle Lombardo and her colleagues at Rio Salado College in Arizona. She describes this in our cover story.

Those responsible for strengthening students' academic skills — which is a component in all transition programs — will find Maricel G. Stantos' research (page 7) on the academic vocabulary skills needed by language minority students useful. Another stumbling block for students aspiring to college is math, and algebra in particular. A team of ABE math experts from around the country talked with *Focus on Basics* (page 30) about why math poses such a problem and what to do about it.

Not all transition programs are young, and not all are additions to existing ABE programs. Massachusetts' ODWIN center was established specifically to enable adults who had career aspirations that depended upon postsecondary schooling to fulfill their dreams. Director Mary Tacelli writes about the origins and current face of the program that has helped about 3000 students succeed in college since its inception in 1964 (page 14).

Rhode Island's Dorcas Place staff found that not all ABE and ESOL students have postsecondary aspirations. Introducing students to college as a place for them is an important part of that program, as is building a sense of cohort among students as they make the transition to college. Brenda Dann-Messier and Eva I. Kampits describe the program in the article that starts on page 22.

Even with the best intentions, getting a transition program up and running smoothly and effectively is not easy. Go to page 19 to read a candid account of the glitches and snags the staff at the transition program at Edmonds Community College in Washington faced in establishing their program, and how they addressed them.

Why are transition programs so important? If students place into remedial courses, as they too often do, the already daunting costs of postsecondary education rise. World Education's Deepa Rao writes insightfully about this issue (page 10). Heed her suggestions, find a postsecondary partner, and develop an effective, flexible transition program for your students.

Sincerely,

Barbara Garner  
Editor

## Relationships Count

*continued from page 1*

*students a year. In response to the need to move academically capable ESOL students into postsecondary educational and training opportunities in the MCCCCD system, the college established a transition program in the summer of 1998.*

Rio Salado College had long recognized the need for a formal transition program. In 1998, the Arizona State legislature decided to support such a program with state funds. The Legislature changed the existing regulatory language and allowed community colleges providing ABE services in Arizona to collect Full Time Student Equivalent money (FTSE) to support transition programs. FTSE (pronounced “footsie”) is state aid money paid to the community college based on student hours. With its funding assured, the Transition Program at Rio Salado was launched with two program advisors, a half-time counselor, and a data entry clerk.

This structure was expanded a year later to include a full-time coordinator, three full-time transition advisors, and an administrative secretary. One of these advisors works exclusively with ESOL students, recruiting a total of about 150 new students a year, of whom about half are ESOL students. Most of Rio Salado College’s ESOL transition students are Hispanic, predominantly Mexican, 50 percent male and 50 percent female, single, and between the ages of 21 and 36.

Some older students are married and have one or two children. In addition to Mexico, students come from other Latin American countries, Asia, Europe and the former Soviet Union, Africa, and the Middle East. In contrast to many lower-level ESOL students, most ESOL Transition Program students are better educated in their country of origin, having finished at least high school. More than half are employed, at least part-time, and most take one or two classes a semester after they complete the transition. Many are recent arrivals to the United States and show enthusiasm for the opportunities represented by the program. With few recruiting problems, the focus is on better preparing them for college.

The three Transition Program advisors form the backbone of the program. One focuses on recruiting students from approximately 20 to 25 advanced ESOL classes, spending about 30 percent of his time on this. Visits to classes are spaced so that the advisor visits each class about once a month. The advisor adjusts the frequency of visits based on the readiness of students at a particular site. Variables include when the students started in that level, whether or not they have participated in a Transition Program workshop yet, individual motivation and readiness, and the speed at which students are progressing in their ESOL studies.

The students are in classes across Maricopa County; the farthest site from our central office is a 30 to 40 minute drive away on the freeway.

*“...more students go on to take college classes from sites where teachers take a proactive role in the transition process and work closely with the Transition Program advisor.”*

## Relations with the ESOL Program

The cooperation and support of the ESOL teachers are essential to the program. Teachers and the ESOL Transition Program advisor collaborate naturally. Aside from the in-service trainings and occasional special trainings focusing on tips for preparing ESOL students for academic writing, teachers are not paid for time outside their teaching duties. Most, however, keep a supply of Transition Program fliers and brochures on hand and distribute them to students who have recently arrived in their classes, refer potential candidates to our program, and communicate students’ strengths and areas where improvement is needed. We find that students whose teachers work closely with us are better able to transition.

The Transition Program advisor recruits from the upper level ESOL classes using a PowerPoint presentation. This presentation covers the programs offered at the MCCCCD colleges; the support services available, including child-care; ways to prepare ahead of time; facts to dispel fears that students don’t belong in community college, such as statistics on the number of

## ESOL / ESL

In this article, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is used to refer to the classes in which students are enrolled when they are recruited for the program. English as a Second Language (ESL) is used to refer to community college classes. These are credit courses on a par with developmental level classes and as such do not count towards graduation requirements.



women, minorities, and students over 30 who make up the student population; and recommended timelines. It is given in English, since students ready for transition must function in English sufficiently to navigate the system. It is, however, desirable for the Transition Program advisor working with ESOL students to be able to speak Spanish, since so many of our ESOL students are native Spanish speakers. Not only does this give the advisor insight into the challenges these students face, it also allows him to provide information to many of the beginning ESOL students to encourage them to transition in the future.

We have found that more students go on to take college classes from sites where teachers take a proactive role in the transition process and work closely with the Transition Program advisor. It also helps tremendously when the advisor has experience teaching ESOL, ESL, or even English as a Foreign Language (EFL). We share information via the ABE Program newsletter, the Transition Program newsletter, sessions at the biannual in-service trainings for instructors, and letters sent out by the Transition Program coordinator. One of the best ways that teachers and the advisor share information is through one-on-one conversations during site visits. This is especially effective when the advisor knows the content of the college classes into which the students will transition.

## Relationships with Students

Transition services are offered to all ESOL students once they have reached the high-intermediate to advanced level in ESOL. After a classroom visit by the Transition Program advisor, students are invited to contact him; appointments are held at a

location convenient to the student. Students are considered Transition Program participants when they are still taking ESOL classes but begin to have one-on-one advisement, usually in the semester before they enroll in a college class. Once they enroll in an ESL class on a college campus in the system, they generally stop taking ESOL instruction, although some still prefer to take non-credit ESOL as

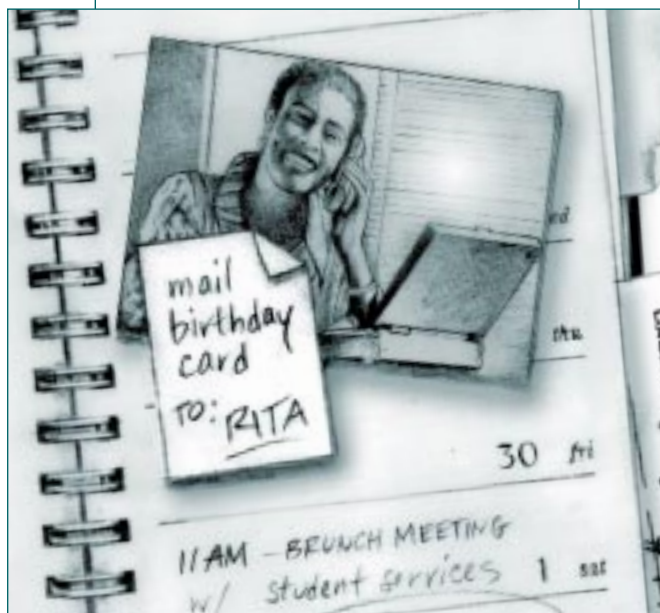
campus, constitutes a second visit. The advisor helps with class selection at this time and steers the student to registration services. Students attending the same college or coming from the same class sometimes do this together as a group. Students can meet individually with the advisor another time to discuss the particulars of their situations.

## Gauging Readiness

After the first year of the program, we realized that we needed to have a systematic assessment of students' readiness for college classes and English language skills, in particular writing and grammar. The advisors had been giving the CELSA test to gauge readiness, but found that the scores were not a good determinant of it. Moreover, advisors had ethical concerns about using the test multiple times with each student, since it can only be given twice in a one-year period. Instead, we chose as

an assessment the language portion of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE: Survey Form 7, Level D). The TABE gives a good indication of advanced ESOL students' ability in grammar and writing. Because it is also prescriptive, it is useful in determining areas in which students need remediation. Students are required to score 18 out of 25 questions on the TABE to be eligible for the Transition Program. This places them at an eighth-grade level for native English speakers.

After being accepted into the program based on their TABE scores, students begin a systematic study of grammar and prepare for the CELSA. The advisor provides students with CELSA study guides and encourages them to take a free Transition Program writing workshop. These are offered three times a year at our



well for the extra opportunity to learn what these classes provide.

The Transition Program advisor meets one-on-one two or three times with a student. This is flexible, however: the advisor is accessible on an as-needed basis. A first meeting typically includes a discussion of the student's goals, motivation, and preparedness for taking college classes. Together the student and advisor complete initial program paperwork. The student will have been tested in his or her ESOL class and the advisor will have the results. If the scores indicate that the student is academically ready to participate in the program, arrangements are made for the student to take the college English language placement test (CELSA).

A visit to the college for the CELSA, coupled with assistance with admissions and a short tour of the

central site, the Adult Learning Center, and at least three times a year at other sites, and run from five weeks to 15 weeks, depending on the site. The workshops meet once a week for two hours and were designed based on observations of classes in upper-level ESL grammar, writing, and reading and a review of the texts used in those classes.

At smaller sites, where it is impractical to offer a workshop, the Transition Program advisor works closely with the ESOL teachers, encouraging them to provide challenging exercises for students participating in the Transition Program, and to assist with transition journal writing. Journals not only serve as a tool for assessment and advisement, but also provide a dialogue between advisor and students. In the past, the advisor reviewed students' journals, but now we encourage teachers to review them. The Transition Program also provides materials for independent study for students who are not able to take a writing workshop. Students complete the materials in the Independent Study Program (ISP) packet of reading and writing assignments, and the transition advisor reviews them.

## Relations with For-Credit Staff

Rio Salado College administers the ESOL Program but it is the only college in the system that does not offer a for-credit ESL program. ESOL students therefore transition into one of the nine other colleges. Establishing and maintaining good relations and communication with staff at these colleges, in particular in Financial Aid, Admissions, Advisement, and among ESL faculty, is critical to student success. In the program's early days, the coordinator actively established relationships. She met

with the appropriate people on each campus to explain the Transition Program's objectives. The coordinator tracks changes in personnel on the campuses, makes periodic visits, updates lists for the team, and keeps our contacts informed about program activities and concerns.

The importance of this connection can be seen in each step of the transition process. For example, the Transition Program provides its students with small scholarships, which cover up to six credits of college tuition. This allows students time to adapt to the more academically demanding environment on a college campus without worrying about the cost of tuition and gives them time to explore other avenues of financial assistance. Students begin to pay their own tuition for higher-level ESL or general classes that they can apply towards a certificate or degree. The Transition Program, through its contacts in the Financial Aid departments, provides support in this area as well. The

***“Establishing and maintaining good relations and communication with staff at these colleges, in particular in Financial Aid, Admissions, Advisement, and among ESL faculty, is critical to student success.”***

program coordinator keeps current on scholarship opportunities open to students and the advisor refers students to our contacts in Financial Aid offices on the campuses.

Without a strong relationship between the Transition Program and these important departments on each campus, the paperwork required in

the scholarship process could easily be a deterrent to student enrollment. The personal connection with staff at the colleges makes it possible to address potential problems quickly and effectively. It also promotes a feeling of good will between Rio Salado College and the sister colleges in the district and contributes to the positive experiences of our students as they transition and adjust to campus education.

## Challenges

By far, the biggest challenge has been tracking students. Our ability to track students across semesters and years has improved with the development of a program-specific Access database, which has the support of top management at the main campus. This database tracks students from the time they begin advisement in the program and through their progress at a campus until they skip a semester. We use the Maricopa District's student tracking mechanism, Student Information System (SIS), to retrieve grades and track student withdrawals or drops each semester. This information is input into the Transition Access database.

Collaboration with the Admissions and Records departments on campus is very helpful. Although Rio Salado College is in the same system as the other colleges, each maintains some autonomy, which is reflected in access to certain records. A contact in the Admissions department can help us gain access to information that might be hard to retrieve otherwise. Other challenges we have successfully addressed have included requiring students to understand the college's drop and refund policies, or requiring students to finish the ESL pathway at college before taking a computer class there. *continued, page 6*

## Indicators

How does the Rio Salado Transition Program know it is effective in recruiting, enrolling, and retaining ESOL students into community college? One way we gauge success is to look at drop/withdrawal rates and pass/fail rates over the life of the program. There has been a dramatic and consistent decline over the last four years in the drop/withdrawal rate of ESOL Transition students and a corresponding increase in the pass rate. From FY 1999/2000 to 2002/2003, the drop/withdrawal rate fell from just over 30 percent to less than five percent. The graph below illustrates this, with the first column representing number of students and the second column the number of classes.

A look at the pass/fail rate is also revealing. In the first year of the program, 73 percent of college level ESL classes taken by transition students were passed. That went up to between 95 and 100 percent each year thereafter. Anecdotal evidence and feedback from the colleges suggest that the program is placing better prepared students into college classes. Some students are continuing with their studies through multiple semesters, some of them are reporting the achievement of an Associate's degree,

and a few are going on to take university classes, while others are improving their immediate job situations.


## What We've Learned

From the advisement process to the collaboration with ABE instructors and with student services contacts on the various campuses, our personal approach has fostered communication between all involved, which we think contributes to the success we're seeing. Another plus has been scheduling flexibility, which enables transition advisors to spend as much time as is necessary with students. This allows us to be far more effective in building relationships with and supporting students as they navigate all aspects of college.

The other key to the high retention of these students once they make the transition to college classes is the level of preparation they receive in the semester leading up to their first class. The team attributes much of the success experienced by our students to this aspect of the program. By the time students take high-level ESL grammar classes, they have met numerous times with the Transition Program advisor, have taken the

TABE assessment, have been given the opportunity to do individualized study and take one or more writing workshops and understand the requirements of college class.

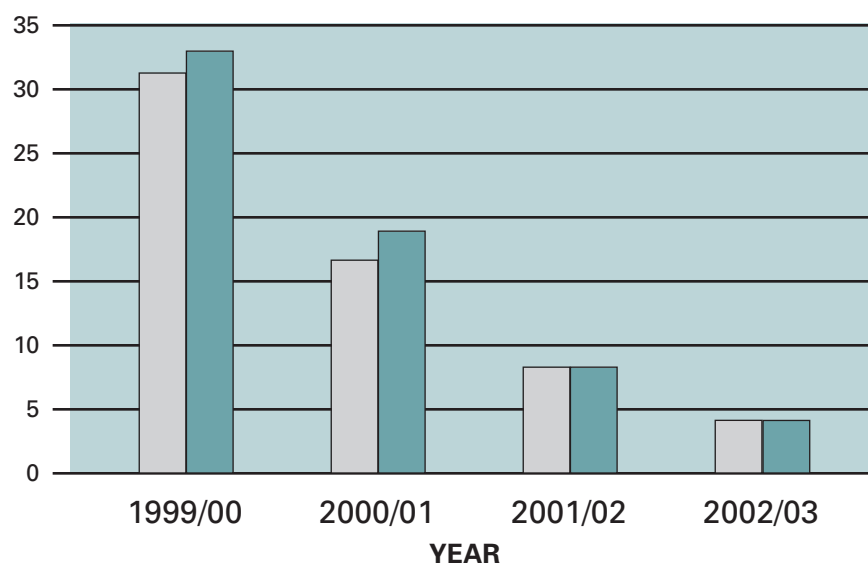
As Rio Salado's ABE Transition Program moves into the future, the team will continue to assist ESOL students wishing to achieve a post-secondary education. Along with the writing workshops, the Program has begun to offer workshops in basic computer skills and has explored opportunities to partner with local libraries where students will have access to computers at no cost. For those who are looking ahead to university study, the Transition Program coordinator has established new contacts at Arizona State University, which will facilitate the transfer process to a four-year college. The team will also partner with the GED arm of the program to provide expanded services to ESOL students who wish to get a GED before transitioning into college classes. The Transition Program has coordinated the use of GED graded readers in selected upper level ESOL classes. This helps prepare those students for the transition into GED and also provides additional academic practice for all students.

Looking back over the four years, we can offer this advice. Try new approaches! Experiment with workshops and study programs. Tailor schedules to your students' needs. Be flexible. Talk to college contacts to get a look at what is being done for ESL students on the campuses. Think how you can use your technology creatively. Think how you can use other aspects of the larger program with your ESOL students. And build those relationships. In the long run, they really do count. 

## About the Author

Jeanne Belisle Lombardo has taught ESL, ESOL, and EFL in California, Arizona, Japan, and France. She now coordinates the ABE Transition Program at Rio Salado College in Phoenix, AZ. ♦

**Drop/Withdrawal Rates for ESOL Students**





## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# Some Findings on the Academic Vocabulary Skills of Language-Minority Community College Students

by Maricel G. Santos

**“The vocabulary first of all, especially when it’s long words, it gets me confused and it make me feel like if I don’t understand one word, then I wouldn’t understand the other... that would [make] me stop, like ok, this is getting me crazy!”**

This comment was made by Louie (a pseudonym), a 20-year old Vietnamese community college student, when asked what he found most challenging about reading his academic textbooks. Louie’s frustration with the vocabulary demands of his college reading is likely shared by many language-minority students who are making the transition from English as a second language (ESL) coursework to content courses designed for native English speakers. For students who are new to a content area such as psychology, technical words like cognitive, dissociation, and psychoanalysis present a challenge. For students who are not yet proficient reading academic texts, academic words — such as *nonetheless*, *illustrate*, and *proportion*, that are commonly used in textbooks across a range of subject areas

(Nation, 1990; Coxhead, 2000) — may also be unfamiliar. While the meanings of technical words are often reinforced by class lectures and discussions, students may be expected to already know the meanings of academic words (Farrell, 1990). Knowledge of academic words has been found to differentiate academically well-prepared from under-prepared college students from all backgrounds (Kuehn, 1996).

always clear which words we should teach language-minority students to prepare them for college-level reading. In a study of typical community college textbooks, I found that one out of every six words, or roughly 16 percent of the words in the textbook sample, were academic words (Santos, 2000). This proportion confirmed for me the importance of this area of word knowledge in college reading, particularly in light of research

indicating that readers often struggle to read independently when about two percent of the words in a text are unknown (Carver, 1994). The prevalence of academic vocabulary in college reading material is one of the reasons I decided to focus my doctoral dissertation on the academic vocabulary skills of language-minority community college students. The language-minority students in the study were either enrolled in advanced ESOL classes or in their first semester taking regular content courses at a community college in urban New England. In this article,

I describe the general design of the study and highlight some findings that may help adult basic education (ABE) and ESOL practitioners understand how academic words can be taught and learned effectively. *continued, page 8*



Many adult English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) practitioners recognize the link between reading comprehension and vocabulary growth (Anderson & Freebody, 1981; Nagy, 1988). However, it’s not

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### The Study

There were two parts to my study. In part one, I administered an academic vocabulary test called the University Word Levels Test (Beglar & Hunt, 1999) to the community college students. The sample included language-minority students in advanced ESOL, language-minority students in introductory psychology classes, and native English-speaking students

minority students in introductory psychology classes who, in turn, performed better than the language-minority students in advanced ESOL classes. This is not a surprising finding: we would expect language-minority students to still be developing their English vocabulary knowledge. However, there was a narrower gap in performance between language-minority students enrolled in intro-

minority students who are GED recipients and enrolled in mainstream courses.

③ Language-minority community college students with greater breadth of academic word knowledge also demonstrated greater depth of academic word knowledge. In other words, students with larger English vocabularies were able to identify more possible meanings and uses for words than students with smaller English vocabularies. Depth of academic word knowledge is important because words often have multiple meanings depending on the contexts in which they appear (Nagy, 1995; Read, 1998). (For example, the word *field* can be used as in “to plant corn in a field” or as in “the field of medicine” or “to field questions from the press.”) Knowing only one meaning might hamper students’ reading comprehension: previous studies have shown that learners will cling to a familiar meaning even when the meaning does not fit the broader context of the reading material (Huckin & Jin, 1987). These findings suggest that deepening students’ understanding of words they already knew — not just teaching them more words — would be a productive route to vocabulary development (Lewis, 2000).

④ Finally, language-minority students with relatively stronger academic word skills were not consistently better at inferring word meanings in context than students with relatively weaker academic word skills. On the other hand, students with weak academic word skills were generally unsuccessful in their attempts to figure out word meanings in context. In other words, good academic vocabulary knowledge does not guarantee successful inferencing, but without it, successful inferencing is less likely. This is likely because students who do not know enough of the surrounding words in an academic text will struggle to infer the meaning of a particular

*“While the meanings of technical words are often reinforced by class lectures and discussions, students may be expected to already know the meanings of academic words. Knowledge of academic words has been found to distinguish academically well-prepared from under-prepared college students from all backgrounds.”*

enrolled in the same introductory psychology class. These data allowed me to examine how the academic vocabulary knowledge of language-minority students compared to that of native English-speaking students and to explore student characteristics that might be related to differences in academic word knowledge. In part two of my study, I worked with a focal group of 10 language-minority students. I interviewed them about their reading habits and perceptions of academic reading. I also examined the kinds of strategies the students used to figure out unknown words in an academic text and probed how well they knew academic words. My analysis of vocabulary assessment and interview data yielded several observations. I highlight four trends here:

① The native English-speaking students exhibited stronger academic vocabulary skills than the language-


minority students in introductory psychology classes and their native English-speaking peers than between language-minority students in introductory psychology classes and language-minority students in advanced ESOL classes. This is encouraging as it suggests that these language-minority students, who have ‘transitioned’ beyond the need for ESL classes, have indeed developed their academic vocabulary skills.

② On average, General Educational Development (GED) recipients demonstrated slightly weaker academic vocabulary skills than high school graduates, a trend observed for both language-minority and native English speaking students. This gap in academic word knowledge, however, was most marked among language-minority students enrolled in introductory psychology. This finding may provide some basis for directing vocabulary instructional services to language-



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

word (Stahl, 1999). I found this to be true for language-minority students in both advanced ESOL classes and mainstream content courses. This suggests that students will need to continue strengthening their word inferencing skills even after they have transitioned into mainstream classes.

There appear to be a range of academic word skills (e.g., breadth of word knowledge, depth of knowledge, word inferencing skills) that can help focus academic word learning and teaching. With these findings, I hope to provide an empirical basis for prompting new thinking in the ABE/ESOL field about the need for and nature of academic vocabulary instruction for college-bound language minority students. 

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# The Open Door Policy

## Hidden Barriers to Postsecondary Education for Nontraditional Adult Learners

by Deepa Rao

**C**ommunity colleges have long recognized the need for postsecondary education and made access to it easy and affordable. Most community colleges have made a strong commitment to what is known as the open door policy: they will not turn away any student who has a high school diploma or has passed the tests of General Educational Development (GED). Many nontraditional adult learners enter community colleges, via this open door, after completing adult basic education (ABE) programs or having been out of school for a long time. As inviting as the open door may be, some hidden barriers in this policy may prevent nontraditional learners from attaining a degree.

The open door policy at community colleges is a benefit to nontraditional adult learners who want to go to college but are intimidated by the criteria of the traditional admissions process. A potential student needs only to complete the application and provide a copy of a high school diploma or a GED certificate. Also, high school transcripts, Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) or ACT scores, and letters of recommendation are not required. The simplicity of the application process makes applying easy and the rolling admissions policy allows learners — traditional and non — to submit an

application at any time and begin their postsecondary education almost immediately.

Who are nontraditional students? Several characteristics help define them. Nontraditional students generally have delayed enrollment, meaning that they did not enter postsecondary education immediately after completing high school (NCES, 1996). Approximately 41 percent of the students enrolled in postsecondary education are age 25 and older; the average age is 29 (AACC, 2000). They usually have a GED or an Adult Diploma, rather than a traditional high school diploma. Many of these students are financially independent, attend school part-time, and work full-time. Many have dependents other than their spouses and many are single parents. They also tend to be the first in their families to attend college (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996).

### Remediation Needs

By keeping the doors to higher education wide open, community colleges have accepted the responsibility for educating all their students, including those who are not ready to do college-level work. Almost all community

colleges offer remedial classes in math, English, and writing. Community colleges now serve more than 10 million students a year. Almost five million of these students are enrolled in one or more remedial courses that often do not offer credits toward a degree (Community College, 2000). Remedial or developmental courses are designed to help under-prepared students strengthen their reading, writing, and math skills so they will succeed in college-level, credit-bearing courses. Most of the students in remedial or developmental courses are right out of high school, but many of the students who need remediation are nontraditional adult learners who have been out of school for a long time (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002). This is one of the hidden barriers to completing postsecondary education: the open door policy in terms of academic achievement masks the skill requirement that exists.

Community colleges have different standards for what is considered remedial. Standards differ from state to state and sometimes even within a state (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002). To determine whether a student needs remediation, most community colleges require students to take a basic skills assessment test (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002). The most popular college placement tests are the ACCUPLACER and the ASSET. Both are adaptive computer tests: each new question is based on whether the previous question has been answered correctly. If the question has been answered correctly, the level of difficulty for the next question increases; it decreases if the question is answered incorrectly.

### History of the Open Door Policy

From their inception in the early 20th century, community colleges have offered higher education to the masses. Until the late 1960s, attracting academically prepared students was not a problem. In the late 1960s there was a significant decline in the number of college-bound students. The universities decided to relax admissions policies and offer financial aid to attract academically prepared students. As the pool of academically prepared students dwindled, the community colleges had to try a new strategy. They implemented the open door policy to draw students and increase their enrollment (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

Students generally take this three-hour test as a part of the enrollment process before the semester starts. A student who scores 75 on the Sentence Skills section of the ACCUPLACER may place into the highest-level remedial English course at one school or into a credit-bearing course at another.

\$1,735 per year for tuition and fees. This does not include books and supplies and other expenses such as rent, transportation, and care for dependents. Total expenses in 2003 for a full-time education at two-year public college could cost a student more than \$10,000 a year (The College Board, 2002).

Students who receive a Pell Grant each year must make what is termed satisfactory progress toward completing a degree-bearing program, such as a certificate program or an Associate's or a Bachelor's program. This progress is measured in credits acquired towards a degree or certificate, and can affect whether or not the student will receive the Pell Grant again. Most community colleges allow students to use their Pell Grants to pay for remedial courses. In most cases, however, students receive only what is termed institutional credit for taking remedial courses. These credits do not go towards an Associate's or Bachelor's degree. Students who rely on their Pell Grant funding to pay for remedial courses are not making satisfactory progress towards a degree. Students must reapply for the Pell Grant each year and this request will eventually be denied (Shoreline Community College, 2003). This loss of funding can have a huge impact on a student's ability to complete a degree.

The community colleges are caught in a dilemma: most postsecondary institutions look to the federal government for funding to operate their developmental classes. The money comes from the higher educa-

***“Students who need to complete one or two remedial courses have a good success rate for completing a degree program. This success rate decreases with each additional remedial course.”***

Cut-off scores prevent underprepared students from placing into credit-bearing courses. Nothing, however, prevents students whose skills are below the level needed to succeed in remedial-level classes from placing into them. Students who need to complete one or two remedial courses have a good success rate for completing a degree program. This success rate decreases with each additional remedial course. In one study, 55 percent of students who took only one remedial course completed a degree program. This rate dropped to 35 percent for students who took three or more remedial courses, including reading (Adelman, 1998). Is the open door open too wide? Should community colleges redirect students who are going to need more than two remedial courses to other programs — back to ABE programs, perhaps — before they enter community college?

## Cost

Remedial education is not free. At many community colleges, the tuition for one remedial course is the same as or slightly less than a credit-bearing course. The average cost to attend a public two-year college is

The federal government provides some financial relief to eligible college-bound students through loans and grants. To receive federal loans, students must be enrolled for at least six credit hours. Nontraditional adult learners often attend school less

than halftime, taking less than six credit hours a semester (Bosworth & Choitz, 2002). Less than half-time students are not eligible for the federal loans; the only federal funding for which they are eligible are Pell Grants.

The Pell Grant is available only to those who show financial need and who have not completed a Bachelor's degree. It does not have to be repaid.

### — FAST FACTS —

## The Pell Grant

- The Pell Grant is the most common form of federal grant funding.
- It does not have to be repaid.
- It is available only to those who show financial need and who have not completed their Bachelor's degree.
- Students must apply for the Pell Grant every year; it is not guaranteed.
- It can be used to pay for remedial/developmental courses at most community colleges.
- It cannot be used for short-term training courses (example: six week job training course)
- A student can jeopardize Pell Grant funding if he or she is not making satisfactory progress towards a degree (Associate's or Bachelor's)

### The Details

- The amount of grant money a student receives is based on a complex formula that takes into account expenses such as credit hours, tuition, and how much the student can contribute.
- The Pell Grant award decreases if the student's contribution increases.
- The formula does not take into account personal expenses such as rent, books, or computers.

(Shoreline Community College, 2003)



tion budget, with the stipulation that the school has to provide credit for all courses paid for by these funds. Without these funds, the colleges would probably not offer the courses. And these courses benefit the many students who need just a little remediation before enrolling in credit-bearing courses.

## Narrowing the Opening


Some postsecondary institutions are examining their open door policies. In 2001, for example, the University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) instituted a new policy called responsible admissions. UMA found that not all students with GEDs or high school diplomas were proficient enough in reading, writing, and math to be successful in college-level or even in remedial-level courses. They did not want to set up their students (and faculty) for frustration and failure. Students in the lower 25th percentile of their high school class or students who scored in the lower 25th percentile of the GED must take a pre-admissions placement test. All other students take a placement test after they enroll. If a student does not do well enough on the placement test to place into the remedial-level courses, UMA refers him or her to a local adult education center. Students who need to work on only one skill are offered admission to the University. Those who need work on more than one skill are encouraged to retake the placement test once they complete the courses at the adult education center (Sherry Fraser, personal communication, May 23, 2003). Other colleges may have similar programs underway.

## Conclusion

Without the community college's commitment to the open door policy

and remedial education, nontraditional adult learners would not have access to postsecondary education. But access is not enough. Community colleges should recognize that not all students are ready even for remedial-level work. By not recognizing this, they are undermining the success of nontraditional adult students. By placing students in courses that are above their skill level, they are setting students up for failure. The more Pell Grant money students spend on institutional credit remedial courses, the less Pell Grant money they will be able to spend on credit-bearing courses that can be counted towards a degree.

*“While opening doors to all students is a laudable goal, community colleges would do well to re-examine policies that admit students with very limited academic skills.”*

While opening doors to all students is a laudable goal, community colleges would do well to re-examine policies that admit students with very limited academic skills. Less than half-time students, who may use their Pell Grant award to pay for several remedial courses, need to know what the Pell Grant guidelines are for making “satisfactory progress” and that they may lose funding if they do not meet them. Both adult education centers and community colleges should take responsibility for educating nontraditional students about these critical points. 

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## About the Author

Deepa Rao has been coordinating the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project, a project of the New England Literacy Resource Center, World Education, Boston, since April, 2002. Prior to that, she worked as a GED and ESOL/Citizenship Program coordinator and teacher in Boston. She began her adult education career as a volunteer teacher for Americorps/City Year Boston Program. ♦

## The GAP Program

***Not just post secondary institutions are examining their policies: many adult basic education (ABE) programs are, too. Recognizing the need to bring students' academic level up before entering into community college, this ABE program reached out to a nearby community college to create this college preparation program.***

Almost every seat in this remedial math class is taken. The students take a moment to review their last homework assignment, converting word problems into algebraic expressions, and then the first hand goes up.

"Question 10," a student calls out.

Eddie Rose, the instructor, turns to the whiteboard and responds, "Read the word problem to me and tell me how to write it on the board."

As the student reads through the word problem, she also tells Eddie how to change the words into a series of numbers, signs, and parentheses. Once finished, Eddie turns to the class, and says, "Does everyone agree with what's on the board?" A few heads shake disapprovingly.

"Okay. So what needs to be changed?" A couple of students make suggestions and once the equation is perfected, the class works together to get the answer. Once the problem is solved and all heads nod in agreement about the process and the answer, another student calls out the next problem to work through.

This remedial math class is

unlike the majority of remedial math classes offered at community colleges throughout the United States. Why? Because this math class is not housed on a college campus but at a local adult education center: the New Haven Adult and Continuing Education Center (NHACEC), in New Haven, CT. Students at NHACEC have the opportunity to take remedial courses before they attend community college and they can do it for free. A strong collaboration with their local community college, Gateway Community College (GCC), enables NHACEC to offer students six remedial-level courses at absolutely no cost to the student. Students who participate in the GAP Program, as it is called, have already earned their high school credentials, or are in the advanced General Educational Development

(GED) and English as a second language (ESOL) classes. Both barriers are addressed through the GAP program. Even though these remedial courses are free, space is limited to students who are academically prepared to do the work. Students who are not academically prepared continue their studies in the ABE/ESOL classes.

The GAP Program was developed through the collaborative effort of Dr. James Boger, the Director of NHACEC, and Dr. Kendrick Dorsey, President of GCC. Funding comes from the NHACEC, GCC, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. NHACEC also provides in-kind contributions in the form of instructor time for these free remedial courses. It is a relatively small program, serving 70 to 80 students each semester. ♦

## The New England ABE-to-College Transition Project

The New England ABE-to-College Transition project was launched in January, 2000, with funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. Its goal is to enable adult literacy program graduates to prepare for, enter, and succeed in post-secondary education so as to help them improve and enrich their own and their families' lives.

As of December 2003, 25 college transition programs in the six New England States are part of this initiative. They operate as part of adult basic education programs in diverse settings: community-based organizations, public schools, community colleges, and prisons. Regardless of the setting, each college transition program provides free instruction to adult learners in basic academic skills of reading, writing, math, and using the computer and the Internet. Students also learn study skills and receive educational and career counseling, and assistance in enrolling in higher education. Students who have successfully completed the college transition program and have enrolled in college are mentored to help them to persist.

This project was conceived and designed by the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC) at World Education. The NELRC provides professional development and technical assistance to the transition programs and manages the project for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

*For more information on the project, visit the web site at: <http://www.collegetransition.org>.* ♦

# ODWIN: A Program Rooted in History

by Mary Tacelli

*In the early 1960s, President Kennedy inspired the nation with a sense of concern for the well-being of our fellow world-citizens and a sense that each of us could indeed make a significant difference. President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and people were beginning to respond to Martin Luther King's invitation to join him in the pursuit of a shiningly hopeful dream. The dream was strikingly elusive in Boston. Children in some of the city's neighborhood schools were being short-changed in terms of the education and career counseling they received. Many minority youngsters were being counseled away from college preparation and into domestic and shop courses.*

Nurse-educator Mary Malone was concerned about the dearth of minority students at the professional level in health care. She mobilized more than 100 volunteers to provide accurate information and guidance about careers in nursing and the allied health fields to Boston youngsters wishing to pursue professional careers. The volunteers also offered tutoring and mentoring to the students, throughout high school and college. The ODWIN (Opening Doors Wider In Nursing) Learning Center was born. By 1966, the parents of these students and other adults asked for similar help. In response, ODWIN opened its own doors wider to the population that would eventually become the program's sole focus: adults with great potential,

but inadequate education, who aspired to a professional-level career requiring college credentials. ODWIN also broadened its focus beyond the health field to any professional career.

Today, ODWIN's mission is to prepare adults for success in college so that they can enter and succeed in professional careers. We began before there were adult basic education (ABE), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and General Educational Development (GED) programs. We have since incorporated aspects of all these services into our program design, making it difficult to categorize us. ODWIN today is a multifaceted, all-purpose college preparatory program for adults.

## Program Design

Malone applied the approach to patient care she used as a nurse to education. Our diagnostic and prescriptive method focuses on each individual's with specific strengths, weaknesses, needs, goals, and methods of learning. We made many mistakes in those early days because what we called the ODWIN 100, our group of founding volunteers, were already providing service before they recognized the need for this type of detailed planning. Our work with those first students made the need evident. We learned that, based on a student's career goal, we

needed to answer the following questions:

- What academic skills are needed for him or her to succeed in a college program leading to that goal?
- Which of these skills does this person currently have and to what level?
- Which of these skills does the person seem to lack or to be very weak in?

The answers allowed us to design an approach that would enable the student to develop and strengthen the necessary skills in a timely and effective way.

## Researching Course Content

To answer the academic skills question required researching the courses that our students would be taking in college, examining textbooks, students' class notes, and tests to determine the skills necessary to handle the material well. For example, which specific math skills would a person need who wanted to become a pharmacist? a dentist? a nurse? an accountant?

Teachers from each major subject area — math, reading, English, and science — assessed the college material from their own specialty's perspective, and then shared information across disciplines. For example, the reading teachers examined some excerpts selected by a math or science teacher to determine the reading skills needed to master the material. The math group did likewise to science samples.

Although most of our early students were interested in health-related fields, which helped narrow the scope of the project, this

research took time. Once completed, it provided us with a comprehensive list of skills in each area, and a subset of each that we deemed essential to success in preparation for each specific career.





We also had a base on which to build information on career goals outside the health fields. Continued contact with students once they have moved on to college enables us to update that base as needed.

## Assessment Tools

The teachers in each area then designed assessment tools to test students' mastery level of the skills identified above. Many of the basic skills have universal applicability and are included across the board, with career-specific items added as appropriate. For example, a person aspiring to a career in accounting needs the same basic math skills (whole numbers, ratio fractions, decimals, and percentages) as the person pursuing a nursing career. But the future nurse needs a solid understanding of measurement, as well, using both the metric and apothecary systems, and must be able to convert between the two systems.

With the exception of our newly developed computer diagnostic, we use paper and pencil tests with room for figuring in math. They are not timed, and we urge people not to agonize over them because they are neither graded nor ranked, but are strictly for planning purposes. A grade provides one assessment of a student's skills: 15 correct out of 25 items, for example, indicates that the person seems to possess 60 percent of the skills tested. But which ones? And, more to the point for planning, which specific skills does the 40 percent indicate that the person seems not to possess? We must prescribe a remedy to enable the student to succeed at that last 40 percent. Consequently, each of the original pre-tests, as well as the many subsequent revisions, had to be designed to provide skill-specific information.

The three core — or foundation — areas consist of reading/study skills; basic math and communication skills, which include grammar and writing, and are tested on paper; and speaking and listening, which, when appropriate,

are tested in interviews. The advanced courses include algebra, chemistry, composition, and biology. The teachers created post-tests that are similar to the pre-tests for each area; they use them for comparison when students complete components of their plans.

## An ODWIN Student's Journey

After attending an information session, a potential student first takes the series of diagnostic tests in the core academic areas of reading/study skills, basic math, and communication skills. If any of those tests indicate sufficient strength in the skills tested, a more advanced test is given to identify the level, if any, at which the student should begin work in that skill area. For example, if the basic math test indicates no weaknesses, the person would then take the algebra pre-test.

As the teachers correct the diagnostic tests, they prepare a profile of the person's strengths and weaknesses in each subject along with recommendations. These form the framework of the person's individualized student educational plan: a program of study designed with the student within the framework of the diagnostic test results as they apply to the student's career goal. The teachers also include estimates of the time the student is likely to need at ODWIN to acquire and strengthen the specific skills required for success in a desired college curriculum. For example, the student might need work in one or more of the foundation courses, one or more of the advanced courses, or a combination. Then a staff member meets with the student to discuss the rationale for the recommendations and to help him or her develop an action plan to implement them within the context of her daily responsibilities and time constraints.

## The Foundation Courses

ODWIN is not strictly a basic education program, but most students

who enroll need some work at the foundation level. Not everyone needs the same skills, however, and students are frequently self-conscious, insecure, and reluctant to ask questions when they first start classes. Consequently, we decided early on to combine individualized instruction with a group setting for each of the three foundation courses.

A basic math class, for example, which meets twice a week for two hours each time, may have up to but not more than eight students, each of whom has a study plan based on the skills he or she needs. The teacher, a staff member with a math background, works with each student individually on one aspect of a specific skill, leaving that student to practice the skill while the teacher moves on to another student. Because the concepts are presented in small increments, students can grasp the general idea sufficiently to solidify their understanding through practice, with the teacher returning periodically to make sure the student is on track and to respond to any questions. This approach is extremely demanding on the teacher, but enables the student to make remarkable progress in a short time. On the worst of days, several students could be ready to begin a new topic at the same time. After the first week or so students are working independently and at their own speed. Lacking the need to keep up with other students or to wait for others to keep up with them, our students are free to move at a comfortable and productive pace. The privacy of working with the teacher one-on-one makes it easier to ask questions. The student develops a real understanding of the concepts covered, experiences success early and frequently, and gains greater self-confidence as well as solid academic advancement.

The basic English and reading/study skills classes operate similarly, staffed by experienced teachers. Depending on the class composition, these language arts classes are sometimes limited to seven students. While we do not include computer skills in the foundation cat-

egory, we do conduct computer classes using the individualized approach.

When ODWIN started, no market had as yet developed for basic skills material for adults. Rather than use materials devised for young readers, we had to develop most of our own teaching materials. As a result, our file cabinets, crammed with original teaching materials designed by ODWIN staff and revised periodically to keep them current and applicable, are our most valued possessions. Supplemented by various workbooks and an English manual, *Writer's Choice*, published by Glencoe, these are our texts for the foundation courses. Not only does this provide material targeting the adult learner, but it also provides the flexibility necessary for individualized instruction. Each student constructs a book tailor-made to his or her needs, building it unit by unit. Each unit addresses one concept, initially presented by the teacher in a one-to-one instructional session.

## The Advanced Courses

Regardless of how effective the individualized foundation courses are, students must be prepared to handle more impersonal college courses. For this reason, algebra, biology, chemistry, composition, humanities, notetaking, pharmacological math, and thinking/reasoning are more conventionally structured group classes. Using various presentation styles including demonstration, modified lecture with student/teacher interaction, discovery exercises, and student presentations, the instructor controls the pace at which material must be mastered to introduce the student to the independent approach to learning required in college. Students also learn how to use a syllabus and a textbook to full advantage, the need for planning to meet deadlines, and the value of keeping track of one's average rather than focusing on isolated grades.

Because our primary goal is to provide the student with strong skills and an adequate knowledge base, classes are still relatively small (no more than 18 students) so that a teacher can quickly recognize any student who might need extra help outside of class. For both levels of biology, chemistry, and composition, we use high school texts. The other advanced courses use a combination of original, staff-designed material, and various publications.

***“...we cannot stop at helping students get into college: we must help them get out of college successfully by maintaining contact with them.”***

The staff provides educational counseling throughout students' participation. When students begin the final phases of their educational plans, we work with them in selecting and applying to college: advising, demonstrating how to collect information, suggesting various resources, proof-reading applications, and critiquing essays. Students themselves must do the leg-work, however: try the dry run to see if the commute to a specific college is manageable, use the suggested resources to research possible scholarships.

## Continued Contact

ODWIN's mission has always been to help people reach a professional level of employment. Therefore, we cannot stop at helping students get into college: we must help them get out of college successfully by maintaining contact with them. Once the student graduates from college, we provide preparation for special licensing exams. We urge our students to call for help if they feel overwhelmed or confused about anything at college. If we don't

hear from students within their first month, a staff member calls to establish contact and to arrange dates and times to keep in touch. If a student has difficulty in a course, we arrange tutoring sessions with either a staff member or one of our volunteers, who are ODWIN graduates. We also tap our graduates to act as mentors for students beginning college.

This contact enables us to use the students' experiences to critique the program's effectiveness. For example, our notetaking course was developed to address difficulties students reported having in college lectures. The thinking/reasoning course likewise grew out of some students' difficulty in visualizing during college lectures and in following complex directions. We had been trying to teach these skills within biology or algebra classes, but recognized that this inevitably led to sacrificing the

notetaking or thinking skill to the course content. Now the biology, composition, or algebra teacher can refer to the students' experiences in notetaking and thinking/reasoning to show students how to apply those skills to specific content.


The increase in numbers of non-native English speakers seeking services has created special challenges. We routinely refer those at the beginning levels to free programs available. Therefore, the students enrolling at ODWIN can often use English on a functional level for their day-to-day lives. With college degrees and professional careers as goals, non-native English speakers need to make a quantum leap to a high level of fluency, not only with general English grammar, composition, and reading/study skills, but also with the specialized vocabularies of mathematics and the sciences. The individualized approach makes it possible to incorporate non-native English speakers into the foundation courses. We have added a conversation club as a means for students to improve their oral and aural fluency.

Students spend an average of two

# A Conversation with **FOB...**

and one-half years at ODWIN before moving on to college. Before adopting the approach outlined here, we had tried several different short-term approaches. The summer program proved to be effective only for those students who were already strong academically. The postgraduate year for recent high school graduates was more effective, but, since each participant brought a different level of need and unique mode of learning, the group approach fell short of the desired outcome. Tutoring college students when they experienced difficulty in a particular course proved to be a band-aid, taking the place of identifying and addressing the root of the difficulty. The difficulties that participants in these three programs experienced in college led us to espouse the individualized diagnostic/prescriptive approach that has enabled hundreds of people to change their lives dramatically.

## Impact

Of the more than 6,000 students who have enrolled in ODWIN classes, approximately 65 percent have completed their educational plans and entered college. Based on the data we have been able to collect, about 90 percent of this group have graduated from college and entered the profession to which they aspired. The thrill of teaching these students is matched only by that of seeing them receive their college degrees, cheered on by their children, many of whom packed their father's and mother's lunches during those college years. 

## About the Author

Mary Tacelli began as a volunteer math teacher for ODWIN in 1968, after completing work for a Master's Degree in Mathematics from the University of Notre Dame. She joined the staff as math coordinator in 1970 and, having worked closely over the years with ODWIN's founder, Mary Malone, was asked to become ODWIN's Executive Director in 1988. ♦

## Why Go Beyond the GED?

**W**hy dedicate an entire issue of Focus on Basics to transitioning to postsecondary education? Isn't the GED good enough? The psychic benefits are well documented: GED holders feel a sense of satisfaction and completion. What about the economic benefits? Does the GED provide the economic security a high school diploma once did? NCSALL researcher John Tyler studies the labor market benefits that accrue to those high school drop outs who pass the tests of General Educational Development. His research reveals that certain groups of GED holders benefit economically in comparison to similar drop outs who do not complete the GED. Even with these economic benefits, however, GED holders who fail to continue on to postsecondary education are left with very low earnings. Focus on Basics spoke with

Dr. Tyler to learn more about what his research can teach us about the need for successful transitions to higher education.

**FOB:** Your research shows that while the GED helps many GED holders to raise their economic earning power, it doesn't raise it enough to bring people out of poverty. What level of education do people need for that?

**JOHN:** I think you'd find that the average high school graduate without college earns above the poverty level, but you can't make an across-the-board statement since the

**"Through the late 1980s and 1990s, the world got much worse for anyone with less than some years of college."**

poverty level is a function of family size. In 2002, for example, the poverty threshold for a two-parent, four-child family was \$24,000.

Through the late 1980s and 1990s, the world got much worse for anyone with less than some years of college. Even those with a high school diploma became much worse off over this period relative to those with at least some college. Simply put, the economic



returns to higher education (relative to having just a high school diploma) grew dramatically, although the growth of the economic gap between those with and without some college education has slowed in recent years.

**FOB: Your research shows that economic benefits associated with the GED seem to accrue only to low-skilled high school drop outs. What about higher-skilled dropouts? How do they perform economically without the GED, and with the GED?**

**JOHN:** Higher-skilled drop outs, with or without a GED, tend to do better on average than low-skilled drop outs with a GED. Skills really matter.

**FOB: As you know, few GED holders go on to postsecondary education. Any indication of why that is?**


**JOHN:** There's no research on that. Another interesting point is that we don't know how well the GED enables them [GED holders] to get into degree-granting programs. Often-times you need the GED to get into degree-granting postsecondary education programs. However, we don't really know how effective studying for

the GED is in preparing one to do college-level work.

**FOB: What advice would you give to GED preparation program staff — program designers and teachers — based on the results of your research?**

**JOHN:** The advice is going to sound self-evident, but based on my research, there are two messages. First, concentrate resources on those with the least skills, because they'll get the most out of obtaining the credential. Second, do whatever you can to help

make the GED a bridge to postsecondary education [rather than an endpoint], because postsecondary education is where the real economic payoffs are.

Also, research shows, not surprisingly, that the two tests that tend to be the biggest hurdles are the writing test and the math test: the writing for males, the math for females. Those trends have been known for some time among the general student population, and work we have done has shown them to be true in the GED population as well. So put an emphasis on these areas. 

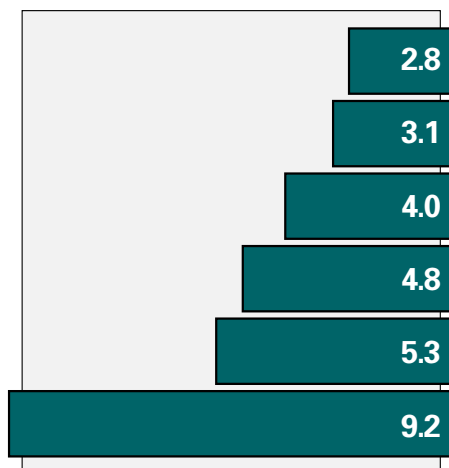
## Resources

To help make the GED a bridge to postsecondary education, students must be convinced that continuing beyond the GED is worthwhile. For teaching materials that tell that story as they help students prepare for the GED, download *Beyond the GED: Making Conscious Choices about the GED and Your Future* from the NCSALL web site at [http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/teach/beyond\\_ged.pdf](http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/teach/beyond_ged.pdf). These materials provide GED students with practice in graph and chart reading, math, analysis of data, and writing, while they examine the labor market, the role of higher education, and the economic impact of the GED.

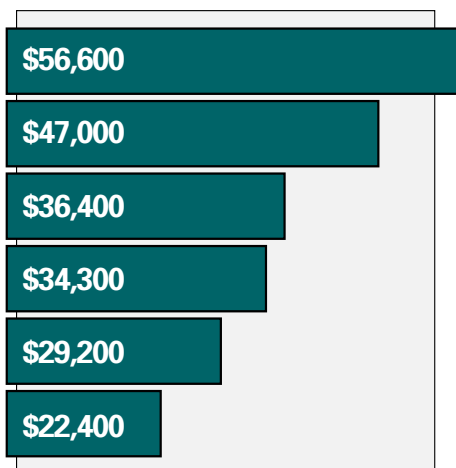
For more information on the economic benefits (and limitations therein) of the GED, download *Focus on Policy* Volume 1, Issue 1, also on the NCSALL web site, at [http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fop/v1\\_1.pdf](http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fop/v1_1.pdf). John Tyler's research reports, as well as summaries of the research, are available at <http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/publication.html> under NCSALL Reports and NCSALL Research Briefs. And, for articles covering similar information in other issues of *Focus on Basics*, go to [http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fob/ti\\_ged.html](http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu/fob/ti_ged.html). ♦

## Education and Training Pays

### Unemployment Rate in 2002



### Median Earnings in 2001



**NOTE:** Unemployment and earnings for workers 25 and older, by educational attainment

Sources: Unemployment rate, Bureau of Statistics; earnings, Bureau of Census

# EdCAP: A Transition Program in Transition

*Fine tuning a transition program for recent high school drop outs requires a willingness to try and try again*

**by Karen Johnson, Barbara Haas, Barbara Harrell, & Roy Alameida**

In 1995, Washington State responded to a truancy and drop out epidemic with legislation known as the Becca Bill, named for a Seattle-area teenager who died while skipping school without her parents having been informed by the school district. This law required all students under the age of 18 not attending a K-12 school to be enrolled in an adult learning program through the age of 18 or until they completed a certificate of General Educational Development (GED) or a high school diploma. If students did not comply, school districts were required to take them to court, and students and their parents could be fined or sentenced to jail. At that time, the Developmental Education Division at Edmonds Community College (ECC), in Lynwood, WA, housed a free GED program as well as a high school completion program for adults over the age of 17, in which students under age 19 had to pay full college tuition. Over the next few years, the program was swamped with 16 to 18 year olds, many of whom would have preferred to

*earn a high school diploma but could not afford the tuition. The GED program did not provide any career training or job skills. A specialized free program that combined a high school diploma with career training was needed for these drop outs.*

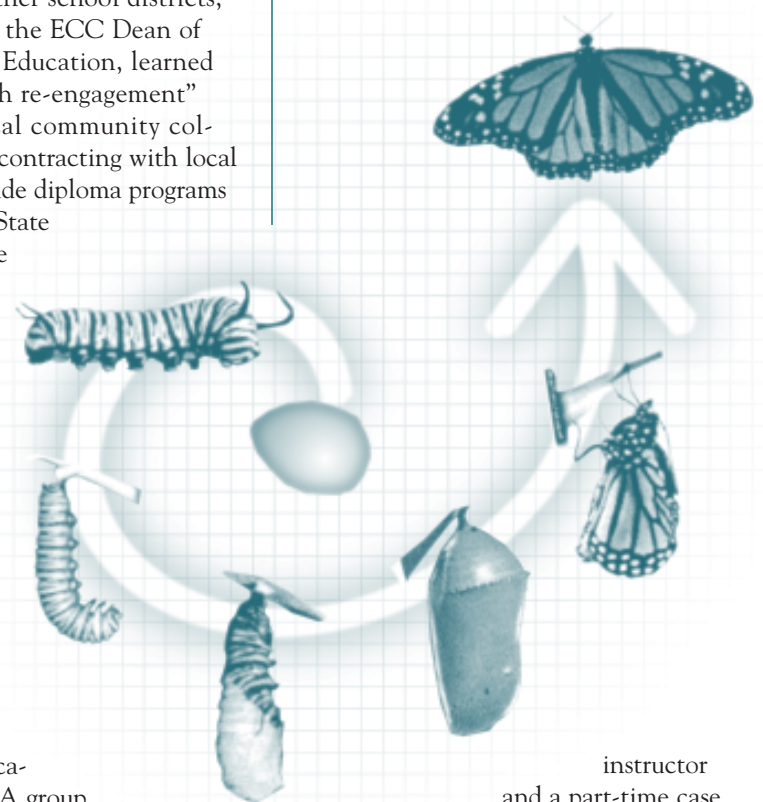
After researching what was happening in other school districts, Karen Johnson, the ECC Dean of Developmental Education, learned of several "youth re-engagement" programs at local community colleges that were contracting with local districts to provide diploma programs at the colleges. State funding for these students was divided between the school district, which received a small administrative fee, and the community college, which received the larger share to provide the educational program. A group of faculty and staff from the Division visited with staff of these programs, including a visit to a model program at Portland Community

College. In the fall of 1999, a small team of High School Completion staff began to design a program that would target 16- to 21-year-olds to complete high school and transition into professional-technical programs at the college. Meanwhile, Karen Johnson, with support from the college administration, approached the Edmonds School District to discuss funding. Years of articulation between the college and the school district paved the way for an agreement that was finalized in the fall of 2000. Thus was born the Edmonds Career Access Program, or EdCAP.

## Creating a New Program

The initial thrill of planning a new and vital program wore off quickly. Our first obstacle was funding. The college gave us a small start-up budget that allowed us to hire a part-time

instructor and a part-time case manager, so we began slowly with a small number of students and part-time staff. The Department Head and the Literacy Coordinator already



had more than full-time responsibilities but were called upon to oversee the infant program.

We began with 12 students who attended a three-day orientation, completed assessments, and registered in September, 2000. We enrolled all the students in a one-credit, required EdCAP Success class, which was designed to help students transition to their college courses; one course in their professional-technical area of interest; and a career exploration course offered through the college. One month later, only nine students remained regularly attending their classes. Our case manager met with students bi-weekly and noted that several students seemed detached from the program and distracted in their classes. Difficulties outside the classroom interfered with their attendance and became excuses for their failure to complete homework. Students described changing living arrangements, lack of money to pay for daily expenses, lack of sleep, and drug and alcohol use. Faculty in the professional technical programs reported that the EdCAP students were undisciplined, had poor attendance,

and exhibited behavior problems. Nevertheless, our office staff was diligently compiling a list of potential students for the next quarter.

We believed that we could make our model work. The EdCAP staff — two part-time faculty, one part-time case manager, the Department Head, and the Director of Literacy Programs — met weekly to discuss reasons for the loss of three of our “pioneers,” rehash our curriculum, and debate the best approach for the next quarter. This was the beginning of two years of introspection and revision. Some of this reflection involved formal evaluation using our limited completion data; however, most was anecdotal evidence collected from our classes and advising sessions with our students. Each time we advised students we discovered more about the barriers they faced and their lack of preparation to make the leap to an adult learning environment. We understood that our struggles were a necessary and positive part of the evolution of the program and would help us figure out how we could become a unique and successful entity in the larger community college system.

## Making Changes

As we grappled with ways to retain our students, we began making changes in our required EdCAP Success course and in our advising. Progress reports from faculty in the professional-technical programs indicated that many students were not attending regularly nor were they completing assignments on time. We had hoped that our EdCAP Success course would provide the necessary support for these students, but we found that skills learned in the EdCAP class did not necessarily transfer to college courses outside our “protected” division. A one-credit, one-quarter course was insufficient. We added a required, second-quarter EdCAP class and increased the number of credits for the first-quarter course to three. We then revised our curriculum for our two-quarter sequence of EdCAP courses by including career exploration. The staff agreed that keeping students in a cohort with the same EdCAP instructor for two quarters would result in a stronger network of support and more continuity in instruction. We also decided that, with rare exceptions, all first-quarter EdCAP

### Evolution of Edmonds Career Access Program

	REQUIRED COURSES	EMPHASIS
Fall Quarter 2000 (12 students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 credit EdCAP Success Class</li> <li>• 2 credit College Career class</li> <li>• Prof. Tech. class or prerequisite</li> </ul>	Quick entry into Prof. Tech. field with minimal support.
Fall Quarter 2001 (60 students)	<b>1st Quarter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 credit EdCAP Success Class</li> <li>• 1 or 2 classes in Dev. Ed. Division</li> </ul> <b>2nd Quarter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 credit EdCAP Success Class</li> </ul>	More careful advising with students placed in Developmental Education classes and two quarters of EdCAP Success classes.
Fall Quarter 2002 (150 students)	<b>1st Quarter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 credit EdCAP Success Class</li> <li>• 1 or 2 classes in Dev. Ed. Division</li> </ul> <b>2nd Quarter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 credit EdCAP Success Class</li> </ul>	Creation of “cohorts” of students and teachers in EdCAP classes over two quarters. Two quarter EdCAP class sequence loosely integrated to allow student to develop a learning and career plan.
Fall Quarter 2003 (220 students)	<b>1st Quarter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 credit EdCAP Success Class (Changing to 5 credits in the spring)</li> <li>• 1 or 2 classes in Dev. Ed. Division</li> </ul> <b>2nd Quarter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 credit EdCAP Success Class (Changing to 3 credits in the spring)</li> </ul>	Strengthening of cohort model with additional requirement of Challenge Course for first quarter students. Tightly coordinated EdCAP Success curriculum focused on understanding self and developing long and short term personal and educational goals.



students would take only courses in the Developmental Education Division rather than attempting courses in a professional-technical area. In this way, students could boost their basic reading and math skills while practicing positive classroom behaviors taught in the EdCAP Success classes.

Because progress reports showed that attendance was a significant factor in whether students were successful, we established strict attendance requirements in the EdCAP Success classes. Our staff worked out the details of a probationary status for students who failed to meet either the attendance or grade point requirements and helped them develop plans to be successful. To handle these additional responsibilities, we hired a full-time case manager who advises students with behavioral and academic concerns.

We were also challenged in the first two years by a substantial turnover in staff: two part-time case managers and two part-time instructors resigned. Also, in the excitement to launch this new program, processes and procedures had not clearly been established. Although staff attempted to meet weekly, scheduling conflicts often prevented this. When we did meet, we frequently had an agenda that looked more like a “to do” list than the substantial kinds of discussions we had had earlier in the glorious, pie-in-the-sky planning days. Since responsibilities were being crafted as we evolved, we had conversations answering such questions as “Was that my job?” “When did we decide that?” “Why didn’t this get done?” And staffing wasn’t the only challenge. Space, at a premium on campus, soon became even tighter with the new EdCAP students placing demands on the GED reception area staff. From the initial 12 we had grown in two quarters to more than 60 students and to more than 150 by the end of the second year.

Our unique location created both opportunities and additional hurdles. Because we are part of a community

college, our students have access to our high-tech library and computer labs, counseling and support services, and multicultural center. In our EdCAP classes, we incorporated a variety of guest speakers from across campus. Our students were also able to participate in the weekly community college activities, such as campus barbecues

*“...in the excitement to launch this new program, processes and procedures had not clearly been established.”*

and brown-bag lectures. Because we are a large system, the EdCAP staff worked strenuously to communicate the purpose and goals of our programs to faculty who expressed frustration with EdCAP students. Our case manager sends out notices to instructors at the beginning of each quarter to explain EdCAP and to identify students in each faculty member’s classes and follows with two progress report forms during the quarter. The case manager communicates frequently with faculty on a case-by-case basis as she hears of students who are having difficulty. We invite faculty from various programs to present information and suggestions to us at EdCAP Department meetings. This work continues.

## Now and the Future

Our principal concern is still retention. We struggle to increase student success and completion. While we are now hovering around 55 percent retention in EdCAP, which is good for this population, we are not satisfied. Too many students fail to attend classes regularly; too many do not do the homework; too many lack support to prevent crises in their lives from interrupting their education. This summer, we discussed ways to promote students’ self-esteem and their ability to persist. Some of our staff suggested that we contact a local outdoor education program, Eagle Rock Challenge Course (Mount Vernon, WA)

that uses ropes and other obstacle courses to promote personal growth and teamwork. We were able to make the Challenge Course a requirement for the new fall quarter EdCAP students. The instructors of the EdCAP Success classes and the case manager participated with the students and will be involved in follow-up training throughout the year.


Our staff is finally stable. We have more clearly defined our job descriptions and are successfully emerging as a team. EdCAP faculty met throughout the summer to refine curriculum and began the year with newfound energy and purpose. Our first Challenge Course was well received and returning EdCAP students

- A strong relationship from the start with the local school district was essential.
- Enthusiasm and desire were not enough. We needed staff and space before we enrolled students.
- This population of young drop outs required gradual transition into college classes and intensive support.
- Curriculum in the EdCAP Success classes needed to include social skills as well as study skills.
- To be a team we needed clear job descriptions and reasonable expectations.
- We should have been better prepared for out-of-control growth.
- It was inevitable and desirable that the program would change. We had to be willing to give up how we thought the program should look in order to make it work for students.



are asking to be included. As the academic year progresses, our EdCAP Success classes already show signs of improved retention (up from 70 to 90 percent) and we have recruited a member of the math faculty to teach a class designed specifically for EdCAP students.

In spite of all these steps forward, we face new challenges. The Washington State Essential Learning Requirements, our state assessment examination, and a Senior Project will become requirements for high school graduation in 2008. We know that there will be much discussion before 2008 and feel uncertain as we await the onset of these requirements and what they may mean for our students. We are excited about the possibility of developing a senior project that includes service learning — doing a project that provides a service to the community — connected to students' career goals. We believe that this component would give our students a link with the community and a place to practice their professional-technical skills.

We are now in a better position to reflect on our efforts and continue strengthening the program to meet the needs of students. The dynamic nature of this program and its students keeps us moving forward. In times of shrinking budgets, programs such as EdCAP that meet the needs of this specialized community must rise to the occasion. 

### About the Authors

Roy Alameida teaches EdCAP Success classes. He has worked in secondary and adult education as a teacher and curriculum developer for eight years.

Barbara Haas is the Department Head for High School Completion and EdCAP. She has worked for more than 20 years in both secondary and adult education as a teacher and curriculum specialist.

Barbara Harrell has worked in Adult Literacy as a teacher, advisor, and program coordinator for 10 years.

Karen Johnson is the Dean of Developmental Education. She has more than 20 years experience in developmental education as a teacher, program developer, department head, and administrator. ♦

## Building the Desire, Building the Ability

*Community-based programs play a role in introducing learners to college and in helping them persist*

by **Brenda Dann-Messier & Eva I. Kampits**

**D**orcas Place is a 22-year-old adult and family learning center in Providence, RI, which assists low-income adults to realize their full potential through literacy, employment, advocacy, and community involvement. Four years ago, we surveyed students to determine their long-term aspirations. Only half of the more than 100 students enrolled at that time indicated that they intended to continue their study after they passed the tests of General Educational Development (GED). This mirrored the student profile in Rhode Island, where 43 percent indicated GED as their terminal goal (OVAE, 2003). In fact, Dorcas Place students' aspirations were better than those in the United States overall. The US Department of Education's OVAE 2003 report to Congress (using year 2001 figures) states that only 25 percent of adult students enrolled in adult education have transition to postsecondary education or training as their goal.

While a larger percentage of Dorcas Place students aspired to postsecondary education than did students in other states, as a staff, we believed that 50 percent was too low.

Research shows that increasing the educational attainment level of adults leads to reductions in family poverty rates, higher wages, stronger labor force attachment, and greater personal and civic responsibility (Dann-Messier, 2000). Thus, the task of raising the aspirations of students and their families became a top priority for Dorcas Place. We got funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to establish a multifaceted College Preparatory Program (CPP) that would instill higher education aspirations and ensure a smooth transition to and persistence in college.

### Drawing on Best Practices

We launched the pilot College Preparatory Program in 2001, basing the design on the successful practices of the 35-year-old federal TRIO program. Funded under Title IV of the Higher Education act, "these programs focus on access to college, retention, and graduation for low-income students as part of a strategy to strengthen the nation's economy and society." In 1997, researcher Lana Muraskin conducted a study of one of the TRIO programs, Student Support Services. She identified these elements as best practices: assistance with college admissions and course selection, social preparation for college, counseling, ongoing academic skills development, peer support, and a constant assurance to students that they can succeed (Muraskin, 1997). Those elements form the essential framework of the Dorcas Place program.

Low-income, first-generation adult learners confront many challenges that have to be overcome or managed before they can enroll in adult education and college. CPP's design includes attention to overcoming these barriers. They may include situational, dispositional, and institutional factors that affect and are often beyond the control of adult learners (Wonacott, 2001). Situational factors include job, health, financial, and legal issues and family or personal problems. Dispositional factors include expectations, self-esteem, level of family support, and past educational experiences. Institutional factors including the educational bureaucracy itself, program fees, scheduling, and procedures that serve a traditionally younger and more dependent student population can either help or hinder participation (see, for example, Belzer, 1998; Hubble, 2000; Quigley, 1998).

Over time the pilot program evolved. Today, it consists of five major components: intensive career, educational, and academic counseling; a semester-long bridge program between adult basic education and college; articulation agreements between Dorcas Place and the colleges our students attend; advocacy with key policy leaders; and continual evaluation and assessment. These components are described in the following sections.

## Career, Educational, and Academic Counseling

In the initial year of the program, staff focused on personal issues that inhibited students' persistence in adult education. This focus has been expanded to include raising learners' goals to include postsecondary study, and advising them on selecting colleges and remaining on an appropriate path to meet their postsecondary goals. Our multilingual, multiracial staff

members also model lifelong learning by staying current in their field. Throughout each semester, current and former CPP students speak to all the classes, urging students to consider college and apply for admissions into the bridge course and assisting them in persisting once they have enrolled.

Brookfield describes adult students as feeling like imposters on campus (1999). To build interest in college, we take students on college tours. At

***“Brookfield describes adult students as feeling like imposters on campus.”***

first, trips were limited to students concluding their GED requirements. To motivate lower-level students to persist in education, we opened these trips to all students. This past summer, Dorcas Place offered an intensive college orientation program to students at any literacy or language level taught at the center. Teachers previewed the trips in class, answered questions, and oriented students to the institutions they were going to visit. Students — typically 40 to 60 each visit — visited up to seven college campuses and participated in cultural events throughout Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. The college counselor conducted follow-up discussions with interested students on a regular basis. We will keep expanding our college tours and cultural events as funding permits. Students who had never stepped onto a college campus before now speak more confidently about going to college. They are more comfortable having walked around campus, eaten in the dining hall, and talked with undergraduates. Site visits let students know that they do indeed belong on campus.

In advocating for college, we also stress the long-term financial benefits of an undergraduate education. Research by Carnevale and Fry (2001) and others

illustrates the benefits of postsecondary education both to individuals and the nation. They identify knowledge as crucial in determining “individual economic opportunity and our overall economic competitiveness” (p. 5). Dorcas Place staff integrate this information into the adult basic education and College Preparatory Program curricula. They use data from a newsletter entitled *Postsecondary Education Opportunity* ([www.postsecondary.org](http://www.postsecondary.org)), produced by T. Mortensen, which documents the positive correlation between educational attainment and earnings.

Mortensen's graphs and figures reveal the lack of economic improvement for certain groups in the United States over the past 30 years: “Those with the most education have prospered, experiencing substantial real gains in their incomes and living standards. Others with the least education have experienced stagnation in their incomes and relative loss of income, which has shifted to better-educated workers. In many cases, those with least education have experienced substantial real income losses, and concomitant losses in living standards both compared to better educated workers and compared to living costs” (p. 1). Students analyze similar research data in math classes, grappling with information that illustrates that “the dividing line between those who are succeeding and those who are struggling to survive is increasingly educational attainment” (p. 1).

Along with feeling uneasy on college campuses and failing to realize that education, although costly in the short term, is a route out of poverty, our students also look with fear at increases in college tuition and fees twice the rate of inflation or more over the past three years nationwide. The college counselor reviews with them the types and availability of financial aid and assists them in completing the necessary documents for admissions and financial support.

Persistence in our classes and



then in college remains a significant challenge to Dorcas Place CPP students. A social worker and other Dorcas Place case managers provide support services for personal issues such as child-care and housing referrals. Working as student advocates, our staff collaborate closely with the Community College of RI (CCRI). The CCRI community is both very committed and sensitive to the various needs of their students since adults are now a growing majority on campus. Students have access to support on an as-needed basis; staff members reach out to those who do not directly initiate contact. When students drop out, it has been primarily due to personal issues, such as a change in family health, housing, or childcare arrangements.

## Bridge Component

Tinto (2003a) stresses that “students persist when they find themselves in settings that hold high expectations for their learning, are provided academic and social support and are actively involved in learning” (p. 5). We were also influenced by Tinto’s belief that “successful education, not retention, is the secret of successful retention programs,” (p. 5) and determined that we needed to maintain the close personal bonds we had with students in their transition. Our experience has also been that students need intensive academic skill enhancement to make the transition to college smoothly. Adapting the TRIO model of social support, we designed a semester-long bridge component in which CPP students attend class on college campus twice a week. Requiring students to enroll in college as a cohort enables students to participate in their own small learning community and support each other as they progress through the course. Tuition, books, and supplies are funded by Dorcas Place.

Two days a week, the bridge component students return to Dorcas

Place’s Learning Resource Center (LRC), a drop in academic center that serves students preparing to enter college and those already enrolled. There they receive academic assistance, including supplemental instruction, participate in study groups, tutoring, and other academic support. Used computers donated to the agency are available for students to keep.

## Articulation Agreements

Our students need the support not just of Dorcas Place but also of the colleges they attend. Recent research on college completion rates confirms this (Thomas et al., 2003), as does Tinto’s framework for effective retention programs, which features “commitment towards students which directs their activities...[and] requires the collaborative effort of all members of the institution, faculty, staff, and administrators alike” (2003b, p.118). We try to assure that via articulation agreements.

Dorcas Place’s articulation agreement’s chief characteristic is that it requires assurance from the college that an appropriate academic and student support system component specific to the adult learner will be available on campus. The agreement also ensures that the college will

*“...our students also look with fear at increases in college tuition and fees...”*

encourage students to continue their education beyond an associate’s degree or certificate program. While we assume that we will have to provide some advice to students interested in transferring to other colleges for additional education, the articulation agreement commits the college to this work as well. Most Dorcas Place students find community college to be

appropriate for their first college experience. We are expanding our articulation agreements to other colleges and universities as students complete their associate’s degrees and visit other institutions.

## Advocacy with Policy Leaders

More than 67 percent of Dorcas Place students receive public assistance. Current welfare legislation restricts TANF recipients from attending college beyond 12 months (as a vocational education countable activity) unless states implement policies that are less restrictive. As a result of concerted advocacy by Dorcas Place and others, underscoring the long-term economic value of investing in the college education of welfare recipients, Rhode Island allows eligible welfare recipients to attend college for 24 college months. In addition to this specific advocacy, as president of Dorcas Place, the author meets with higher education leaders on a regular basis, often through joint membership on regional task forces and boards. We also invite higher education leaders to attend CPP celebrations each year.

Advocacy is valuable in other arenas as well. Cognizant of national data on the scarcity of adult males attending college, Dorcas Place advocated with community and governmental agencies that serve men, leading to an increase in their enrollment at Dorcas Place. Last year, males represented 50 percent of bridge enrollment.

## Evaluation and Assessment

Evaluation continues throughout the semester, with staff in regular contact with students, faculty, and the academic dean. A more formal evaluation takes place with all the partners at the end of the semester, reviewing what worked or did not. These eval-

uation sessions have led to program revision and transformation, as components are eliminated or broadened. For example, the first two bridge components included Dorcas Place faculty who sat in on the course as part of their academic duties. They don't do this anymore since we have a good rapport with the college professor and are familiar with the course content. Instead, the college counselor and peer advisor stay on campus on the days that bridge program students attend class.


Progress toward learners' goals is monitored quarterly. Curriculum improvements are continual; modifications are based on bridge staff and students' feedback. For example, student feedback highlighted the need for assistance in becoming better writers since students discovered the importance of such proficiency in college work. We now concentrate more fully on developing students' writing abilities.

## Lessons for the Future

Today, as a direct result of our College Preparatory Program, more than 90 percent of our more than 400 students declare their interest in continuing their study beyond the GED and indicate that they will encourage their children to pursue higher education as well. Upon completion of the bridge component, out of an estimated eight to 10 students, perhaps six or seven will be enrolled in college in the next semester.

A new and complementary focus is the inclusion of children with their parents in our college awareness activities, as part of our Family Literacy initiative. Families will be invited on college tours and cultural events to develop aspirations for college study and recognize its lifelong benefits. We were recently awarded a national TRIO dissemination grant through the Council for Opportunity in Education to scale up and replicate our five-element model regionally. This will allow us to add another bridge component, to be offered in the evening. Working adults will attend college class one night a week on

campus and return to Dorcas Place at least two evenings a week for academic skill development and supplementary services. Both of those new initiatives will be linked to a system of evaluation that ensures that they meet community needs in demonstrable ways.

The Dorcas Place Adult & Family Learning Center model builds on the premise that we as an agency and our students must focus on high aspirations, apply resources to this in both academic and student support areas, and demonstrate mutual commitment. We have identified partners and created collaborations with higher education institutions and policymakers, at the state, regional, and national levels. We engage in continuous evaluation and assessment. This full circle can resonate effectively with the higher education community, policy makers interested in promoting an able and educated work force, and the goals of the adult learning agency and its students in promoting educational opportunities for life-long learning for success. 

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## About the Authors

Brenda Dann-Messier has been President of Dorcas Place for more than four years. Before that, she worked at the LAB@ Brown University, was the United States Secretary of Education's Regional Representative based in Boston, and directed two TRIO programs, the Rhode Island Educational Opportunity Center and the Educational Talent Search Program of the Community College of Rhode Island.

Eva I. Kampits has been an educator and consultant for more than 35 years. Director of the Office of School/College Relations since 1994 for New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC), she has led initiatives promoting partnerships, developing evaluation and assessment models, and contributing to research and analysis of public policy issues with national and international partners as well as legislatures. Her current activities range from supporting access and equity for disadvantaged students of any age to consulting with the People's Republic of China. ♦

# Approaches to ABE Transition to Postsecondary Education

by Judith A. Alamprese

**A**dult basic education (ABE) programs increasingly are being viewed as a bridge to the next destination rather than a student's final stopping place in education. A variety of factors are prompting the development of activities to assist adults enrolled in ABE, English as a second language (ESL), and General Educational Development (GED) instruction to enter postsecondary education. ABE staff, particularly those in community colleges, recognize the resources their institutions offer learners in developing their skills and knowledge so that they can access better opportunities in the labor market. To assist learners in accessing these resources, ABE staff are enhancing instruction and identifying support services to enable learners to enroll in college-credit courses. State adult education offices also are encouraging ABE programs to work with admissions and counseling offices in community colleges to orient learners to the requirements of postsecondary education.

National initiatives, such as the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's ABE to College Transition project,

are supporting ABE programs in developing services to help students be prepared to succeed in college. The challenges these efforts face are to identify adults whose skills and life circumstance allow them to participate in postsecondary skill training or academic courses successfully, and to develop coordinated services that can prepare and support adult learners in making a successful transition to undergraduate education.

## State of Transition Activities

Transition activities represent an emerging area of service in adult basic education. Several efforts are underway to describe practices and learner outcomes as an initial step in developing robust research on this topic. For example, as the linkages between ABE program and community college enrollment data are improved, programs and states are better able to determine the patterns of ABE student enrollment in college courses. In Oregon and Idaho, state policymakers track the enrollment of ABE students in college courses and encourage their ABE grantees to promote postsecondary participation. ABE programs supported by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation are collecting data on the outcomes of adults participating in their transition services in an effort to document, understand, and evaluate the results of these activities.<sup>1</sup> Abt Associates Inc.<sup>2</sup> is documenting emerging practices in its study on ABE Transition to Postsecondary Education, which includes transition activities undertaken by community colleges, school districts, and community-based organizations. Two

other studies are focused on the role of the community college in ABE transition. The Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy is investigating ways of strengthening the community college role in adult education, and Berkley Policy Associates<sup>3</sup> is conducting a project entitled Adult Basic Education — Community College Transitions. As models of service become better defined and data about learner outcomes from these services become available, the stage will be set for a scientific test of the effects of ABE transition activities.

## Approaches to Transition

Comprehensive information about the variety of current ABE transition activities is not available. However, an understanding is emerging from descriptions of the Nellie Mae-funded and other transition programs as well as from other research underway. Activities in ABE transition range from orientation and advising about the opportunities and requirements for postsecondary participation to multi-component programs designed to place students in community college credit classes (see the chart on pages 28-29 for descriptions of a variety of models). Although the audiences for transition activities tend to be adults in GED and high-level ESL classes as well as learners who have completed their GED, some ABE programs also provide awareness information on postsecondary opportunities to adults receiving high-level ABE instruction.

The development of transition activities moves ahead in stages. ABE staff try new strategies, test them with groups of learners, and then refine them based on learners' reactions and the availability of new information. Sometimes a model is provided to staff to use in organizing services, as with Nellie Mae's ABE to College Transition Project. In this case, the New England Literacy Resource



Center (NELRC), which manages the project, asks grantees to follow a multi-component framework in developing transition activities as part of the demonstration. Regardless of the approach, the early lessons from designing and implementing services can be helpful in building models that can then be systematically evaluated.

## Types of Approaches

The approaches that ABE programs are using in developing activities to transition learners to postsecondary education can be categorized into three types: awareness and orientation activities, counseling and referral activities, and comprehensive transition programs.

### **Awareness and orientation**

**activities** usually involve the dissemination of information regarding the college admissions and registration processes, financial aid, and college placement examinations. These activities can help orient learners to the requirements for admission into postsecondary programs, provide them with practice in completing forms, and assist them in obtaining financial and other support. Some ABE programs, particularly those in community colleges, work with the admissions and financial aid offices in their institutions to schedule orientation sessions with GED classes as learners near completion of the program. ABE staff also may arrange for individual meetings between the admissions and financial aid staff and adult learners so that learners can receive personalized attention. In some instances, ABE staff have integrated information about college requirements, forms completion, and financial aid into ABE classes. This dissemination of information about postsecondary application and entrance requirements is considered an initial and crucial process in preparing learners for transitioning to further study.

**Counseling and referral activities** for learners who are interested in pursuing postsecondary education can be organized in a variety of ways. The

emphasis is on offering learners individualized assistance in understanding the requirements for postsecondary participation, determining whether their life's activities make their participation feasible, providing encouragement, and identifying areas in which learners need to strengthen their skills in order to qualify for admission to college. Some ABE programs have integrated these activities into their usual services, while others have established relationships with internal institutional departments, such as community college counseling and tutoring offices, and refer learners to these services. Sometime ABE programs work with external service providers who offer these types of assistance, to which they refer learners.

In the **comprehensive program** model, ABE programs provide a multi-component set of services to prepare learners for entrance into postsecondary education, including orientation, advising, study skills and time management, and academic preparation. These are often organized as self-contained services that operate over a few weeks. Academic preparation is the critical component in these programs. The goal often is to assist learners both in being admitted into postsecondary classes and in completing an entire course.

The design of these approaches is based on ABE and community college staffs' experience in working with adult learners and in identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in postsecondary education. As these approaches are refined further and data are collected about their effectiveness, the field of adult basic education will have better resources and tools to use in providing effective transition services for adult learners. 📖

### Notes

- i The Nellie Mae Foundation funds the New England Literacy Resource Center, which is housed at World Education (home of NCSALL's dissemination activities and *Focus on Basics*), to coordinate and provide technical assistance to many of the transition programs funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

- ii Abt Associates' study is funded by the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

- iii Berkeley Policy Associates' project is funded by the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

## About the Author

Judith A. Alamprese, a Principal Associate at Abt Associates Inc., has more than 25 years of experience directing research, evaluation, and policy projects in adult literacy and workforce development. She currently is investigating methods for improving adults' decoding skills and is developing a model for interagency coordination and leadership among state adult education policymakers. ♦



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# Pathways to College for Academically Under-prepared Students

The New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC), with support from the Nellie Mae Foundation, supports more than 25 College Transition Programs in New England. NELRC defines college transition as a comprehensive approach to preparing nontraditional adult learners for the college experience. The approach includes academic instruction designed to help the student place into college level courses or the highest level developmental courses, computer skills, and a college survival skills component that covers note taking, test taking, time and stress management, and other skills designed to help adult learners manage college successfully. It also includes academic and career counseling, and exposure to the college culture. Around the country, a growing number of programs are dedicated to helping nontraditional students prepare for, gain access to, and persist in college. This chart, developed by Jessica Spohn and Silja Kallenbach of NELRC, illustrates a number of prevalent models. It is not an all-inclusive list. Do you have a different model? Please share it with *Focus on Basics* readers via the *Focus on Basics* electronic discussion list. See page 9 for information on how to subscribe.

	Developmental/ Remedial Courses	Developmental Courses and College Survival Skills	Learning Communities/ Cohort Model	Dual Enrollment	College Transition	Other
DESCRIPTION	Traditional and most prevalent method	Used by community colleges	Based on academic readiness	Students completing a GED or ADP	Bridges academic gaps between the GED, ADP, ESOL and college level courses	Help non-traditional adult learners enter into four-year colleges
	Used by community colleges	For students assessed as under-prepared to enter into college level courses	Students placed into developmental and college level courses as a cohort	Dually enrolled in developmental courses.	Provides courses in college reading and writing, and in pre-algebra, and basic computer skills	More academically rigorous and cover a broader range of academic topics, often including, for example, biology and chemistry
	For students assessed as under-prepared to enter into college level courses	Courses include academic reading, writing, math, and several levels of English for non-native speakers	Students kept together in classes as much as possible		Courses aligned with the academic benchmarks of the collaborating college	
	Courses consist of academic reading, writing, math, and several levels of English for non-native speakers	College Survival skills cover note taking, test taking, time and stress management, and other skills to manage college	College Survival skills cover note taking, test taking, time and stress management, and other skills to manage college		College Survival skills cover note taking, test taking, time and stress management, and other skills to manage college	
	Specific entrance requirements vary,				Collaborates with one or more colleges	
	Begin at pre-GED skill level in both math and reading				Level and intensity of collaboration varies greatly. Some have Articulation Agreements	
	Institutions vary as to what they consider college level reading, writing and math.					

	Developmental/ Remedial Courses	Developmental Courses and College Survival Skills	Learning Communities/ Cohort Model	Dual Enrollment	College Transition	Other
LENGTH	Several years in developmental courses or as little as one college semester before entering college level courses	Several years in developmental courses or as little as one college semester before entering college level courses	Several years in developmental courses or as little as one college semester before entering college level courses	Dependent on a student passing the GED and how many developmental courses student must complete before entering college level courses	14-52 weeks	Two or more years
LOCATION	Community colleges	Community colleges	Community colleges  Adult learning centers	Adult learning centers or community colleges	Adult learning centers or community colleges	Adult learning centers
CREDIT	No credit towards a degree  Many colleges grant "institutional credit"	No credit towards a degree  Many colleges grant "institutional credit"	Credit towards a degree  "Institutional credit" for developmental courses	"Institutional credit"	No credit towards a degree  Some have arrangements with collaborating college so students can take a course for credit	No credit towards a degree
COST TO STUDENTS	Student pays for courses or uses federal Pell grants  Students may be eligible for federal grants and loans	Student pays for courses or uses federal Pell grants  Students may be eligible for federal grants and loans	Funding arrangements vary from free to partial tuition to full tuition	Typically free of charge, but some tuition may apply	Typically free of charge	Typically, minimal tuition is charged
OTHER SUPPORT	Many colleges offer additional academic support through Learning Resource Centers, including assisted models, e.g. Plato, Destinations			Support in applying to college and completing financial aid forms  Sometimes additional academic support after entering college	Some programs offer courses in additional content areas e.g. biology	Support in applying to college and completing financial aid forms  Sometimes additional academic support after entering college



# A Conversation with FOB...

## Transitions and Math

**E**ven after receiving high school diplomas or certificates of General Educational Development (GED), a large percentage of community college students need remedial — often called developmental — math before they can move into college-level math courses. Why is this, and what, if anything, can be done about it? Focus on Basics invited five math specialists from around the country who work in adult basic education (ABE) or community colleges — Lynda Ginsburg, Myrna Manly, Pam Meader, Linda Murphy, and Mary Jane Schmitt — to talk about the problem.

**FOB:** Why are so many community college students in developmental math courses? What's the issue?

**LINDA:** I find that most students have an issue with transition. Many students coming into developmental math have poor study skills and poor study habits. For example, with attendance: they don't come to every class. They don't ask questions. They need to know that they can interact with their instructors; they also need to make use of the services the college has to offer.

**MYRNA:** This is especially true with the transition from adult programs,

where the structure has been one of open entry and self paced instruction. Students could proceed when it was convenient for them. The structure of most community colleges does not allow that freedom.

**PAM:** In Maine, ABE is separate from the community college and developmental system. We [the ABE system] play a big role; this is where students learn how to be students and how to be not fearful to ask a question. I think the biggest gatekeeper to math transitions is phobia. When I have a student, not only do I teach them algebra but to be in touch with their phobias, and how to deal with them.

**MYRNA:** A general point of view is that GED grads don't quite measure up with high school graduates. I'm not aware of any evidence that shows that. When I was teaching in community college, the high school graduates had just as poor study habits as people who were coming in from adult ed.

**MARY JANE:** You seem to be in agreement that most students have an issue with transition. We don't have evidence that the GED grad and the high school grad are different in that.

**LINDA:** Without any hard statistics in front of me, I can't say. But I work with incoming [community college] students on assessment and placement. I sometimes know, when I'm talking with students, whether they are GED or high school graduates, and I don't find a difference between them. GED [holders] might even have been better prepared for college in their arithmetic skills.

**MYRNA:** That's really no surprise,

because the GED is normed so that four out of every 10 high school students won't pass it.

**FOB:** I still have trouble understanding why people can complete the GED or high school and still need developmental math before they're ready for college level math.

**PAM:** The GED isn't enough, you need at least an algebra course. We suggest that students take an algebra course with us [at the ABE program] before they take a college math course.

**LYNDA:** ABE teachers often don't have the math content credentials to be able to teach the level of math that is needed for college credit courses. As soon as you try to teach a good solid algebra course, you need math credentials. ABE is a population laden with great people in language and literacy but the math content people are few and far between.

And learners who are preparing for the GED want to do it quickly. So most times, even if a teacher is comfortable teaching math, she won't teach the whole algebra sequence, because the students are in a hurry to pass the GED.

**PAM:** We teach the whole [algebra] sequence, in two parts, over the course of a year. It's applied [algebra].

**MYRNA:** In typical algebra classes in community colleges, an entire year of high school algebra is condensed into one semester. We had to design a pre-algebra class to make the transition to abstract thinking easier.

**LINDA:** Why is it that the teachers hired for GED programs aren't prepared to teach algebra?

**PAM:** The pay in adult ed isn't enough to attract them.

**MARY JANE:** Maybe in ABE we should start an "Algebra for all movement," similar to the one in K-12, but "all" would mean teachers and administrators as well as students. All adults should be up to snuff in algebra.

**MYRNA:** That's what a survey found of adult ed teachers in Pennsylvania found. They wanted staff development to be algebra, algebra, algebra.

**PAM:** You can be knowledgeable

in math and not be a great teacher. On the other hand, you absolutely have to have background in math so you don't pass on math misconceptions.

**LYNDA:** As to the teaching piece: there's a growing body of knowledge about how to teach math effectively. The professional development has to be from that body of research. There are two pieces: accurate math knowledge, and more of it, and math pedagogy. What are effective ways to help other people to learn math?

**MARY JANE:** The adult education system has to put 25 percent of its focus on math overall, to even get a jump start. To start some serious research, some serious staff development, so the math doesn't stay a gatekeeper and our students can get a leg up. I don't see that happening because the field is led by literacy and language.

**LYNDA:** What would you say about the model that has specialists teaching math, rather than everyone teaching everything. Recognize that it's a different bag of skills that are needed to teach math well, and that programs should be encouraged to have math specialists. We need to acknowledge that it's a different body of knowledge and skills.

**MYRNA:** That's a good point.

**FOB:** *So, students enter community college with math deficits for a number of reasons. They completed high school weak in math. They didn't get algebra in high school. They were so focused on getting the GED quickly that they didn't want to invest the time in more math skills development. And even if they wanted more math, many GED teachers don't have the math knowledge to teach algebra.*

*At the same time, students are often unprepared for the structural academic demands of community college such as fewer class hours, knowing how to study, knowing how to access resources.*

*What happens when these students get into community college?*

**MARY JANE:** There are some incredible statistics: 80 percent of people in Massachusetts who go into community college are in developmental, non-credit math courses. Only 50 percent really make it out of there. Those numbers were so striking to me.

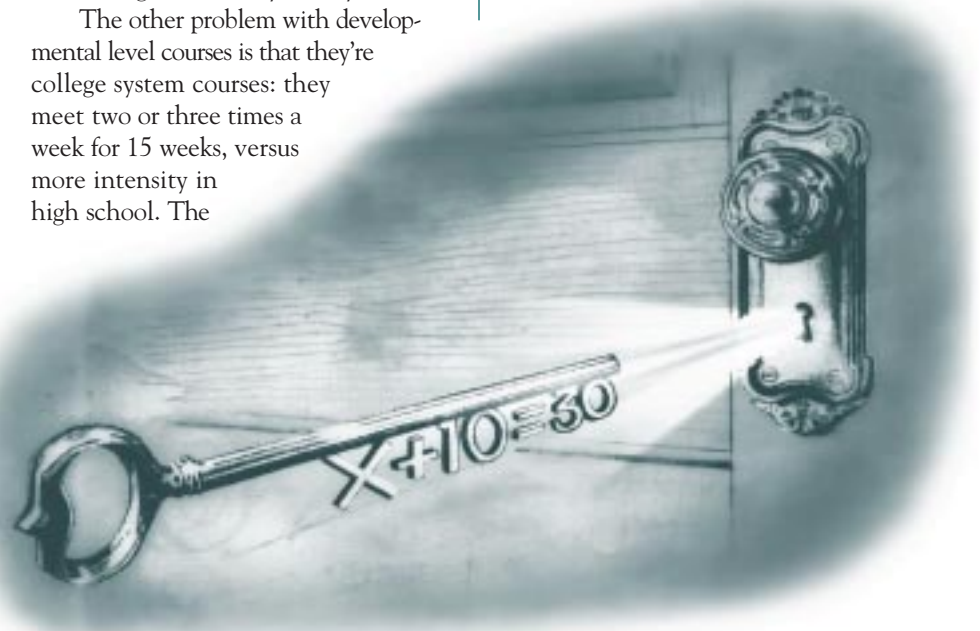
**LYNDA:** There are lots of instances of people taking developmental math over and over and over. Some have math learning disabilities that are hard to diagnose. Teachers don't recognize the problems that their students are having. You often have adjuncts teaching who aren't necessarily great teachers. They're not using strategies that are most helpful: looking for meaning, hooking it on to people's understanding of what they already know.

The other problem with developmental level courses is that they're college system courses: they meet two or three times a week for 15 weeks, versus more intensity in high school. The

one that's reported across the country.

**MYRNA:** We've been mostly talking about algebra, but there's the course before algebra. To me, that introductory arithmetic course shouldn't be taught in a purely symbolic way. Students who have been through arithmetic over and over and still do not "get it" won't benefit from doing it the same way once again. The pre-algebra content needs to be functional, helping students understand when to use certain math procedures and why they work in the situation.

**LYNDA:** There is k-12 research on that. Teachers expected that kids would think word problems — the applications — were harder than doing



pace [in community college courses] is too fast for people who are struggling.

**LINDA:** Here at Northern Essex Community College, we have several options. If students are in danger of failing, they can opt into an individualized course, which extends their time and lets them move at their own pace. But most of our students stay in the regular classroom. We have a very good group of adjuncts that has been here for a long time. We have about 1,000 developmental math students per semester across all three levels of math. I don't think that our failure rate is as high as the

operations, but kids find word problems easier, and symbols [arithmetic operations] harder.

**FOB:** *That's teaching quality again.*

**MARY JANE:** In ABE in Massachusetts, we have an incredible staff development system, but in the community college system there isn't the same strong support. Community college teachers could really use some time for staff development.

**FOB:** *Testing often drives curriculum. What about the community college placement tests, such as*

**the ACCUPLACER (which provides information used to place students in the proper levels in different courses)? What role do they play in this?**

**PAM:** You're not allowed to use a calculator on the ACCUPLACER. It's heavy on arithmetic. My fear was the students wouldn't show that they have some algebra.

**LINDA:** We use it for placement in Massachusetts. It seems to be placing the students properly. Our state has mandated a cut-off score for placement into a college level math course, but cut-off scores for within developmental classes are determined by each community college.

**MYRNA:** I decided the test was not a huge problem in our college after taking the ACCUPLACER a number of times as if I was a student: I simulated various student profiles. For example, when I answered the questions as a student who knew how to estimate with fractions but had forgotten the procedures to carry out the operations, I could choose the correct answers and was placed at the proper class level. I found that someone who has been taught math using a more progressive, meaning-based approach can use those skills and test well on problems that look like they depend on more traditional, operations- focused skills.

**MARY JANE:** It [the ACCUPLACER] gives a bad message. It looks like a symbol manipulation test. If teachers in ABE decide to analyze the test, looking at typical items and thinking about what students need, it appears so much like a symbol manipulation test that I fear that teachers will teach in that way. Tests give a message about what's important. I would like to see it revised.

Besides, the people in advanced technical education say that even community college courses that are for credit aren't necessarily preparing students well mathematically for technical tracks. The math in community college is very [focused on] symbol manipulation rather than modeling or taking a functional

approach to algebra. In the symbolic approach to algebra, the emphasis is on transformations, such as knowing how to transform  $x(x + 5)$  to  $x^2 + 5x$ . Solving equations, simplifying expressions, and factoring are the central actions. A modeling approach focuses more on what the math is about. Mathematical modeling requires you to examine a situation, search for relationships, and represent those relationships with math structures. So you might start with a situation such as carpeting a room, and describe the relationship between the cost and the dimensions of the room.

The community college placement

***"The GED isn't enough, you need at least an algebra course."***

tests look at algebra as a manipulation of symbols. Some people believe that algebra should be taught using more of a functional or modeling perspective. Some books are being written that way.


I believe a more functioning approach to algebra is more motivating for people, but the test and basic courses would have to change. So that's the dilemma.

**MYRNA:** I would add that a student who goes on to most traditional pre-calculus and calculus courses needs skill in symbol manipulation to succeed. While I advocate for the functional approach, I see value in ensuring that students can perform some manipulation techniques on demand. As a teacher of a course that is a preparation for others, you can't fight that.

**PAM:** It might be dependent upon the field that the student wants to pursue. Here in Maine there are three areas: if a student is going into a field with high math expectations, they need symbol manipulation. If they're not, I'd have them know how to use math in their lives. I have students who say, "How come no one ever told me about this?"

**MARY JANE:** I'd at least advo-

cate for a balanced approach: learn some symbol manipulation with meaning as well. Most people don't just teach algorithms anymore, they build conceptual knowledge.

***FOB: So even if the tests don't change, there's a need for instructional reform so all ABE students get a stronger math education, no matter what their goals.*** 

## About the Participants

Lynda Ginsburg, a Senior Researcher at the National Center on Adult Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania, has a doctorate in cognitive psychology and mathematics education and has taught mathematics at the high school, community college and ABE/GED levels. She is a founding member of the Adult Numeracy Network.

Myrna Manly has taught mathematics in junior high, high school, workplace, community college, and college. She was the mathematics editor of the 1988 version of the GED test. She presents workshops and seminars for adult education teachers, is revising her book, *The GED Math Problem Solver*, and consults for the GED Testing Service.

Pam Meader is a former high school math teacher who became an ABE teacher more than 16 years ago. She currently teaches four math classes, including algebra, at Portland Adult Education, Portland, ME, and is involved in a Nellie Mae grant for College Transitions.

Linda Murphy has been in developmental math education for about 22 years at Northern Essex Community College, Lawrence, MA, both as an instructor and as the math center coordinator. She is the grant manager for a three-year FIPSE Grant called 100% Math, a statewide effort to improve retention of the developmental math student.

Mary Jane Schmitt has taught, developed programs in Massachusetts and nationally, and is part of a team creating a numeracy curriculum for adults and out-of-school youth. She co-directs the National Science Foundation-funded Extending Mathematical Power Project (EMPower) at TERC in Cambridge, MA. She helped develop the numeracy portion of the forthcoming international Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. ♦



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- Order back issues for \$2/copy from: *Focus on Basics*, World Education, 44 Farnsworth St., Boston, MA 02210-1211, or call Caye Caplan at (617) 482-9485. Topics available:

- Research
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- Adult Development
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# BLACKBOARD

## Web Resources

A quick overview of transition to college programs can be found on the American Connects web site under research, promising practices. Go to <http://www.americaconnects.net/research/> The “**Noteworthy Practices Brief**” includes ESOL-to-ABE and College Transition and Adult Secondary Education to College Transitions, and highlights program elements that contribute to the success of each.

**Massachusetts’ Curriculum Frameworks** include a section on the math needed for postsecondary education. Go to <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/frameworks/mathnum.pdf>. Read through the table of contents and beginning sections, then scroll down to page 81 for the content standards.

“**Grassroots to Graduation: Low-Income Women Accessing Higher Education**” is an evaluation by the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women of the effectiveness and support systems of 21 college access programs serving low-income individuals. Available at <http://www.wihed.org/news/256114.html>, the report provides good information for people interested in designing college access programs.

Students interested in transitioning into a health career might want to explore some of the student resources on the National Institute for Literacy’s **LINCS Health and Literacy Special Collection** at <http://www.worlded.org/us/health/lincs>. Students can go to MEDLINEplus and use interactive tutorials to

investigate the signs, symptoms, and treatment of more than 165 health conditions.

To build math skills, students can visit the National Institute for Literacy’s **LINCS Science & Numeracy Special Collection** <http://literacynet.org/sciencelincs> and link to A+Math, which offers drills, practice, and games in basic number operations. To learn about science, heredity and genetics, students can link to Explore Science.

Financial aid is a must is one of the findings of a study done by the Institute for Higher Education Policy. “**Getting Through College: Voices of Low-Income and Minority Students in New England**” is a rich resource for transition programs. It provides a snapshot of how low-income and minority students in New England feel about obstacles they face and what works to enable them to persist in postsecondary education. It can be downloaded from [www.ihep.com/Pubs/PDF/Nelliemae.pdf](http://www.ihep.com/Pubs/PDF/Nelliemae.pdf)

## Transportation: Necessary in a Transition

(Research Notes)

While this issue of *Focus on Basics* focuses on the transition from adult basic education to postsecondary education, another important transition is the transition to employment. Just as transportation is considered an important factor in enabling learners to persist in school, so, too, is transportation often a factor in successful employment. Graduate student Kerri Sullivan used data from NCSALL’s Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning (LSALs) to examine the role of car usage in employment outcomes such as employment status, average weekly wages, and weeks worked per year. She found that car ownership is an important employment tool for adults of low educational attainment in Portland, OR, even in the context of other factors such as social networks/resources (social capital) and literacy skills (human capital). To read her full study, go to <http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu>. ♦

## Join the National ABE-to-College Transition Network Commencing In May 2004

The National ABE-to-College Transition Network will support ABE staff, programs, and states in establishing and strengthening ABE-to-college transition services through technical assistance, professional development, collegial sharing, advocacy, and increased visibility for this critical sector of the adult basic education system. The Network is intended for anyone interested in helping GED and EDP/ADP graduates and other nontraditional adult learners gain access to, prepare for, and succeed in postsecondary education. The Network will provide a forum for learning and dialogue among practitioners, policymakers, staff development providers, and researchers. Basic membership is free and gains members access to monthly news bulletins, a web site with relevant resources, and an electronic discussion list. The Network is sponsored and operated by World Education’s New England Literacy Resource Center, home of the New England ABE-to-College Transition Project. Network partners include the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. **Join the Network by going to [www.collegetransition.org/ctnetwork](http://www.collegetransition.org/ctnetwork)**. The web site will be online by May 2004, but you can sign up now. ♦





## NCSALL on the Web

### Do you want to...

- plan a professional development activity?
- learn about the latest research on a particular topic in the field?
- find a new teaching technique or idea?
- prepare a proposal to seek additional funding?

Our **Subject Index**, located on the NCSALL home page ([ncsall.gse.harvard.edu](http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu)), allows you to access easily all NCSALL publications by topic, including Accountability, GED, Learner Motivation, Curriculum Development, Assessment, Technology, Family Literacy, Math, Program Design, Practitioner Research, Writing, and more — the Subject Index includes more than 50 topics.

Sign up for the NCSALL mailing list from the NCSALL home page to receive printed copies of NCSALL Research Briefs and quarterly electronic postings, including two-page updates on activities at the NCSALL lab sites.

## NCSALL Publications

### NCSALL Reports

#### New — Published Fall 2003

Order copies for a small fee or download (for free) from the NCSALL website

*How Teachers Change: A Study of Professional Development in Adult Education*  
by Cristine Smith, Judy Hofer, Marilyn Gillespie, Marla Solomon, and Karen Rowe

This report presents findings from the NCSALL

Professional Development study (NCSALL Reports #25, \$10) that investigated how a sample of 106 adult education teachers in three New England states changed after participating in one of three models of professional development. The study's authors identify the types of change undergone by the teachers and the degree to which they changed. The authors also examine the individual, professional development, and program and system factors that interacted either to support or hinder change. (A Summary Report — NCSALL Reports #25a — is also available.)

*The Characteristics and Concerns of Adult Basic Education Teachers* — by Cristine Smith and Judy Hofer (November 2003)

Based on data gathered for the study on How Teachers Change, this in-depth exploration (NCSALL Reports #26, \$10) documents what is commonly known, but not well researched, about adult education teachers: the challenges they face in their teaching, their programs, and as members of the field; the training and preparation they receive; and the conditions in which they work. The study finds that teachers and programs are stretched, stressed, and challenged as they strive to provide the best possible services to large numbers of students.

*Survey and Methodology for Assessing Adult Basic Education Teachers' Characteristics and Concerns*

This document provides the revised questionnaire and interview protocols used in the NCSALL Professional Development Study, plus suggestions for sampling, so that

programs or states who want to get a better portrait of their own teachers may use or adapt the protocols for the own specific informational needs. (Available to download only.)

## NCSALL Books

### New — Published Winter 2004

*Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, Volume 4: Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice* — edited by John Comings, Barbara Garner, and Cristine Smith. Published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Volume 4 is the newest addition to a series of annual publications by NCSALL that address major issues, the latest research, and the best practices in the field of adult literacy and learning.

Contents: D. Perin, *Foreword*. T.G. Sticht, *The Year 2001 in Review*. D. D'Amico, *Race, Class, Gender, and Sexual Orientation in Adult Literacy: Power, Pedagogy, and Programs*. A. Levenson, *Why do Companies Provide Workplace Education Programs?* R. Stites, *Implications of New Learning Technologies for Adult Literacy and Learning*. D. Helsing, E. Drago-Severson, R. Kegan, *Applying Constructive-Developmental Theories of Adult Development to ABE/ESOL Practice*. S. Merriam, *The Changing Landscape of Adult Learning Theory*. Appendix: S. Merriam, *Resources on Adult Learning Theory*.

Visit the NCSALL web site to review chapter summaries and to order your hard copy. ♦

## NCSALL Web Site

<http://ncsall.gse.harvard.edu>

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