Documenting Outcomes for Learners and Their Communities:
A Report on a NCSALL Action Research Project

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The collaboration that resulted in this report involved many people over several years. The heart and soul of this action research project were the teachers and administrators of the three participating adult education programs: Knox County Adult Literacy Program, Knoxville, Tennessee; Mount Rogers Regional Adult Learning Program, Abingdon, Virginia; and Knott County Adult Learning Center, Hindman, Kentucky. We would like to thank these individuals (listed in Appendix 1) for their commitment to exploring ways to improve the delivery of quality services to adults in their communities.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The action research described in this report focused on developing approaches that local programs can use to document the outcomes of student participation in adult basic education programs. This project has implications for professional development as well as for outcomes documentation in adult basic education.

Over the course of two years, three teams of teachers and administrators from three adult basic education programs in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia, with a team of NCSALL researchers from the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville serving as facilitators, addressed this issue. The teams examined their current documentation practices, were introduced to a variety of possible approaches to documentation, and developed their own documentation processes using a cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation. From the action research, they developed new approaches to documentation and gained a new understanding of their work as adult educators.

Documentation efforts focused on particular aspects of students' lives that the program or the students identified as areas in which they hoped to make change. The Virginia team established a process that helped students identify the changes they hoped to make (i.e., their goals for education) and to document achievement of those goals and outcomes. The Tennessee team documented outputs and outcomes as part of their focus on the Equipped for the Future framework standard Take Responsibility for Learning. In the Kentucky program, students used calendars to document their activities that supported their children's education, such as reading to their children and meeting with teachers. The teams, programs, and students found these documentation efforts useful tools for instructional planning and for learner and project assessment. The programs have continued to use these documentation tools and to develop new ones.

Although the main purpose of this research was to contribute to understanding of a systemic issue—how to document the outcomes of participation in adult basic education—it also contributed to the participants' professional, program, and personal development. For the participating teams, this action research project has led to increased understanding of how programs might identify and document student outcomes in ways that meet local program needs and how that documentation can support program improvement. Team members learned from working in groups and having an opportunity to share experiences with other teachers in their own teams and from other teams. The two aspects of this project that participants seemed to particularly value were the focus on students and the opportunity to reflect on the goals of their work.

When the teams were asked to identify challenges, some named conceptual issues, such as "the idea of documenting changes in learner lives versus test scores," but most named practical challenges common to the field of adult basic education. These included student turnover; limited time for teachers to design, collect, and implement documentation; and difficulty in finding ways to share results with teachers in other programs.

The facilitators extensively reviewed project data. The findings from this review with direct implications for practice and policy in adult basic education are:

- Local adult basic education programs can develop documentation processes useful in planning and assessing their work. However, more work is needed on the local, state, and national level before these locally developed documentation processes can be used for the performance accountability systems the Workforce Investment Act requires.

- Action research is an effective approach for professional and program development in adult basic education, but if it is to be widely used, factors such as the limited paid time typical of adult education in most states must be addressed.

On the basis of these findings, the researchers make the following recommendations to the field of adult basic education about outcomes documentation and using action research as a tool for professional development, program improvement, and performance accountability:

- Those responsible for professional development in adult education should use action research more extensively. To improve practice, teachers need to be paid for the time they spend in action research, action research needs to be accepted as professional development by the state system, and facilitation support needs to be available.

- Local and state adult basic education (ABE) administrators should encourage the use of action research approaches to improve program quality. Systematic processes of reflection to identify areas that need improvement, combined with ongoing action and evaluation, help keep a program focused on continuous improvement.

- States should build consensus about the goals underlying their performance accountability systems, using such participatory processes as action research. Action research as professional development should include this local definition

of goals as part of consensus building because this focus and measuring goal achievement seem to build a program's capacity to implement performance accountability systems.

- On the state and federal levels, resources should be committed to designing outcome measurement and reporting systems flexible enough to include a variety of goals and rigorous enough to measure performance.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Teacher: *They're working on their businesses in the classroom. So they were using skills to try to buy this computer—pretend, you know. But, still, if I had a folder and I had a check-off list that said, "They negotiated, they listened actively, they spoke so others could understand, they were respectful to the computer teacher," then I could actually check that off. And I could have that in the folder. And then I could go back . . . and I could say, Okay, this helped me see that they did this well. I can see that being a way into it, a way to do it.*

Researcher: *It just struck me that one of the things we're trying to do here is capture little moments, when the process is very dynamic. We're trying to figure out how you give evidence for moments that tell you that you've moved. It's never going to be the whole picture.*

Administrator: *Seeing what we do in documentation really ties together our students' progress.*

Over the course of two years, teams of teachers and administrators from three adult basic education programs addressed how local programs might document the outcomes in students' lives of their participation in adult basic education programs. The teams examined their current documentation practices; were introduced to a variety of possible approaches to documentation; and developed their own processes using a cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation. From the action research, they developed new approaches to documentation and a new understanding of their work. This report describes the work of the project and what can be learned from this action research.

Two major national initiatives, the National Reporting System (NRS) and Equipped for the Future (EFF), influenced this action research project. In 1998, Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) mandating a performance accountability system for federally funded adult basic education programs in the United States (P.L. 105-220). States are required to set levels of performance for three core indicators:

- Demonstrated improvements in literacy skill levels in reading, writing, and speaking the English language; numeracy; problem solving; English language acquisition; and other literacy skills

- Placement in, retention in, or completion of postsecondary education, unsubsidized employment, or career advancement

- Receipt of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent

The NRS establishes the measures that states may use in their reports on the WIA core indicators. It also provides optional secondary measures that a state may report (for instance, registering to vote, increased involvement in children's education, or leaving public assistance), but these are not included in state performance assessments. The NRS was being implemented as the action research teams carried out their work.

The National Institute for Literacy's Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards-based system reform initiative has conducted a multi-year, field-based research process to determine what adults need to know and be able to do in their roles as workers, family members, and citizens (Stein, 2000). When completed, EFF will provide a common framework for defining, tracking, and reporting results to policymakers as well as to students and their local programs. The EFF framework consists of:

- Four Purposes for Learning, defined originally by adult learners and validated by a wide range of adults. These purposes are *access* to information so adults can orient themselves in the world; *voice*, or the ability to express ideas and opinions with confidence; *independent action*, or the ability to solve problems and make decisions independently; and *a bridge to the future,* or learning how to learn, to keep up with a changing world.

- Three role maps that define activities critical to carrying out the roles of worker, citizen, and family member, such as *Become and Stay Informed* to be an effective citizen, *Promote Family Members' Growth and Development* to be an effective parent or family member, and *Work Within the Big Picture* to be an effective worker.

- Thirteen activities common across these three roles, such as *Manage Resources, Guide and Support Others, Create and Pursue Vision and Goals,* and *Keep Pace with Change*.

- Sixteen Content Standards that provide specific and measurable statements of what adults need to know and be able to do, clustered in four categories: communication, interpersonal, decision-making, and lifelong learning skills. Each Standard describes components of skills typically taught in adult basic education, such as *Read with Understanding* and *Resolve Conflict and Negotiate.*

EFF has been developing an assessment framework to define performance levels and identify progress measures for the skills identified as their standards for what adults need to know and do to carry out the key activities in their lives. This work began in 2001 and will be completed in 2003.

In the long term, EFF is addressing what adults should know and be able to do and developing new approaches to assessing learner progress. The NRS has established how to measure a narrow range of skill gains and limited outcomes, at least in the short term. However, questions remain about documenting outcomes of adult literacy education in students' lives and about how local programs might document outcomes in ways that meet student and practitioner needs. EFF expects to eventually provide a way for programs to show "results that matter" for all stakeholders, and the NRS establishes ways to document particular outcomes that concern policymakers. In our study, we focused on how local programs might document outcomes in ways immediately useful to students, teachers, and programs. We determined that an action research project might be an effective way to explore this issue.

This project was a part of the work that the Center for Literacy Studies (CLS) at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville conducted as a partner in the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). The CLS work for NCSALL has addressed how to assess the impact of literacy learning in ways that serve policymakers concerned about the results of their investment, practitioners concerned about the efficacy of their work, and adult students concerned about how their efforts to learn will benefit them in the rest of their lives (Merrifield, 1998). This is particularly relevant in a time of increased emphasis on performance accountability.

The CLS and NCSALL efforts to address assessment of the impact of literacy learning have included:

- A policy paper examining performance accountability in adult education (Merrifield, 1998)

- A paper reviewing previous outcomes studies in adult literacy education (Beder, 1999)

- Two studies examining how learners assess the changes in their lives resulting from participation in adult literacy programs (Bingman & Ebert, 2000; Bingman, Ebert, & Smith, 2000)

- A policy paper based on the findings (Bingman, 2000)

The remainder of this report includes a methodology chapter briefly discussing action research and giving an overview of the project processes, a chapter describing the first and second project stages, a chapter describing the results of the teams' work in Stage 2, a chapter discussing the CLS researchers' findings, and a chapter presenting conclusions and recommendations. This report is based on our field notes, project team reports, and project artifacts the facilitators and program teams produced.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Action Research

Action research is an approach to research and development grounded in practice. In a collection of articles edited for an adult education audience, Kuhne and Quigley (1997) described action research as "a form of inductive, practical research that focuses on gaining a better understanding of a practice problem or achieving a real change or improvement in the practice context" (p. 23). They described a repeated cycle of six steps in three phases:

Planning Phase
1. Pose problem
2. Define project and determine intervention
3. Determine measures of data collection

Action Phase
4. Implement action and observe results

Reflection Phase
5. Evaluate the results
6. Reflect on the project, possibly posing another problem

In the same volume, *Creating Practical Knowledge Through Action Research: Posing Problems, Solving Problems, and Improving Daily Practice* (Quigley & Kuhne, 1997), Quigley discussed the development of action research, from the work of Kurt Lewin to the reflective practice of Argyris and Schon to the more radical participatory action research advocated by Kemmis and McTaggart. Quigley situated action research in the practice of adult education in the "institutional and staff development context" (p. 16) and as an instrument of empowerment and social change.

In describing participatory action research, McTaggart (1997) emphasized that action research involves "the intensive study of a situation and the production of knowledge in some form or another, including important ideas like informed practice" (p. 27). He discussed Lewin's action research cycle as "a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, acting, observing, and evaluating the results of the action" (p. 27) and described action research as a joint project of academics and "workers" (p. 31). The guiding principles of participatory action research McTaggart outlined include:

- Concern on the part of academics and practitioners (workers) with understanding and improving both their own individual and their organizational practice

- Studying and changing the discourse and practice, including distribution of power of the organizations involved

- Getting started quickly and starting small, with a spiral of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting

- Using the project to both change practice and produce knowledge

- Beginning with the subjective experiences of the participants

McTaggart described projects that began as small cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection but built over time to include multiple cycles and extensive documentation of the changes in activities, discourse, social relationships, and forms of organization and development of expertise (p. 39). These iterative processes culminate in research in which evidence and critical reflection combine in new critiques, knowledge, and theory, as well as in changed practice.

The Documenting Outcomes Project

Although this project included some of the elements of participatory action research that McTaggart described, our work has been more limited—by both time and resources. With the participating teams, we developed processes that enabled both academics and practitioners to build understanding of their work and the contexts in which they work. The teams started small and used expanding, iterative processes of planning, action, and reflection. The project began with participants' experiences, has changed practice, and produced knowledge about that practice. The teams did not—except incidentally—study practice discourse or power distribution. Although the project did not include the level of documentation or length of process to build new critiques, knowledge, and theory, it may contribute to a critique of limited, highly bounded ways of measuring outcomes.

The methodology in action research is not necessarily predetermined. Its description, therefore, is messier and more complex than that found in more traditional research. Our action research design included four not always linear steps:

- Understanding the current situation in local programs, what was and what was not documented, and why
- Examining various frameworks that integrate documentation into program work
- Developing and implementing new approaches
- Reflecting on the results

The project's work occurred in two stages, each including cycles of planning, action, and reflection. The first stage, in 1998, involved one program and focused on clarifying the project's issues and processes. The second stage, in 1999–2000, involved three programs and was more structured. Both stages contributed to greater understanding of the issues and led to new approaches to documenting outcomes. A third stage is ongoing, as the three programs continue to build on their work in this project. Each stage included:

- Understanding the situation and clarifying the questions
- Examining frameworks, particularly EFF, that could structure action to document outcomes
- Developing and implementing new approaches
- Reflecting on results

CLS staff serving as facilitators and documenters and teams of practitioners from three adult education programs carried out the project work. For the names and positions of the staff and team members, see Appendix 1.

In the first stage, the methodology focused on understanding the situation and posing the problem. The facilitators worked with one program to define terms and clarify the meaning of "outcomes." At the same time, the program explored the EFF framework and the ways it might contribute to documenting outcomes. In the second stage, the facilitators used varied activities to help the teams understand their situation in terms of documenting outcomes. In both stages, the program teams did the primary work in developing and implementing new approaches. The following table gives an overview of the project and the three teams' work.

Table 1: Overview of the Documenting Outcomes Project

	Tennessee: Knox County Adult Literacy Program	Virginia: Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program	Kentucky: Knott County Adult Learning Center
		Stage 1	
Fall 1997	• Became EFF field site • Began to meet with CLS facilitators to plan the action research		
Winter 1998	• Team attends EFF Institute • Team experiments with using EFF, e.g., students rewrite EFF poster		
Spring 1998	• Inputs-to-Impacts model developed		
Fall 1998	• Teachers begin implementing outcomes documentation processes • Start second round of EFF field research		
		Stage 2	
Winter 1999	• Continuation of documenting outcomes work • Completion of documentation matrix	• Join action research project • Reflect on student outcomes • Complete documentation matrix • Implement and evaluate learning activities • Review EFF • Revise Inputs to Impacts model	• Join action research project • Reflect on student outcomes • Complete documentation matrix • Explore learning activities • EFF introduction • Revise Inputs to Impacts model
Spring 1999	• Regional meeting • EFF Debriefing Institute	• Regional meeting • Revision of state reporting forms	• Regional meeting • Work on Parent Role • Map with students
Summer 1999	• Decision to focus on documenting EFF standard Take Responsibility for Learning (TRL)	• Developed and revised DoSetMet form	• Summer Reading Project with calendar documentation
Fall 1999	• Design and implement TRL process • Regional meeting project	• Pilot DoSetMet with lead teachers and Washington County • Evaluation meeting • Regional meeting	• Implement expanded calendar • Regional meeting
Winter 2000	• Continued to use documentation processes	• Continued to use documentation processes	• Continued to use documentation processes
Spring 2000	• Final reports	• Final reports	• Final reports

The Participating Teams

In the first stage of the project, the facilitators worked with a team from the Knox County Adult Literacy Program (KCALP). We chose KCALP as a research site because of its interest in EFF, history of work with the CLS, and interest in developing a system of outcomes documentation as part of a continuous improvement process. KCALP served Level 1 students (testing below sixth-grade level in reading or math) as part of the county school system's adult basic education program. Located in an urban area in downtown Knoxville, Tennessee, KCALP works closely with the nonprofit Friends of Literacy to provide services. Both day and evening classes were offered at the main center, and Friends of Literacy operated family literacy classes in a Knoxville apartment development. At both locations, day classes met for five hours on each of four days per week, and evening classes were held six hours a week. The two programs had eight full-time teachers and 59 active volunteers working with 220 students.

In consultation with state adult basic education staff in Kentucky and Virginia, two teams were added in the second stage. State staff were given a project description and asked to recommend programs for the project. (Artifact 1 is a flyer sent to state and program staff.) In both Virginia and Kentucky, the programs the states recommended were interested in participating. CLS staff met with program administrators and developed work agreements. KCALP also continued to participate in Stage 2, but on a slightly different schedule. At all three sites, team members were paid an honorarium for the extra time the project required.

The Knott County Adult Learning Center is located in the coal-mining region of the eastern Kentucky mountains. In 1999, the program enrolled 70 students in adult basic education (ABE) classes and 23 in literacy classes. Classes were offered six hours a day in an adult learning center in the county seat. The majority of the program's students were young single mothers. All five staff members (three GED instructors and two literacy instructors) were on the action research team. Two were professional teachers and administered the program; the others were paraprofessionals.

The Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program is located in rural southwestern Virginia and serves five counties and two small towns. This program serves 1,200–1,500 students per year in English as a second language (ESL), ABE, and workplace classes. The program also works with community colleges to help prepare students without high school diplomas and provides adult basic education in several correctional facilities. The program has about 40 part-time teachers and two full-time administrators. Class schedules vary, but most classes meet for a few hours

once or twice a week in a variety of sites. The Mount Rogers action research team included three instructors from one county. Their classes included a weekly GED class held in a local library, classes in a public housing development, a class at the county vocational school, community classes held in a high school, and classes in the county jail. The lead teacher from that county also participated in the project's final stages.

Artifact 1: One-Page Description of Action Research Project Used in Program Recruitment

Documenting Outcomes for Learners and Their Communities:
Developing Performance Accountability at the Local Level
A Center for Literacy Studies NCSALL Project

What: Action research projects to develop ways to document the outcomes of participation in adult basic education programs on the quality of life of adult learners and their communities.

When: January 1999 to December 1999

Who: Teams of 3–5 teachers and 2–3 administrators from three programs in Tennessee, Virginia, and Kentucky, working with staff from the Center for Literacy Studies.

Why: To contribute to the development of knowledge about performance accountability systems by exploring ways that local programs can document outcomes.

How:

- Teams will develop processes for documenting outcomes of participation in adult education in learners' lives and communities and will implement these documentation processes in their program on a trial basis.
- The teams will explore using the Equipped for the Future (EFF) standards as a framework for their documentation and will consider quality of life indicators and measures used in fields such as community development.
- The teams will consider connections to state and federal performance accountability systems as they develop their processes.

Project Activities

- Teams will identify possible/probable outcomes for learners' lives.
- Teams will explore connections with EFF framework.
- Teams will develop methods to try out ways to document outcomes. This will not be a comprehensive system but will focus on a few outcome areas.
- Teams will evaluate documentation process tried by team members.
- Teams will implement one or more effective processes programwide.
- Teams will identify connections with state systems.

Summary

To summarize the project methodology:

- The project was framed as action research, defined by Kuhne and Quigley (1997) as "inductive, practical research that focuses on gaining a better understanding of a practice problem" (p. 23). The need to document outcomes of literacy education that are possible and useful at the program level was the problem in this instance.

- Three adult education programs teams participated in the project. A team of CLS researchers facilitated their work.

- The research was conducted in two stages, the first with one program team, the second with two additional teams.

- The research process began with a series of activities that enabled teams to examine their current practice and consider how outcomes documentation fit with their program needs.

- The facilitators introduced possible approaches, including EFF, that might prove useful in this effort.

- Each team built on these activities through a cycle of planning, implementation, and evaluation to develop their own documentation processes.

CHAPTER 3: IDENTIFYING THE QUESTION, PLANNING THE WORK

Both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of this action research project included a planning cycle. In Stage 1, planning and building understanding took the greater part of the year. In Stage 2, the planning processes were more systematic, and the teams spent more time developing and implementing their documentation processes. This chapter describes the activities used to plan and build understanding in both stages. The CLS facilitators designed and led these activities and provided feedback and support to the teams.

Stage 1: The Tennessee Team Explores Documenting Outcomes

KCALP carried out the first stage of the project. The Documenting Outcomes action research project was one of KCALP's three major projects in 1998, and it was integrated with and supported the other two projects. In 1997, KCALP had moved from an ambitious strategic planning process to the even more ambitious project of continuous improvement as structured by the Malcolm Baldridge Educational Criteria for Performance Excellence, which focus on improvements to such organizational aspects as leadership and work systems. At the same time, KCALP was a partner in the EFF field development work. KCALP has been very deliberate in choosing to be involved in projects that support its long-term strategic goals and chose to con-tinue their EFF collaboration and participate in the action research project because these efforts would advance its goals. (For more about KCALP's program improvement efforts, see Cody, Ford, & Haywood, 1998.)

KCALP's participation in the action research project started as a team of four teachers and two administrators (who also taught) began work on the EFF standards field development project. For this, the team developed a program profile, studied EFF, attended two training institutes, and conducted in-class research on the EFF standards. Teachers used selected draft EFF content standards to plan and teach lessons and document student performance. They reported on this process and recommended changes in the standards.

While KCALP teachers experimented with using the EFF framework, KCALP team leaders met regularly with the NCSALL facilitators from the CLS and identified and clarified issues to address in the Documenting Outcomes action research. CLS staff reviewed the literature on quality of life measurement, which informed the discussions. The action research team also reviewed logic models that the United Way of America (1996) and others (Flora, Flora, & Wade, 1996) used to move beyond a simple input-to-output evaluation model, in which only such

immediate activities as number of clients served are considered, to evaluations that capture more meaningful changes or outcomes.

Based on the logic models they reviewed, the facilitators and the KCALP team developed the Inputs-to-Impacts model to clarify the various aspects of adult education program processes. The model lists student and program factors separately and defines *input* as the factor available for performance (i.e., what the student or program brought to the processes of the program). The *processes* include the educational and organizational processes a program implements. *Outputs* are defined as the immediate results of these processes, whereas *outcomes* are the changes that occur in students' lives through participation in the program or the long-term results of program improvement. *Impacts* are the changes in the community resulting from changes in students and programs. This "Inputs-to-Impacts" model became an important tool in the action research process. The action research teams found the model useful in both analyzing their broad program structure and examining particular activities (e.g., disentangling program outcomes from individual student outcomes). The version of the Inputs-to-Impacts model in Artifact 2 is a revision that includes items from all three action research teams.

Artifact 2: Logic Model Framework Developed by Programs

Inputs-to-Impacts Model:
A tool for analyzing performance factors in ABE programs

	Student	Program
Inputs: Factors available for performance	• Previous educational experiences • Life experiences • Goals • Abilities • Commitment to learning needs • Temperament (e.g., shyness) • Challenges (e.g., learning disability, childcare needs, transportation)	• Building, equipment • Staff • Curriculum • Materials • Program goals • Volunteers • Technology
Processes: Educational and organizational processes contributing to performance	• Intake interview • Orientation • Reading, writing, math activities • Social interactions • School governance activities • Testing and assessments • Discussion/analysis • Cultural expressions • Computer use	• Planning • Record keeping • Assessment • Scheduling • Instruction • Staff development • Advice, guidance, support • Referrals to human services
Outputs: Immediate results of services provided	• Test scores • Journals • More comfort in class • GED • Resumé • Certificates • Documentation of improved performances	• Number of classes offered • Number of hours of instruction • Number of students • Number of staff development activities • Records kept
Outcomes: Longer-term results of education for individuals and programs	• New reading, writing, math practices • Changed self-concept • Opened a checking/savings account • Computer skills • New goals • Changed/new skills • Driver's license/commercial driver's license • Workforce skills • Citizenship • Job or job promotion	• Aggregation of student outcomes: test scores GED student goals met • Teacher changes • Improvement in program quality • Changes in program philosophy
Impacts: Changes in community brought about by changes in learners' lives	• Children more involved in school • Increased use of public resources • More activity in civic life • Pressure for improved neighborhood • Better educated/developed workforce	

This draft was produced by the staff and action research teams of the CLS NCSALL Documenting Outcomes Project, 1999.

As the KCALP teachers used the EFF framework, they explored ways to integrate the broad EFF skill standards with the basic academic skills they continued to teach. They began to focus more on helping students identify life goals and connecting instruction and learning to those goals. EFF's role maps and focus on learners' purposes helped make those connections. The KCALP team—teachers and administrators—identified the need for assessment measures that went beyond the standardized tests they used. They needed ways to assess learning gains as well as outcomes of goal achievement. Although students often told them about outcomes, they had no systematic way of recording those oral reports. They discussed evidence of performance of EFF skill standards and what would serve as evidence of goal achievement. In fall 1998, the KCALP team began to focus on ways to document outcomes. Rather than collecting evidence on a broad range of possible outcomes, they decided to focus on learner goals and ways to document achievement of particular goals and the resulting outcomes.

Beginning to Document Outcomes

Each of the four KCALP teachers used a different approach to document outcomes, but all based approaches on learner goals. One teacher worked closely with two students who wanted to open their own business. She met with them twice a month to discuss their progress and used taped interviews as a documentation method. The students started a cleaning business and also identified changes or outcomes. These included increased self-esteem, discovery of capabilities needed to start at business, greater comfort speaking in front of others, and an ability to solve problems. A second teacher documented students' use of math—specifically measurement skills—as they painted and decorated their new classroom. She classified the work completed in class—learning to compute area and perimeter, measuring the room, and drawing scale models—as outputs, whereas the newly decorated classroom and student reports of using measurement skills at home were classified as outcomes. The outputs and outcomes were documented with artifacts or reports in student portfolios. A third teacher tried using student journals to document use of a math skill (estimation) as an outcome in learners' lives. A fourth teacher kept a collection of products students had produced in the computer lab to meet needs in their everyday lives, an invitation or a flyer for a home business, for example.

While the teachers developed documentation processes for students in their classes, the team's two administrators focused on student outcomes resulting from participation in a student leadership team. The administrators also began systematically reviewing test scores with students and discussing errors, helping students identify better learning strategies. The KCALP team summarized their

work in the first stage of this action research on documenting outcomes in an adaptation of the Inputs-to-Impacts model, found in Appendix 2.

When the KCALP team reviewed their work in Stage 1, they concluded they had accomplished a great deal in terms of understanding ways to structure their instruction and tie it to student goals. The team members were using EFF to both frame instruction and support their continuous improvement work, building student leadership and integrating a month-long "Learning Skills Class" orientation into the broader program. But the teachers' efforts to document learning outcomes in students' lives, particularly outcomes outside the classroom, had not proceeded as they had hoped. Teachers were confused about the difference between outputs and outcomes. The processes they had developed were time consuming and did not enable teachers to readily document and report outcomes to other stakeholders. In the second stage of the project, KCALP tried a new approach more directly grounded in EFF. This is described in Chapter 4.

Stage 2: Virginia and Kentucky Join in a More Structured Process

The second stage of this action research project built on the work and experiences of KCALP in Stage 1 and broadened the project to include the Virginia and Kentucky teams. Although the EFF framework continued to inform the project, the two new teams were not directly involved in EFF development work. Both new teams were from rural programs and added the perspectives of two different states.

During Stage 1 of this project, the KCALP team members largely developed their action research work themselves, with guidance from CLS facilitators. During the Stage 2 year (1999), CLS facilitators structured each team's initial work. CLS staff held about a dozen meetings with each team, the earliest including specific activities to introduce the project and begin developing documentation processes. The CLS facilitators collected data on these activities, including agenda, minutes, and field notes from each meeting. A sample facilitator's agenda for a team meeting can be found in Appendix 3.

Activities common to all three sites (with some variation for KCALP) included:

- An initial activity to define the issue
- Completion of a documentation matrix of current documentation processes
- Exploration of instructional activities to document learner change

- An introduction to EFF
- A review of the Inputs-to-Impacts model

These activities, as well as activities at two regional meetings all three teams attended, provided opportunities and structures to explore the theory and practice of documenting outcomes.

After the series of initial meetings, the program teams began to develop their own documentation processes. The later meetings were times to report and reflect on and sometimes revise the teams' work. Teams reported on their ongoing work at meetings with the CLS facilitators. Each team's work developing outcomes documentation processes particular to their programs is described in Chapter 4.

Defining the Issue: What Are the Outcomes We Care About?

The initial meeting with each team began with a process to examine what was meant by "outcomes" and to begin to determine the outcomes documented in each program (the KCALP process was somewhat different because of its earlier work). Each team member was asked to think of two particular students and write about changes in these students' lives that may have resulted from their participation in adult education programs. The changes or outcomes were listed on newsprint and discussed in terms of types of outcomes and reasons to document. We noted that the outcomes the team members named were often not those the program documented. Artifact 3 is drawn from newsprint created in the initial meeting of the Virginia team.

Artifact 3. Notes from First Virginia Team Meeting, 2/1/99

Outcomes listed for an ESOL student:

- Learned English
- Learned to follow directions in English
- Uses map
- Much stronger confidence
- Uses English to interact with other students
- Built friendships
- Uses phone to make inquiries
- Uses Internet to find information
- Uses computer for Internet and educational activities

Outcomes listed for a student in an ABE class held in a public housing project:

- Uses Internet to locate parenting and health information
- Able to critically read Internet material
- Uses Internet to follow interests
- Read a book
- Opened checking account
- Got a job
- Read school reports
- Tried new parenting skills
- Improved use of phone book

Outcomes for a student in a jail class:

- Reading level improved
- Reading Bible
- Passed all but math chapter on the GED practice test
- Doesn't curse anymore
- Plans to drive truck

The Documentation Matrix

Developing a matrix helped the teams focus on the documentation processes that they and their programs already used. The facilitators asked the teams to bring all their documentation forms to the meeting in which they developed a matrix. The meeting room tables were covered with tests, folders, forms, and printouts. Using newsprint or a whiteboard, the teams listed their program's various forms of documentation and answered the following questions about each piece: Who does it? For whom? How often? How is the information used? What are the key items reported? Artifact 4 is the Kentucky team's matrix.

After completing this process, the teams examined program goals: those established by the state, those determined by the program, and their individual goals for their work. The teams then looked at the matrix they had created and noted that accomplishment of many of these goals, particularly their own goals for their work, were not being documented. For example, in Kentucky, both the program and state goals were primarily focused on inputs—that 6 percent of the population would have its educational needs served—whereas the teachers' goals included "ensuring that every student feels like they have experienced success in the program," "fostering the process of students gaining self-esteem and taking on leadership roles," and "helping students see the importance of personal responsibility." The documentation identified in the matrix process measured attendance and achievement of a variety of state-identified objectives on a checklist, for example, "earn a GED," "learn wellness/health." The program did not have a way to document the other outcomes they believed were important to students' lives.

Artifact 4: The Kentucky Documentation Matrix

Documentation method	Who does it?	For whom?	How often?	How used?	Key items reported (themes)
Intake Interview	• Anyone available who has first contact with the student at the Human Services Center	• For program record • For state record	• Daily with each new student • One initial intake interview per student	• To track student goals	• Goals • To get GED • To improve basic skills to enter into other educational programs
Objectives Form	• DEAL/KVEC/SEP form (Student Goal Sheet) • Interest Inventory Form	• For program record • For state record	• Filled out initially, then updates as student reaches objectives	• State uses for statewide statistics to report to federal government • Documentation to enter into other ed. programs	• Objectives • Academic goals • Life skills (voting, parenting, health) • Improve basic skills
Report Data (for state)	• Teachers enter information on diskette to send to state (Program Evaluation & Planning Branch, Frankfort)	• Within KY Valley Ed. Cooperative • To target areas for improvement • State uses to evaluate regional programs	• Monthly • For End-of-Year Performance Report	• As a program evaluation tool for needs assessment	• Attendance • Objectives • Goal attainment • Test scores
Teacher Notes	• Notes kept on Prescription Sheet • Assessment notations (e.g. needs more work with fractions) • Record of Student Contracts Sheet	• For teachers' use within the program • State evaluators also use as a program assessment resource	• Can be daily • Whenever needed	• Information purposes • To help make lesson plans	• Specific academic skills/needs • Attendance follow-ups
Student Goal Sheets	• Interest Inventory Forms • Student Goal Sheet	• Students fill out themselves	• Upon initial intake • Periodically checked/updated for assessment	• To help students determine and focus their goals	• Identifying services offered • Determining student goals • Identify career interest areas
Student Journals	• Students keep journal • Writing assignments	• For student • For teacher documentation of student writing skills	• 2–3 times per week	• To document and monitor writing progress	• To record student feelings and reflections • As a writing exercise • To prepare for GED essay

Using Instructional Activities to Document Outcomes

To begin exploring approaches to documenting outcomes, the facilitators suggested several learning activities that involved students in reflecting on the outcomes of the adult education experience in their lives. Each team member was asked to try one of these and record the results. Suggested activities included:

- Students write a sentence, paragraph, or essay (depending on skill level) starting with the stem sentence, "Since I started adult ed classes, my life has changed . . ."
- Teacher leads a story circle in which each person tells a story of a change in his or her life. Teacher records on a flipchart.
- Student identifies a goal (e.g., helping children with schoolwork) and keeps a calendar to record evidence of meeting that goal.
- Student keeps a portfolio of items that show outcomes of changes in their lives, (e.g., a canceled check copy if they opened a checking account). Student and teacher decide what is evidence.
- Student and teacher identify a short-term goal and ways the student would know he or she is meeting that goal (the evidence). Together, they make a checklist, and, as the student does one of these things, it is dated on the list. For example, if a student's long-term goal is getting a GED but he or she needs numerous math skills to get there, the checklist might be the various math skills.

Team members in Kentucky and Virginia tried these activities and recorded the results. Some team members used an activity once, and others used the activity in an ongoing process. For the most part, the teams did not find these activities effective as outcomes documentation. With some of the stem sentences, reported outcomes were very general, and students did not reflect on or provide evidence of outcomes. One teacher used a four-page set of stem sentences requiring specific outcomes and evidence, but she reported that the process took too long and students resisted taking the time. Using calendars and lists helped focus on particular learning objectives but not on outcomes in people's lives. Three teachers tried a "story circle." One interpreted this as a group discussion to address a particular topic—emergency phone numbers—and the outcomes she identified were her own assessments of student change (e.g., increased self-confidence). She did not document student responses. The other two teachers focused discussions on changes in students' lives, but only one framed the discussion in terms of how being part of the class "had helped them [students] individually." An excerpt from this teacher's

log is reproduced here. This teacher reported that the activity had given her a structured, helpful way to talk to students about their lives, and both she and her students were excited about the changes they recognized. However, except in her log of the discussion, the outcomes were not recorded or integrated into a broader system of outcomes documentation.

Artifact 5: Notes from Teacher's Log, 2/26/99

What did I do?

I organized a group discussion with three students. The group consisted of two students from the School-to-Work/GED program and an ESL student. I began our discussion with telling the group that, as instructors, we were able to document their academic progress but that I was also interested in their personal progress, how being a part of the GED program had helped them individually. We began our discussion with:

"What can you do now that you couldn't do before?"

1. *I can read!*
2. *I can use a ruler, and this has helped me with my vocational class and projects at home.*
3. *I am more committed to meeting the goals I have set. Before entering the program, I was not very responsible, and I didn't know how to work towards something, but now I do. I have also learned study skills that have carried over into my other (vocational) class.*
4. *I am not afraid to talk to other people or to ask a question.*
5. *I can communicate in English. I can read and understand English.*

"Have you noticed any changes at home with yourself or family members?"

1. *I am reading books and the local newspaper.*
2. *I am able to communicate with my mother. I used to always be negative about myself and everything else, and that caused a lot of problems between my mother and I. I try to be positive, and that has helped the two of us get a long better. I can express myself better.*
3. *My father is learning English now. I help him a lot. Before, we only talked to each other in Chinese, but now we talk some in English. We now want my mother to learn.*
4. *I study English on my own every day at home. I read the newspaper, history books, and other books.*
5. *Sometimes we get things in the mail, and my father does not understand it, but I can now read it and explain it to him.*

"What about work?"

1. *I am better organized and work harder than before. I want to accomplish more than what is expected.*
2. *I am more committed and dependable.*
3. *I had never used a computer before entering this program. I can now use a computer in my vocational class. I can also use a copy machine and a fax machine.*
4. *I am able to understand my customers better and can help my father, mother, and uncle understand them.*

What did I learn?

The students were excited to share their thoughts and seemed to be even more excited about the changes they had noticed in themselves. I was also excited about our group discussion. It proved to me that we don't just affect our students academically, but we have a great impact in all aspects of their life. I really enjoyed being with them and talking with them.

Team members reported that these instructional activities were useful ways to know students better and helped students reflect on goals and accomplishments. Trying the activities also seemed to help some of the team members experiment with new instructional approaches. However, the team members did not believe these activities would meet the program's documentation needs. As the teams developed their own documentation processes, they integrated some elements of the activities but developed more structured approaches.

EFF

A review of EFF was included as an action research activity because it informed this project from the beginning, and we wanted each team to consider the EFF framework as a possible structure for documenting outcomes. KCALP was a partner in the development of EFF and learned about it both by attending EFF-sponsored training institutes and by integrating EFF into their program. Some Virginia programs were involved in EFF development, and the Mount Rogers team had been introduced to EFF through their state staff development system. However, they had not implemented EFF in their program.

The Knott County team was not familiar with EFF. To introduce EFF to the Knott County teachers, CLS facilitators used a process the EFF staff had developed. Team members were asked to identify something they would like to learn to do and to connect these to the EFF role maps and common activities. They then identified a skill supporting that activity and brainstormed about ways they might practice that skill. For example, one Kentucky team member identified a wish to speak more comfortably in public. She located "Form and Express Opinions and Ideas" on the Citizen Role Map and "Develop and Express Sense of Self" from the Common Activities, which could be supported by the generative skill "Speak So Others Can Understand." She talked with another team member about ways she could practice this skill.

After the Knott County team reviewed the EFF framework, each teacher planned to use EFF in an activity with students that would also help document outcomes. The lead teacher reviewed the three role maps with a class of four women. The group chose to focus on the citizen role. They looked at the key activities and brainstormed about ways to do each. They then chose one activity from their list: Write a letter to "Form and Express Opinions and Ideas." This was an activity that they could do in one class period and that also addressed a GED skill. The teacher reviewed the format for a formal letter with them. Two wrote to their Congressman about welfare reform, and two wrote to the state's Department of Transportation about bad roads. The letters served as documentation (of an output,

not an outcome). Other Knott County teachers tried different activities, some more closely tied to the EFF framework than others. Team members were pleased with the activities as ways to involve students in thinking about their goals and learning, but the activities did not result in outcomes documentation. A similar process was used to review EFF with the Mount Rogers team.

Reviewing Inputs-to-Impacts

In Stage 2, the Kentucky and Virginia teams reviewed the Inputs-to-Impacts model developed with KCALP in Stage 1. Both teams added items to the original chart. The version on page 14 includes their revisions.

The model had been developed as part of a process to define terms and clarify the relationship of outcomes to program processes. It proved useful as a planning and analysis tool as well. For example, as the Virginia team developed its documentation processes, the facilitators used the model to distinguish outcomes (e.g., help children with homework) from inputs (e.g., attend class regularly) in an early list of "learner achievements" they planned to track. KCALP used the chart to present its work to the other teams at the regional meeting and added categories describing evidence of its outcomes. (See Appendix 2). The Kentucky team's use of the chart as part of the planning process is described in Chapter 4.

Using the Inputs-to-Impacts model as a tool to review the various instructional activities the teams had tried led to clarification in thinking about outcomes documentation. The teams looked at a list of the outcomes identified from these activities and decided some were outcomes (e.g., helping children with their homework), but others were outputs (e.g., learning computer skills or doing written summaries). The facilitator noted at least three approaches to documentation of outcomes. One was to take a broad look and document whatever outcomes were found. The story circles and stem sentence activities did this, asking students to talk or write about the changes they had seen in their lives. A second method was for the program or teacher to identify a desired goal and document achievement. This was done with the calendar activity in which the teacher's goal was for students to keep appointments, and she had students use a calendar to document this. A third approach was for the student to identify a goal and to work with the teacher to identify ways to determine and document when this outcome was reached. The teams eventually developed this last approach.

Two Regional Meetings

In addition to meetings held at each program, the teams came together in two regional meetings. The first, held in April 1999, gave people from each team the opportunity to meet the other teams. Each program did a brief presentation on their program and community, and the team from Knox County presented their Phase 1 work to develop outcomes documentation (see Appendix 2). Artifact 6 is one facilitator's summary of the themes of the first meeting.

Artifact 6: Reflections from a Facilitator after the April 1999 Meeting

Briefly, the broad topics that underpinned the meeting were:
Understanding the current situation
- *Looking at what is documented, how, why*
- *Identifying outcomes that are not documented but are important*
- *Understanding state/federal systems*

Understanding the theory
- *Introduction to Equipped for the Future framework*
- *Examining the Input–Impacts continuum*
- *How do we collect evidence*
- *Thinking about performance accountability*

More experimentation with documentation processes, focused on those particular outcomes or goals.
Try promising processes programwide.

We are in the process of "acting" on the process of documentation while keeping all of the above in mind.

Discussion topics at the first meeting also included differences in reporting requirements among the three states and differences between what the state found important to document and report and what concerned students. The group also spent some time considering how EFF could help frame instruction that led from students' goals to outcomes the students and others hoped for in their lives and communities. At the end of the meeting, the teams expressed excitement about meeting each other and about focusing on students' needs and goals. At the same time, they expressed frustration at the program funders' demands, which some saw as interfering with their work and requiring time to complete reports on results (e.g., attaining a GED) unrealistic for many students. They felt pushed to focus on things that were not necessarily important to the students.

In November 1999, the groups met again and presented the documentation processes they had developed and were now testing. Representatives from the Tennessee and Kentucky offices of adult education who were involved in developing

reporting systems for their states also attended and commented on the presentations. The state staff found the work exciting but were not optimistic that it could be integrated into the state performance accountability reporting. At this meeting, the team members also wrote evaluative comments on their project experience (summarized in Appendix 4).

Summary

In the initial meetings of both stages of this project, the action research teams took part in a variety of activities that increased their understanding of outcomes documentation. They agreed on terminology and identified the documentation processes already in place in their programs. They tried a variety of approaches to documenting outcomes and learned about EFF and how it could be used to frame their work. In the next cycle, the teams designed and tested their own approaches, as described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THE TEAMS' DOCUMENTATION PROCESSES

After the April 1999 meeting, the three teams began to focus on their individual documentation projects. The plan was for each team to develop a documentation process; pilot it with a few classes; and, if successful, move it into the entire program. The facilitators originally thought the programs might develop processes enabling them to document outcomes in ways acceptable to state systems. The Virginia team focused on this. The Tennessee team's process was designed to meet needs identified in their program improvement process, and the Kentucky team built their process around particular goals the teachers and students identified. We begin with the Kentucky team's results.

Supporting Children's Education

The team at the Knott County Adult Learning Center was intrigued by the EFF framework and saw it as a way to integrate some of their students' life issues with the program's focus on academic skills. They discussed the EFF role maps with students, and eventually the group (staff and students) determined that they all shared the parent/family member role. The students listed areas of concern and parenting issues of interest to them. At an action research team meeting, the team sorted through this list and identified the overall goal of being a better parent and a subgoal similar to the "Supports and Encourages Child's Education" EFF Key Activity from the Parent/Family Member Role Map. We used the Inputs-to-Impacts model to analyze this Key Activity, and the program team decided to focus on reading to children as a way to support children's education. Artifact 7 is the team's planning grid the team created.

Artifact 7. Planning Done on Whiteboard

(The plain text was created by the Knott County staff and students, and the items in italics were added during the action research team meeting.)

Big Goal: Be a Better Parent: ***Supports and Encourages Children's Education***				
Inputs	**Individual Goals**	**Processes/Outputs**	**Outcomes**	**Impacts**
• Children • Parents • Library • Teachers • Book-mobile	• Maintain reading skills • Do better in school • Parent/child bonding	• Pretest with TABE • Develop book list • Fill in calendar • Folder for parent • Check calendars weekly • *Visit library* • *Talk about reading to children*	• Demonstrate improved reading test scores • *Continue to use library* • *Closer to children, better relationship* • *Continue to read to child*	• Parent/child transfer • Better reading in classroom • *Increased library use*

The team considered teacher observation or a checklist of age-appropriate books as documentation but decided to have parents document their reading on a weekly calendar. Over the next few months, a group of parents read to their children and recorded what they read and the amount of time spent reading on calendar pages the teachers provided (see Appendix 5). Some students participated in the county library's summer reading program with their children. The team used a computer database to record the information from the calendars, including the title of the book read, the source of the book (home or library), and the number of minutes read (5–15, 15–30, 30+). They also recorded the child's name, age, and school, and the parent's pretest TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) score administered in the spring before this reading project began.

At the end of the summer, the CLS facilitators reviewed the data and determined that the parents read to their children on an average (mean) of 8.8 days. These days were all in June because a school vacation interrupted the program. (The Knott County program had to move to a new center in July, causing additional disruption.) The team administered the TABE again in the fall. The team reported that 6 of the 10 participating adult students had advanced to another reading level on this standardized test. At the fall regional meeting, the Kentucky team reported that adult learners' self-confidence had increased, their family relationships had improved, and their desire for their children to be readers had increased. Artifact 8 is the summary.

Artifact 8. From the Overhead Used by the Knott County Team at the November 1999 Regional Meeting

Inputs	Processes	Outputs	Outcomes
• Negative past school experiences • Low self-confidence • Shyness • Lack of commitment to education • Lack of reading material in the home • Limited finances, inadequate childcare and transportation	• Conduct orientation • Administer pre-/post-test • Visit library • Develop book list • Create reading calendar • Provide folders • Collect calendars weekly • Compile data	• Library cards obtained • Calendars completed • Pre-/post-test scores obtained • Number who advanced a reading level/showed improvement • Number of books read • Number of minutes spent reading	• Improved reading ability (parent and child) • Continued use of library • Continued reading to children • Closer relationship with children • Greater appreciation of education • Increased self-confidence • Increased leadership role in children's education

After the summer reading program ended, the team met with the parents and found they remained enthusiastic about focusing on their children's education. They wanted to encourage their children's reading and had ideas about how to do so. The team designed a new form on which parents were asked to record instances of reading to their children, helping with homework, children's school attendance, children's use of the public library, and meetings with their children's teachers (see Appendix 5). The team planned to collect these forms monthly and record the data in a computer database.

This effort was not as successful as the summer reading program. Only a few parents completed and returned the forms. The team decided the form was too complicated and not relevant to everyone. They revised it, scheduled more parent meetings, and loaned parents cameras to use as another way to document educational activities at home. The team presented the pictures at the November regional meeting. This was successful as a one-time effort but not something the team continued.

In their final meeting with the CLS facilitators, the Knott County team said the documentation work had helped them know their students better. They also said both students and staff were more deliberate and purposeful in their work. They described their changing student population and how this affected their documentation efforts. When the action research project began, their students were mostly mothers in a welfare-to-work class. Several of the students in the parent group had graduated or left the program. The program's students now included many more young male and female students who were not parents. The focus on supporting children's education was no longer as appropriate. After the Documenting Outcomes project was "officially" over, the Knott County team continued to experiment with EFF and with documenting their work. They have focused on developing a process to help students set and document goals.

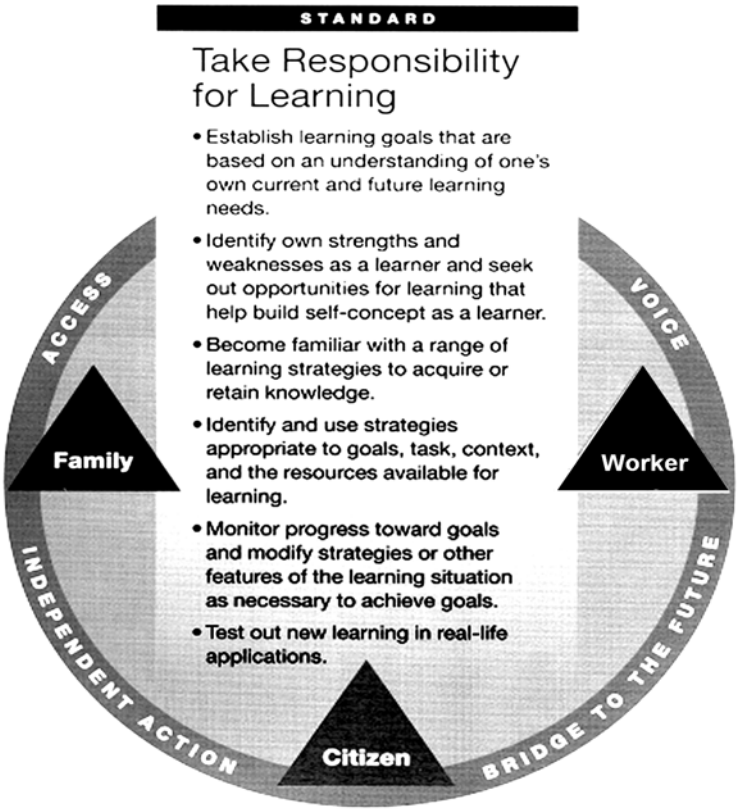
Taking Responsibility for Learning

In Tennessee, KCALP team teachers had developed processes to document outcomes during Stage 1 but had not carried them beyond their individual classes (see pp. 15–16). After the April regional meeting, the Virginia and Kentucky teams focused on developing their documentation processes, but KCALP went through a crisis period brought on by conflicts between county and state agencies involved in providing educational services to welfare-to-work clients. The program survived this crisis, but KCALP no longer contracted to provide these services, and several teachers left. By the end of the summer, the situation had stabilized, and KCALP

was ready to plan for a new documentation process. Three of the original team members and four new teachers participated in the action research team in Stage 2.

Throughout the fall, the team met and developed a plan to document the outcomes addressing the EFF Standard "Take Responsibility for Learning." They presented the plan at the November regional meeting (Appendix 6). Plans included teaching about the standard, using a story that demonstrated someone taking responsibility for learning, and collecting data on students taking responsibility for learning.

Figure 1. EFF Standard "Take Responsibility for Learning" (from Stein, 2000)



Teachers gave students a presurvey on Take Responsibility for Learning (TRL), asking them to write briefly:

- What does it mean?
- Why is it important?
- How can I use it?

A postsurvey asked similar questions:

- What does it mean to take responsibility for learning?
- How does taking responsibility for learning work?
- Is taking responsibility for learning important to you? Why?
- How have you used responsibility for learning in your life?
- How can you use responsibility for learning in your life in the future?

During the month between the surveys, teachers focused on TRL, introducing the concept by asking students to read, write about, and discuss a story about a famous person (e.g., Bill Cosby) who took responsibility for learning in his or her life. Students were asked to keep a journal of events in their daily lives that indicated taking responsibility for learning and to share these with the class. At first, students tended to write the same things every day and did not seem to grasp the TRL concept. The teachers tried brainstorming about TRL's meaning in a staff team meeting and then did a similar activity with students. These brainstorming activities seemed to improve students' understanding of and commitment to the project. The teachers also kept logs of their observation of TRL in the classroom, though they reported they did not really have the time to record everything they noticed.

The KCALP team met with CLS facilitators and discussed their experiences with using the TRL standard. They found the student journals were useful as a writing activity, and the teacher log helped with planning. However, the pre- and postsurveys were most useful in identifying and documenting instances of students taking responsibility for learning both in class and in their everyday lives. Among the changes they noted in students were:

- Increased writing in journals and greater variety in examples of TRL that students identified
- More learning activities outside class
- Some students were more aware how they best learned
- Two students got e-mail accounts, and two got library cards
- Students became better at setting short-term goals
- Some students were more proactive about issues in their lives (e.g., getting a landlord to make repairs or asking for a work schedule that fit with their schooling)

The teachers also reported changes in themselves. As they worked on the project, they adapted their own classes (e.g., using facilitated discussion in a beginning literacy class to identify instances of students taking responsibility for learning). One teacher said she became "less authoritarian" and "included more independent and flexible student-centered learning time." The project reinforced the team's commitment to involving students in decision-making. The project also served as a team-building process for a group of new teachers. KCALP plans to continue to teach TRL, introducing this EFF standard as part of its month-long Learning Skills orientation class. As the program implements EFF, TRL will be applied in student goal-setting, planning, and assessment processes.

DoSetMet

From the beginning of the project, the Mount Rogers team focused on connecting action research work with efforts to develop a process for reporting required data to the state. They reviewed Virginia state documentation requirements as well as the forms used locally. They then developed a new form to be used at student intake to collect the information required by the state. This included demographic information and the student's source of information about the program, reasons for enrolling, goals, test scores, and other information. They also added a list of "learner achievements" based on a short checklist of personal, social, and academic learning skills. These were chosen as a way to begin to document more than test scores. Some were outcomes (e.g., "helped child with homework") and some were class-room activities (e.g., "worked on assigned tasks"). After discussion in action research team meetings and several revisions, the team decided to move their outcomes list to a separate document.

The team had determined that using activity-based documentation, such as story circles and stem sentences, was too time intensive. Instead, they developed their outcomes document as a checklist, using some items from their learner achievement list. They first conceived of the checklist as an exit instrument and a supplement to the other reporting form. It was organized around the three EFF roles, plus the category of "self." The original draft had a space to check when something was accomplished and a space for comments. The following were examples of accomplishments: use library, ask for directions, read help-wanted ads, use a computer, volunteer in child's school, and pay bills. The team decided to add a goal-setting column to use at intake. The learner could note which items she or he had already accomplished and those that would indicate progress toward goals. Items relevant to the student's goals would be the focus, but other items accomplished could be checked as well. Though these were decontextualized competencies or activities, they could be contextualized by the learner's goals. The team discussed having a space for the goals on the form and giving the student a copy of the form, both to facilitate documentation and as motivation.

The team tried using this new form with several students. They noted student reactions, how long the students' took to complete it, and whether students could give evidence of their accomplishments. They found that although it took some time to complete, most students liked the form and were able to describe their accomplishments. The students added items and suggested language changes. The team found the list helped both the teacher and the students think about goals and outcomes. The form was revised to include student suggestions. In its current iteration, the form lists 43 items with three possible responses to each item: currently do (DO), would like to do (SET), and now can do (MET). Artifact 9 reproduces the summary version of this form.

In fall 1999, several Mount Rogers teachers outside the team tested the DoSetMet form. These teachers met with the team in November to reflect on their experience with the form. In this group meeting and in written evaluations, the teachers were quite positive about the form's usefulness both as a way to help them know their students and as a goal-setting process for students. Several noted the form helped build students' self-esteem as they focused on what they could do. An employee of the Virginia Department of Human Services who attended the meeting requested a copy of the form to use as part of the department's intake procedure for new clients.

Virginia had introduced a statewide computerized data collection system before it was required for the National Reporting System. One of the data items was achievement of learner goals. Mount Rogers teachers used the DoSetMet form to

document learner goals as students set and achieved them. This information could then be entered into the information system. Virginia recently revised its reporting system, and identification and documentation of student goals is no longer a focus. However, Mount Rogers teachers continue to have DoSetMet as an option to use for goal setting and documentation; some teachers, including the action research team members, continue to use it. But the Mount Rogers team has not been able to integrate the form into their formal reporting system as they had hoped, and form has not been introduced statewide.

Artifact 9: Do/Set/Met

DO/SET/MET GOAL SHEET

Instructor:_____ Class:_____

Date:_____

Please fill in the **total number** of students in your class that have checked DO/SET/MET in each of the following categories.

I - Worker	**Do**	**Set**	**Met**	**Comments**
1. Fill out a job application				
2. Arrive at appointments on time				
3. Fill out work-related forms				
4. Read and understand work related materials				
5. Communicate with others in work/social settings				
6. Have a job				
7. Obtain job promotion				
8. Organize, plan, and prioritize work				
9. Use a computer				
II - Citizen/Community Worker				
10. Use library				
11. Locate and/or use community agencies or services				
12. Have a driver's license				
13. Use public transportation				
14. Complete U.S. citizenship class				
15. Apply for legal immigrant status, U.S. citizenship, emancipation papers				
16. Register to vote				
17. Vote in primaries/elections				
18. Obtain legal advice				
19. Use maps				
20. Ask for directions				
21. Active in volunteer work				
22. Participate in neighborhood watch/activities				
III - Parent/Family Member				
23.Read to children				
24. Help children with homework				
25. Volunteer in child's school				
26. Talk with teachers/school staff				
27. Attend school-related meetings (e.g., PTA)				
28. Fill out insurance forms				
29. Use a recipe				
30. Assemble a toy/equipment/furniture				
31. Read product/medicine label, directions, and safety warnings				
IV - Self				
32. Read daily (magazines, books, newspaper)				
33. Have a checking/savings account				
34. Balance a check book				
35. Have a personal/family budget				
36. Pay bills				
37. Use an ATM card				
38. Count money				
39. Compare prices to determine the best buys				
40. Solve a problem				
41. Feel good/better about myself				
42. Feel independent				
43. Meet a personal goal				

This form was developed by Rita Roper, Jerry Musick, and Sherri Whitlock, teachers in the Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program in Abingdon, Virginia.

Summary of Team Activities in Stage 2

Three diverse programs participated in the Documenting Outcomes action research project. They all developed outcome documentation processes they found useful, at least in the short term. Table 2 summarizes their efforts.

Table 2. Summary of Stage 2 Team Activities Developing Outcome Documentation

	KCALP, Tennessee	Mount Rogers, Virginia	Knott County, Kentucky
Documentation Process	• Five teachers spent a month working with their students focusing on the EFF standard Take Responsibility for Learning (TRL) in students' lives.	• Three teachers developed a checklist of 43 possible goals/outcomes that students use to evaluate current skills, set goals, and document accomplishment.	• Five staff members worked with students to identify the goal to support their children's education. Students documented activities that did that, e.g., reading to their children.
Documentation Purpose	• To determine how students were implementing TRL in their daily lives	• To help students set and document goals for state reports.	• To motivate students and document increased activities supporting children's education
Documentation Tools	• Pre- and postsurveys • Student Journals • Teacher observations recorded in journals	• DoSetMet checklist	• Calendar forms
Where Implemented	• In program	• Countywide	• In program
Used	• As a foundation skill for learning	• To report goal achievement to state • To plan instruction	• As a focus for instructional activities
Continues	• In Learning Skills orientation class	• As an option, countywide • Team teachers are using	• No

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS: WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Action research is a spiral of research, learning, action, and reflection. It is an ongoing process without a clear point at which the researchers come to the end of the project, analyze their data, and report their findings. As practitioners research their own practice, analysis is ongoing, questions change, and the project doesn't really end. But at some point, the focused work stops, and researchers can summarize what has been learned. We have reached that point with this report. In this section, we begin to answer the following questions:

1. What have we learned about documenting outcomes of participation in adult basic education programs?

2. What have we learned about conducting action research in adult basic education programs?

3. What have we learned about how action research affected the participants?

The CLS team developed the findings in this section on the basis of an extensive review of project data, including team and regional meeting minutes, artifacts from program teams, CLS staff field notes and personal reflections on meetings, results from evaluations, interim and final team reports, and informal interviews with team members.

Documenting Outcomes of Participation in Adult Basic Education Programs

In this project, we set out to work with adult basic education programs to develop indicators and measures that could be used to document the outcomes of student participation in adult education. We were interested in going beyond what could be measured by intake/exit demographic data and standardized tests. We hoped program teams would be able to document what one teacher called the "invisible outcomes," the changes teachers saw or heard about from their students but had no way to report. We hoped that, with the project participants, we could create methods to capture and report these outcomes as part of state performance accountability systems. We imagined being able to document outcomes in a way that made a compelling case for community impact.

The teams that took part in this action research developed ways to document changes in students. Some of these changes fit our definition of *outcomes* and go beyond classroom activities—they are changes that make a difference in students' lives. The Virginia team's DoSetMet form established a process that helped students

identify the changes they hoped to make (or their educational goals) and document achievement of those goals, or outcomes. The Tennessee team documented outcomes as well as outputs as part of their focus on EFF's TRL Standard. The Knott County Adult Learning Center students used calendars to document activities that supported their children's education, such as reading to their children and meeting with teachers.

These documentation efforts focused on particular parts of students' lives that the program or students identified as areas in which they hoped to make change. The three teams developed ways to document changes the students reported and the teachers observed. The teams, their programs, and their students have found these documentation efforts useful tools for instructional planning and for learner and project assessment. The programs have continued to use these documentation tools and to develop others.

For the participating teams, this action research project has led to increased understanding of how programs might identify and document the out-comes of adult education participation in learners' lives in ways that meet local program needs. This project explored, through action research, the development of indicators and measures of the impact of participation in adult literacy programs and used the EFF framework to inform this work.

However, in the span of this project, we were not able to develop measures acceptable to the state accountability systems with which we hoped to connect. This was not caused by the involved states' lack of interest. State adult basic education staff from all three states followed their state team's work and engaged in at least some consideration of how it might be integrated into state adult education reporting systems. Unfortunately, the federal performance accountability requirements limited use of locally identified and documented outcomes. The state staff were more concerned with establishing the reliability and validity of locally developed documentation. Putting in place a new reporting system that would meet the guidelines of the National Reporting System was their priority, and they did not feel they had the resources or perhaps the latitude to experiment with other approaches.

For local documentation efforts to be part of a state performance accountability system, local programs need a commitment to rigorous, ongoing data collection and analysis. Each process the action research teams developed included collection of some baseline data (on goals, test scores, or assays of knowledge of a particular EFF standard) and collection of data on outcomes. However, analysis of this data varied from project to project, most likely because of the facilitators' limited focus on analysis and the teams' limited time. Giving the teams more

extensive training in analysis as well as a longer commitment of time would have been helpful.

The Rewards and Challenges of Action Research in Adult Basic Education Programs

Participating in this action research was both a positive experience and a challenge for the people involved. In this section, we examine what was most helpful and valued by the participating teams, the challenges the teams and facilitators encountered, and particular issues we faced as facilitators.

The Rewards

Throughout the project, we asked for the teams' feedback on the action research process through informal activities, such as having them write brief answers to questions on cards, and through structured surveys completed at regional meetings (see Appendix 3). In these activities and surveys, the team members identified a variety of activities they found useful, including analyzing current documentation in the Documentation Matrix and using the Inputs-to-Impacts chart. More of the positive comments concerned the overall process. People liked working in groups and having a chance to talk about their work and share experiences with teachers on their own and other teams. As one teacher wrote:

> I enjoy listening to the ideas/opinions/responses of my coworkers. It helps me understand their focus.

Several people also mentioned appreciating having facilitators who brought different ideas and different approaches to facilitation. One person said she found "respect for everyone involved."

The two aspects of this project the participants seemed to particularly value were the focus on students and the opportunity to reflect on the goals of their work. The focus on students and their goals influenced how team members approached their work, as discussed in Chapter 5.

The Challenges

As the facilitation team reflected on what we learned from this project, one of us summed up the challenges by saying, "This work is hard." And it was, because of the process and for reasons that are part of working in adult basic education.

We used an action research methodology because we wanted to work with programs to develop outcomes documentation rather than field test a particular approach. But this led to some initial frustration for team members, who noted, "There were no predefined test instruments in place" and "We didn't know what to collect or what to do with it." In the first stage, we worked with the Knox County Adult Literacy Program to conceptualize what we were doing: What did we mean by "outcomes"? Who was the documentation for? How did our documentation processes fit with the program and state processes? In this first stage, we were able to develop processes that helped the Stage 2 teams go through similar thinking in a more structured way. But these teams also felt some initial frustration. Helping everyone involved in the project understand and, if possible, appreciate the processes of developing the action steps to be taken is one of the challenges of action research.

When the teams were asked to identify challenges, they named some conceptual issues, such as "the idea of documenting changes in learner lives versus test scores," but most named practical challenges, including:

- Getting students to provide data by completing journals, calendars, and charts
- Student turnover and a changing student population with more young students
- Limited teacher time to design, collect, and use documentation
- Difficulty in finding ways to share results with other teachers in other programs
- Specific program issues, such as office moves or funding changes

Many of the project's challenges are those of our underfunded field. In discussing the amount of personal (uncompensated) time her teachers devoted to the project, one administrator commented, "This is not a new problem for adult education—it is a continuing problem that is a barrier to providing excellent education." Most of the teachers were part-time. The marginal place of adult education in the larger system is typified by the forced relocation of the Knott County program and the loss of major funding in Knox County.

The changing student population the action research project teams noted is typical. In adult basic education, there is high student turnover (Young, Fleischman, Fitzgerald, & Morgan, 1995) and an increasing number of younger students (Hayes, 2000). Documentation of outcomes assumes continuing contact with students or at least an exit interview, but this is difficult to obtain, as students often stop attending class without notice (Beder, 1999).

The requirements of the performance accountability structure developed in response to Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (1998) also had implications for local program teams. State reporting requirements were in flux. The pressure and confusion of adopting a new reporting system added to the teams' work. The mandated performance accountability system seemed to inhibit states' willingness to experiment with the processes that the action research teams were developing.

The Facilitation Process

As facilitators, we increased our knowledge of action research as a learning process. We came to realize that coming to consensus was part of any action research. Our growing understanding about the connections between documen-tation and other program processes, as well as our understanding of the challenges programs and teachers face in trying to integrate documentation with instruction, came with reflection on the ongoing work.

One issue in action research in adult education is team members' participation in all aspects of the research process (See Adelman, 1997; Peters, 1997). We did not begin this project thinking of it as participatory action research. As facilitators, we had already defined the question we wanted to address, and we established the structure of the process. But as the project progressed, we found it was in many ways controlled by the teams. We had been clear from the beginning that the documentation processes the programs would implement would meet their programs' needs. Although we, as the researchers, could have identified particular measures of particular outcomes and asked the programs to pilot these, our approach was to work with the program teams to develop measures—or processes—that fit their contexts. The work sometimes proceeded in unexpected ways and was tied more than we might have anticipated to particular instructional goals, but this was what was needed and possible. The teams' work also led to results beyond the original intention of the project, as discussed in the next section. One facilitator described our experience:

> The hardest part and the thing that sometimes makes the process awkward is not having a "playbook" because the process is organic, but the unknown, the twists and turns of this kind of work, is where the yield that is the most informative and ultimately the most gratifying comes into focus.

Another quandary we faced was how much we could reasonably request of team members. Although they received compensation for time spent on the project, they had too little time. In retrospect, we might have, for example, asked for more written documentation of team meetings we did not attend. We might have established a more extensive documentation process for the project, but we were

hesitant to push for too much. The teams worked hard and enthusiastically, and their investment in the project may compensate for what we lost in data.

Looking back on the project, we have identified several factors we might change in another cycle. First, as facilitators, we needed more time on the project. Like the program teams, we were all part-time. The teams were in three different states, which limited our ability to attend all team meetings. We also felt limited by funding and did not extend the programs' involvement more than a few months beyond the original plan. In retrospect, it would have been useful to have had more time to work with the program teams to help them refine and analyze data from their documentation processes.

Although the facilitation process was not always smooth, we developed tools, such as the Documentation Matrix, that we found quite useful in helping the teams look more broadly at their programs and their practice. We came away from this project with a renewed commitment to the value of action research in sharpening the questions participants ask about their work and the work of adult basic education as a system, and in giving participants tools to help answer their questions.

What Else Have We Learned? Action Research as a Learning Process

In his article "The Role of Research in the Practice on Adult Education," Allan Quigley (1997) places action research in the "practical" category of his "Research Intentionality Framework" (p. 17), or research for "practitioner development and institutional improvement." Although the purpose of our research was to contribute to understanding a systemic issue—how to document the outcomes of participation in adult basic education—we found it also contributed to participants' professional, program, and personal development.

Professional development

"The result is improvement in what happens in the classroom and school, and a better articulation and justification of the educational rationale for what goes on" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1984, p. 5, quoted in Quigley, 1997). The teams reported these kinds of results in their final reports:

- The project built a team out of a group of newly hired teachers
- The focus on TRL led the teachers to give students more responsibility
- Teachers and students were better able to set goals

- Teachers focused more on student goals
- Teachers know students better and are better observers of students' life situations
- Teachers and students use different thinking processes and are more deliberate and purposeful
- Teachers are able to turn new ideas/approaches into teaching strategies

Effective professional development involves engagement in active thinking about one's practice, and this occurred during this project. As they participated in this action research, team members changed their understanding about aspects of their practice and reported ways their practice had changed. The process of identifying desired outcomes led to increased instructional focus on meeting learner goals and achieving desired outcomes. As one teacher said, "If you start with student goals and you document reaching those goals, you better do something in the classroom to help them learn what they need to get there." In some instances, this meant a classwide focus, as in the Knott County summer reading project; in others, it meant extra focused help from a tutor as a student worked to meet a goal.

Developing processes to document changes in learners' lives meant talking to learners about topics at a depth new to many team members. They found they gained understanding of their students' lives and the barriers students faced. One teacher who piloted the DoSetMet form spoke of how it led her to initiate dialogue with students, and the team members from Virginia said that having a tool—the DoSetMet form—facilitated their ability to talk to students about issues in the students' lives. A Tennessee teacher reported, "Based on the issues and concerns revealed by this project, I revamped my classroom procedures to include more independent and flexible student-centered learning time." Ten of 13 team respondents to a survey late in the project said their instructional planning and practice now focused more on student goals and needs.

As part of the project, team members also had opportunities to try new instructional techniques and learn research skills of data collection and, in one site, computer data entry. One Kentucky team member commented that she had "stretched" herself. One final team report spoke of the staff being "able to turn new ideas/approaches into teaching strategies."

Student development

This project also led to learning opportunities for students. All three teams involved students in designing documentation processes. The Virginia team tested each version of what became the DoSetMet form with students and revised both the content and the language on the basis of student suggestions. The Kentucky team focused their project on parents' reading to children after the team used the EFF framework in a series of meetings with students to identify a goal (to support their children's education) and steps to meet that goal. The Tennessee team revised their approach to documenting TRL on the basis of student feedback.

Students reflected on goals and accomplishments in each of the teams' projects. The Mount Rogers team reported that the process motivated students and built their confidence. Students also set more specific goals when they used the DoSetMet form. The Knox County team also reported that students were better at setting short-term goals.

In addition to the goal-setting changes and an increased awareness of accomplishments, project activities generated a variety of student outcomes and outputs. The Knott County team reported improved reading, increased library use, and better "organizational habits." Some Knox County students developed an interest in writing in a journal and continued to do so after the TRL project ended. The team reported, "Almost all students seemed to have learned more about themselves as learners." The learning activities that led to these changes could, of course, be carried out as part of regular classroom practice, but the action research project encouraged the teams to undertake these activities.

Program development

The Knox County team has been intentional about program improvement for several years. They are participating in the Baldridge National Quality Program award process and have set clear priorities for change. Participation in the action research contributed to this process, helping them "understand what they were doing and why." One KCALP team member felt affirmed in the program improvement effort after observing the action research facilitators' similar processes of reflection and analysis. For all three teams, thinking through program processes led to increased appreciation of how different program aspects—goal setting, instruction, outcomes documentation—can be aligned.

Personal development

All team members reported that participation in the action research project changed their classroom practice. For some, the changes went beyond the classroom. One administrator told us the project had helped teachers think of themselves as actors outside their own classroom. They saw they had knowledge and understanding to contribute to solving program issues and, by extension, issues of concern to the field of adult education. Several have presented at state conferences and written for newsletters. Although we cannot attribute their activism to the action research project, it seemed to support it.

One team member attributes a major change in her life—returning to college—to her participation in the project. She speaks of the project as changing her life because it convinced her that she could further her own education.

Summary: What Did We Learn?

From the Documenting Outcomes action research project, we have learned:

- Local adult basic education programs can develop documentation processes useful for planning and assessing their work
- More work is needed at the local, state, and national levels before locally developed documentation processes can be used for performance accountability systems, such as those required by the Workforce Investment Act
- Although practitioners value participation in action research, such factors as the limited paid time for teachers typical of adult education in most states make it difficult
- Action research is effective for professional and program development in adult basic education

CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

Action research probably has most relevance for the programs in which it occurs. But the action research described in this report also has wider implications for adult basic education practice and policy. We have identified implications for professional development, program improvement, and performance accountability.

Action research is a valuable professional development tool in adult education.

As they participated in this action research, the team members changed their understanding about aspects of their practice. The work of understanding and developing outcomes documentation created opportunities for reflections that led to improved classroom practice. Developing processes to document changes in learners' lives meant talking to learners about topics and at a depth new to many team members. They found they gained understanding of their students' lives. The process of identifying desired outcomes led to an increased instructional focus on meeting learners' goals and achieving the desired outcomes. Thinking through program processes led to increased appreciation of how different program aspects—goal setting, instruction, outcomes documentation—can be aligned. Team members also gained a greater understanding of research and greater awareness of research as a source of knowledge that might contribute to their work. Although some changes the project teams reported might be specific to a focus on outcomes documentation, the participants' experiences indicate that action research in which the question and methodologies are in part determined by others can serve as valuable professional development.

The adult education literature has only begun to discuss action research as a professional development tool, most extensively in Quigley and Kuhne's 1997 *New Directions* edition: *Creating practical knowledge through action research: Posing problems, solving problems, and improving daily practice*. The adult education literature supports using practitioner research (also referred to as practitioner inquiry) as part of professional development (Drennon, 1994; Fingeret & Cockley, 1992; Lytle, Belzer, & Reumann, 1992). Typically in practitioner inquiry, an individual teacher identifies and investigates a question of concern to him or her. Teachers may be part of a research group, but their question and investigation is usually their own. Action research could extend these efforts by including group research on questions identified by both programs and other entities (e.g., the EFF field research in which the work of collecting data for EFF standards' development and the accompanying assessment framework is also changing teachers' practice; Stein & Bell, 2001). In K–12 educational literature, action research is recognized as an effective approach to

professional development (See, for example, Altricher, Posch, & Somekh, 1993; Zeichner, 2001).

Recommendation

Those responsible for professional development in adult education should use action research more extensively. By doing so, they can learn from the experiences reported here, from the EFF work, and from the states where action research has been used in professional development, particularly Pennsylvania and Tennessee (see, for example, Quigley & Weirauch, 1997; Action Research Group on Learning Disabilities of the Center for Literacy Studies, 1994). To effectively improve practice, teachers need to be paid for time spent in action research, the state system needs to accept action research as professional development, and facilitation support needs to be available.

Action research is a tool to help student set and monitor goals.

Students set particular goals and helped identify the particular outcomes that were documented in this action research. In their research on learner persistence, Comings, Parrella, and Soricone (2000) identified student goals and goal-setting as important to supporting learner persistence in adult education. Involving students in action research to identify goals and develop processes to document goal achievement may have a positive impact on student persistence.

Recommendation

Action research involving students in both setting and documenting achievement of their goals should be pursued and evaluated as a tool to further learner persistence.

Action research can enhance processes for improving program quality.

Action research focusing on outcomes can contribute to building local program quality by supporting systematic thinking about what the program does and why. Establishing goals and examining outcomes focused the action research teams in this project on the processes that lead from goals to outcomes. The cycle of observing, planning, acting, and evaluating fits such approaches as the Baldridge National Quality Program (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 1998) and Project Equal, Pennsylvania's field-based program improvement initiative (Alamprese, 2000).

Recommendation

Local and state ABE administrators should encourage use of action research approaches to improve program quality. Systematic processes of reflection to identify areas that need improvement, combined with ongoing action and evaluation, help keep a program focused on continuous improvement. Resources such as *How are we doing?* (Bingman, 2001), a guide for local programs based on this action research project, can be used to facilitate local inquiry into program improvement, particularly when local programs have access to financial support for staff time.

Performance accountability could be supported and enhanced by action research.

The Workforce Investment Act mandates "a comprehensive performance accountability system" (Section 212) that states are to use "to assess the effectiveness of eligible agencies in achieving continuous improvement of adult education and literacy activities." In her review of performance accountability in adult basic education, Juliet Merrifield (1998) recommended four principles that support effective performance and accountability in adult literacy and basic education. These may be summarized as:

- Agree on performance by coming to consensus on goals and what is to be measured as indicators of accomplishment of those goals
- Develop mutual accountability relationships so communication and support move in all directions within the system
- Build performance capacity and be accountable so programs have needed resources to meet goals and the capacity to measure achievement
- Create new tools to measure performance so multiple measures are used and instruction is not targeted at a few easily measured items

The action research conducted for this project addressed each of these principles. The processes involved the teams in clarification of their goals and led to consensus on at least some of the performances they hoped to measure. The action research seemed to strengthen mutual accountability at the program level. Teachers expressed a new understanding of students' needs and a more focused effort to meet particular needs. For students, identification of goals seems to deepen commitment to their learning, which is also a finding of other studies (Comings, Parrella, & Soricone, 2000). Documenting the activities in their lives that supported their goals

also built commitment. Research on ways to document outcomes built the capacity of the teams to be accountable—that is, to document performance on at least some goals—and new tools were created.

But local efforts such as those described in this report cannot by themselves build a comprehensive performance accountability system. The work must extend to the state and national level if the principles Merrifield outlines are to be achieved. For example, a more extensive and focused process of examination and consensus building around goals involving all the programs in a region or state could undergird a state performance accountability system. Mutual accountability should go beyond teachers and students to include state and federal agencies. Systems of feedback and accountability need to be put in place. For programs to have the capacity to truly be accountable for both measuring and meeting goal achievement, the challenges identified in this project, particularly limited staff time, will have to be addressed.

More extensive projects that involve more teams in a program or state have the potential to build a system of accountability that integrates a variety of tools to measure the performances that are recognized as most important. Local programs can develop new ways to measure performance, but integrating these processes into state reporting systems will require changes. The federal National Reporting System and most state systems require standardized measures of only a few outcomes. Increased flexibility on the part of state and federal policymakers is needed so that locally developed processes for documenting a wider variety of outcomes can count as measures for program accountability. And more complex and nuanced systems must be developed and used to report the kinds of data collected by teams that take part in projects such as this. Although national legislation focuses on economic outcomes of adult education, learners have a wider variety of goals. Programs need to have the ability to focus on these individual goals as well as nationally established goals. As the EFF Assessment Framework takes shape, with a clearly identified performance continuum for each of the 16 standards, local programs may be able to use the EFF standards as the vehicle for identifying, assessing, and reporting student goals and progress.

Recommendations

- States should build consensus on the goals that are the basis of their performance accountability systems by using participatory processes such as action research.

- Action research should include some focus on locally defined goals as part of consensus building because a focus on goals and measurement of goals'

achievement seem to build programs' ability to implement performance accountability systems.

- State and federal resources should be committed to designing outcomes measurements and reporting systems flexible enough to include a variety of goals as well as rigorous enough to measure performance. These might include performance-based assessment frameworks, such as that of EFF (Stein & Bell, 2001), and Web-based reporting systems that allow reporting of specific evidence of goal achievement.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:
List of Participants

Knox County Adult Literacy Program

Jane Knight
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Glenna Short

Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program

Deborah Lowe Duty
Jerry Musick
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Rita Roper
Sherri Whitlock

Center for Literacy Studies

Beth Bingman
Brenda Bell
Donal Crosse
Olga Ebert
Rosemarie Mincey

APPENDIX 2:
KCALP Documentation Report

Teacher	Input	Process	Output	Outcomes	Evidence of Outcome	How Collected	How Documented
E. L.	• Where they're at • Why they're there • How they feel about being there • Student goals • Needs	• Lessons in Learning Skills • Write paper - organize paper - discussions • Interviewing • Before: what do you already know? • After: what do you know now?	• Read paper to class • Complete Learning Skills class • Complete what we ask them to do • Knowledge/under-standing of skills/steps/goal • Changes in student attitude: responsible, motivated, energized, confident	• Speaking to the group • Son came with the parent to find out about GED • Used Plan, Do, Study, Act approach in CNA Training • Showed other people how to apply tool she uses • Application outside the classroom	• Attendance • Student writing • Observation • Interviews • Class discussion • Other teacher artifacts	• Scheduled interviews and artifact collection • Collect information/ observations on occasion • Students volunteer to share	• Copy artifacts • Transcribe interviews • Log–teacher reflection
B. M.	• Math and creative writing • Low math scores/writing skills	• Graph the tests • Math drills weekly • Writing about positive activities with math - looking beyond (how to improve overall math skills) • Correcting work themselves • Organize a notebook • Subject areas/checklist • Math rules in resource • Interviewing/process/ goal - how can we help?	• Frustration is less • Some are missing less but taking more time/some less time but missing more • Taking notes/ notebook – comprehension – they explain it back – putting work in to prove the skill • Skills Bank 80%	• Used estimation in budgeting/grocery shopping	• Explain process • Work and checklist • Skills Bank list • Notebook graphs • Tests • Journals	• Interviews • Weekly journal writing • Informal discussion	• Teacher checklist on students (I.E.P) • Reflection log

APPENDIX 2 (continued)

Teacher	Input	Process	Output	Outcomes	Evidence of Outcome	How Collected	How Documented
D. P.	• Computer knowledge of equipment • Knowledge of computer language and terms • Ability to use computer • Operating system • Ability to navigate through software • Educational objective • Individual needs	• Use beginning computer lesson plans • Simulation of secretarial duties in relationship to word processing • Students pursuing independent work • Skills Bank (specific skills) • Typing tutor • Teacher direction	• Increased independence • Increased comfort level to computer • Increased sense of responsibility • Academic skills gained • Keyboarding ability/ skills	• Child's Presidential List produced • Using the computer to generate products for everyday life	• Skills Bank scores • Teacher observations • Keyboarding reports • Student skills assessment sheets • Artifacts	• Students bring artifacts voluntarily	• Collection of artifacts filed in teacher notebook by student
R. T.	• Hadn't used math concepts to decorate a room • Hadn't used a tape measure to measure a room • Hadn't used graph paper to make a scale drawing of a room	• Introduced students to math formulas of "area" and "perimeter" • Had students use tape measure to measure room for area and perimeter • Students used graph paper and measurements to make scale model room	• Students complete word problems by determining which formula is needed to be used – Read Critically* • One student drew layout of room and recorded the measurements given by other students – Resolve Conflict and Negotiate* • Scale drawings by each student of new classroom, with ideas of how the furniture should be arranged – Work Together* (* EFF Standard)	• Knows that measurement needs to be done so that she doesn't get the wrong size curtains • To be able to figure out how much paint she will need to paint her own house • May use the scale drawing with her new apartment • Use scale drawings to set up new classroom	• Word problem homework paper • Teacher observation while measuring • Students' scale drawings • Student evaluations and opinions	• Work produced from lesson plans	• Students' work in their portfolio • New classroom

Appendix 2 (continued)

Teacher	Input	Process	Output	Outcomes	Evidence of Outcome	How Collected	How Documented
J. K.	• Develop leadership skills • Some students had difficulty understanding what teacher was saying in classroom • Some had problems with listening when talking with children • Things distracted them when they tried to listen • Misunderstanding came as a result of poor listening skills	• S.M.A.R.T. to develop goals • Reading/active listening • Discussed -listening process -barriers to listening • Hold leadership business meeting • Took Listening Inventory -introduced listening process -introduced barriers to listening and strategies to compensate for them -introduced listening strategies	• Identified barriers to class listening • Students wrote about barriers to listening • Two students participated in teleconference and wrote about it • Students have to summarize two things they heard at the meeting • Participated in Volunteer Training workshop (listened and made comments) • Student independent action in classroom and computer lab • Had students identify how active listening would help them by using the process writing about the experience	Students: • Take more control of their education • Take more control of children's education • Plan, problem solve, set goals in various adult roles using strategies	• Observations of business meeting panel and telecon-ference • Written reflections of students • Written homework • Observations of class	• Written work turned in • Learner self-evaluation (written response to questions)	• Collected samples of work • Teacher reflection log of events
J. F.	• Student releases • Diagnostic approach to learning and development of better and newer strategies for learning • Student's poor test and self-analysis	• Student and assessment coordinator review: - educational objectives/ diagnostic feedback - test and learning strategies • Student informs teacher of areas to work on • Teacher sets up class and computer lab work • Teachers and students analyzed their test taking strategies and skills	• Increased use of Skills Bank computer program • Classroom focus on educational objectives • Skills improvement • Student reflections on testing weaknesses • New strategies on next assessment • Progress with Skills Bank levels	• Long-term progress in educational growth • Used learned strategies in adult life areas	• Observations -classrooms -computer lab • Student comments and reflections	• Teacher and student review: -educational objectives giving diagnostic feedback -test and learning strategies • ABE class work and computer lab work • Teachers and students analyzed their test-taking strategies and skills	• Written reflections • Skills Bank assessments • TABE assessments • Student educational plan and goals worksheet

APPENDIX 3: Sample Facilitator's Agenda

Documenting Outcomes for Learners and Their Communities
Action Research Team Meeting
Knott County Adult Learning Center
August 27, 1999

Facilitator's Agenda

Check In

Review project status
1. Rest of the fall developing and implementing documentation processes of outcomes under broad goal of Support Child's Education
2. CLS development of inquiry guide
3. November 19th meeting to share work and evaluate learning, processes, advise, suggestions on using for continuous improvement

Report from August 16 meeting re: KY WIA documentation requirements—what do they know now?

Report on my conversation with Sandy K.

Review work with parents

Report from team on meeting with parents. Is there still a commitment to focus on parent role?
Have they identified additional outcomes?
If this hasn't happened, see if it would be helpful to plan a parent session together. We could assist or just help plan. It would be good for us to have this for our later product.
If it has happened, what are the additional outcomes?

Documenting additional outcomes

Look at the outcomes (either determined with parents or some the team thinks are likely). Eventually need to identify 4–5 to track.

What might be evidence of progress? Look at EFF standards for connections. How could this evidence be collected? The Summer Reading Project (SRP) fits into this.

This "evidence of progress" are outputs. The reading to children was an output of focusing on reading to children—and encouraged the reading.

What are the outcomes? For example, for the SRP outcomes might include:

- Parents developing the habit of reading to children (evidence? documentation?)
- Parents and children regularly using library (evidence? documentation?)
- Improved reading skills for parents (evidence? documentation?)

Impacts of SRP and other work should include school success.

Summer Reading program data
Look at data display from June calendars. What do they note? Does it suggest any changes in documentation or instructions?

Next steps
Either proceed with parent meetings or develop more documentation of progress and outcomes processes/forms
Set implementation of process
Set evaluation

APPENDIX 4: Summary of responses from team members at the 11/19/99 regional meeting (N=13)

What has changed about your instructional practice and planning?	• More focus on student goals and needs (10) • More real life materials, situations (4) • Some changes in planning (3) • Integrating learning activities/processes around EFF/Take Responsibility for Learning (3)
Do you collect more or different evidence/ items/things from students?	• More questions to individual students about their lives (oral/written) (7) • Collecting evidence that students achieved specific goals/outcomes (4)
What was the place/use of the EFF framework in what you did?	• Basis/foundation/center of all our work (5) • EFF skills (7) and roles (4) are a part
What were the things that made this difficult?	• No assessment in place, hard to document changes (7) • Student attendance (2)

APPENDIX 5: Knott County Team Family Reading Project Forms

Summer Reading Project

Name:			
Child/Children's Name	Age	Sex	Attended School
Pre-Test Score: TABE Post-Test Score:			

DATE	DAY	TITLE OF BOOK	ORIGIN	MINUTES
06/19/99	Sat	The Cat in the Hat	Home	5–15

APPENDIX 5 (continued)

Knott Co. Adult Learning Center

EFF Parent/Family Member Role: Goal/Key Activities –
Foster informal education of children/Support children's formal education

NAME: **MONTH:**

	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
1. Read to Children															
2. Help with Homework															
3. Good Attendance															
4. Library Use															
5. Meet with Teacher															

APPENDIX 6: Knox County Plan

Knox County Adult Literacy Program
Action Research Project

PLAN:

Question: How do programs capture changes in the lives of students? Do they take responsibility for learning and how does it look in their daily lives?

Data to Collect:
Student writings (in a journal) or tape recordings of events that occur when they are at home (not at school). They will answer the questions: What, When, Where, Why, Who, How?

Students will use the EFF skill wheels to show skills they used. The journal and skill wheels will be brought into class daily and discussed with the teacher.

Teachers will keep their own journals that reflect their observations of TRL in the classroom.

Data will be collected daily for a four-week period.

Methodology:
Research will be conducted over a four-week period. All documentation will be turned to Beth Bingman in January 2000.

We will use Bloom's Taxonomy and the action words listed on the attached chart to describe indicators of TRL. The process will be:

1. Each teacher will give students a pre-survey on TRL.

2. Teachers will select a model story that reflects the standard and use RWD to present the story.

3. The teacher will teach a lesson on TRL and provide examples to students.

4. Teachers will work with students to get buy-in on this four-week project.

5. Students will be ask to keep notes, write in a journal, or tape record events that happen in their daily lives and report those back to the teacher each day. They

will be given 3–5 skill wheels to take home each day. When they report for school in the mornings or evenings they will discuss events with their teacher, turn in writings, and submit any evidence they choose and skill wheels that indicate skills they used.

6. Teachers will collect information daily. They will analyze and describe the learning and link it back to TRL and/or other skills. This means teachers need to listen and discuss events with students, document findings, and collect products. Start out early recording observations and analysis in journals.