

# First Mondays

Monthly Notes for Virginia's Adult Education Providers



February 4, 2013

Volume 4, Number 7

## Calendar



**COABE National Conference**  
March 24-28, 2013  
New Orleans

**VAILL 2013**  
July 10-12  
Radford University

## GED®



### Countdown

Only 11 months until the new  
GED® Test

### January Numbers

Tested - 1780  
Passed - 652  
Incomplete - 555

We now accept Visa and MasterCard as payment for GED® transcript and certificate requests. Ask your students to visit <http://www.gedva.com> to access the form. Requests paid with a credit card can either be faxed or mailed.

## Teacher Observation Project

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, the Resource Center will soon be offering a revised and updated version of the Teacher Observation Project implementation training, which considers the questions "what is good teaching in adult education, and what does it look like?" The training was delivered to Regional Program Specialists at their statewide meeting last month in Roanoke. I hope all of you have had a chance to talk with your specialists about the training and its implementation in your programs. There will be further opportunities for the training soon. Please visit the Resource Centers [Teacher Observation Project](#) page for a complete description of the project.

The project is also called the *Virginia Teacher Feedback and Guidance Project* and is designed to help teachers build their professional capacity through substantive and supportive feedback. The process and tools were developed and piloted by the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. They are based on research by Jon Saphier, founder of Research for Better Teaching, a professional development organization dedicated to improving teaching and learning, and others that indicates that narrative reports based on observers' notes are more likely to lead to improved teaching than the checklist approach. Notes and narrative reports provide a detailed, chronological record of what was observed, show how events and activities relate to each other, allow the observer to give the teacher specific feedback, and provide evidence for any claims the observer makes.

Improving the quality of instruction is a high priority throughout all levels of education. On the Jan. 30, 2013 broadcast of *Morning Joe* on MSNBC, Bill Gates, when asked to comment on what he has learned about American education that has been most striking to him, replied "What's fascinating is that teachers get no feedback. That is, they may be really good at one part of their job and not at another part of their job, but we haven't created a system where observers come in and watch what they do, where we ask the students about their perceptions... taking the very best teachers and spreading those best practices... So our teachers get the least feedback of any, and we've got to change that. We've got to help them learn from each other."

## Money Matters



Purchase of technology equipment must be made by April 10 in order to request reimbursement. Purchases made after that date will not be reimbursed.



### OAEL

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Please visit our [Web site](#) for more information about adult education and literacy in Virginia and for news and updates throughout the month.



Susan Utt delivers the Teacher Observation Project implementation training to regional specialists at their recent meeting held last month in Roanoke.

## GED Testing Service® Monthly Update

Debbie Bergtholdt, state GED administrator

The GED Testing Service® monthly update contained the following information that will be of interest to your programs.

Currently, 37 jurisdictions (states) offer computer based testing. Over 50,000 individual tests have been delivered. Testers are passing at higher numbers, and the failure rate is less than half that of the paper and pencil version. They are finishing faster, taking an average of only 75% of the allocated time, and they are 42% more likely to retake the tests that they don't pass.

Some of the reasons for these numbers are that the question and answer are on the same screen, so there is no looking from the test booklet to the answer document and risking losing your place or bubbling on the wrong number line, and there are no stray marks on the paper that could possibly cause incorrect answers.

Very soon the GED Testing Service® is going to announce a risk free guarantee that will be available through May. Computer testers who do not pass a test during their first test appointment will be allowed to take that subject area test again for free. And, in case you are wondering, the CBT center will get paid for both administrations. As soon as this promotion is officially announced, I will let you know.

The GED Testing Service® announced that the price of the computer based test will remain at \$120.00 through 2015.

## **A Visit to Region 8, Northern Virginia**

Dr. Susan Clair, director, Office of Adult Education and Literacy

On January 29 & 30, I travelled to Region 8, and the first stop was the Prince William SkillSource Center. Marsha Abramovich, Regional Program Manager, met Elaine Callahan and me along with Donna Motsek and Sue Garlock from the Prince William Adult Education Program. We were given a tour of this premier SkillSource Center by Project Director Kristi Sargent. We were very impressed with the services offered at the SkillSource Center. Employment services along with GED® and ESOL classes are offered there. Pictured below is Debbie Caselli, GED® instructor, and several GED® students attending a morning class at the SkillSource Center.

Our next stop for the day was the Prince William County Public Schools Adult Education Program. We toured the new adult education center, met with staff to discuss local programs, and caught up with Debbie Cargill to visit an ESL class.

Our next visit took us to the Fairfax County Regional Jail. We met Regional Jail Coordinator Meghean Rustia and visited a GED® and ESOL class at the jail.

We then headed to Woodson Adult High School, where adult learners were attending classes and the halls were lined with students eager to attend class. At the adult high school, we met with Jane Cruz, principal of the high school, and several of her staff, including Ann Wyllie, chief GED® examiner.



On Wednesday, we stopped by the Fairfax County Public Schools' Plum Center for Lifelong Learning and met with Maryann Cunningham Florez, program manager for adult ESOL. Maryann took us on a tour of the Bryant Alternative High School where I met Lead Teacher Jennifer Marshall and had a chance to talk to a group of students enrolled in the ESOL advanced studies class. They were each given an opportunity to introduce themselves and tell us about their experiences of learning English and how it has helped them enhance their education and employment opportunities. Meeting and talking with the Bryant School ESOL students really made me realize how valuable our adult education programs are and the impact they have on the lives of our students.



Dr. Clair (second from right) meets with Lead Teacher Jennifer Marshall (left) and Bryant School advanced ESOL students.