Performance Standards: You Can Make A Difference!

By: Vicki Bauer, State AE Administrator

Even though a program/fiscal year ends June 30, it isn’t until December that we submit our annual report to the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) at the US Department of Education.

Let’s take a look at last program year: July 1, 2009–June 30, 2010. Probably the biggest change that affected our performance standards for the year was the requirement of students to attend 60 contact hours before post-testing. (Prior to PY 2010, post-testing was to be done at 45-60 hours of attendance.)

Most Adult Education (AE) staff were pretty pessimistic about the 60 hours and predicted a decline in testing; that’s exactly what happened! Overall, the state saw a decrease in level movement in all eleven educational functioning levels. For many EFLs, performance was the lowest it had been since 2003. See the table on page 2 for the accomplishments from PY 2003-2010.

It can be very difficult to keep some students for 60 hours. Hopefully, improvements in orientation, managed enrollment, student registration fee, classroom management, goal setting, etc. is helping retain students for 60+ hours. Do you have some ideas and/or strategies that you would share with other AE staff about student retention?

Let’s look at another set of figures regarding post-testing, or the lack there of. Statewide last year, we had over 750 students who had more than 60 hours but were never post-tested. This leads to the question WHY? That was 7% of our student enrollment last year. What a difference that would make on the performance standards accomplishments!

Most of these students had hundreds of hours of attendance, but no post-test was given.

If you are not aware of the 60 hour post-testing policy, please read over the Nebraska Assessment Policy, which includes guidelines for both the TABE and

Continued on page 2
Performance Standards, continued

Continued from page 1

BEST Plus assessments. You can ask your program director for a copy or you can access it on our NDE website at: www.education.ne.gov/ADED/home.htm NOTE: The exception for post-testing at 60 hours is state corrections. Since they have students for many hours each week, they have a different post-testing schedule.

Have you post-tested all your students who have had 60 hours of classroom instruction this program year? If you are unsure of your students' hours of attendance, ask your program director to print out an AIMS report that can tell you exactly who needs to be post-tested.

Some directors give this report to their teachers each month as a reminder or “heads-up” when it is nearly time to have students post-test or if the time has passed.

Right now, AIMS reports show that there is close to 700 students thus far this program year that have more than 60 hours of instruction and have NOT been post-tested!

The most important reason why we pre and post-test is for the student’s (and teacher’s) benefit. We want to pre-test to see where a student’s strengths are, but also to determine what areas a student needs to study and learn in order to meet their individual student’s goals.

We can’t develop a student’s educational plan if we don’t know this vital information. It helps guide our instruction, along with many other factors (completion of the registration form, interview with student, student goals, writing sample, etc.).

Some reasons for post-testing include improving a student’s self-esteem when an educational gain is seen; determining if more study is needed in any particular area(s) or if the student is ready for GED testing or other goal completion; and, if you are the teacher, the self-satisfaction in knowing that you have helped another person reach their goal!

Also, post-testing reminds us that we don’t “teach to the test;” that we are helping people learn educational/life skills to last a lifetime, not just to pass a test; and that, as the teacher, you are accountable for following the guidelines/rules of the local, state, and national AE program.

We’d love to share any new strategies that you have incorporated into improving your student retention to 60+ hours in upcoming issues of this newsletter. Please e-mail me at vicki.l.bauer@nebraska.gov.

Be sure to check your students’ hours and post-test at 60! And, most importantly, thanks for all you do for those adults who need our services in order to have a better life for themselves and their families!

Statewide last year, we had over 750 students who had more than 60 hours but were never post-tested!
Calling All ABE/GED/ESL Instructors

How Can We Help You Teach Workplace Skills??

By: Jeanette Evans, Nebraska AE Consultant

“My students don’t want to work on anything besides what they need to get their GED.”

“I don’t have time to teach anything besides the basic subjects or the ESL curriculum.”

“It’s just too complicated to try to develop lesson plans for workplace skills. This is an education class, not a workforce class.”

“I thought that’s what DOL Career Centers were supposed to do for students.”

“We don’t have workplace curriculum. What am I supposed to use?”

“I don’t have the time to devote to finding material, developing lessons, or finding time to fit it in around the other things we are doing in class.”

Any of that sound familiar or identify how you feel about teaching workplace skills? It is a sure bet that when new legislation for our adult programs is developed, it will contain a great deal of language regarding the need for students to be career ready and/or postsecondary ready when they finish our ABE/GED/ESL classes.

NDE supplied one entire set of Workplace Essential Skills curriculum for each of the state’s AE programs in 2008. In addition, each program was able to request as many sets of WES DVDs as needed for the program classrooms. Also, each program received a resource box of additional/supplemental materials for use in assisting in workplace skills development for both ABE/GED and for ESL.

NDE values the vast and complex job that each of you do with students in your classrooms every day. We know that a great deal is asked of you to meet accountability standards, assessment requirements, and goal achievement.

Now transition skills are added to that job description. Budgets are tight. Time is tight and sometimes access to equipment and supplies is limited.

We also know that with the current national administration’s emphasis on skills and education for the 21st Century Learner, we have to find a way to assist students to gain the knowledge and the skills to be a productive worker in sustainable employment OR to be able to enroll in college or a training program successfully for advanced education. To that end, we must all be thinking of new, different, and better ways to assist our students.

While most of us agree that the students really do need the skills, how do we get that to happen? Where are you in this process? What can we do for you? Do you need materials? Do you need training? Do you need equipment?

E-mail me at jeanette.evans@nebraska.gov with your comments, concerns, questions, needs, and suggestions about how we can help you meet the Federal requirements for Adult Education students. It’s “easy” to say we need to do “this and this and this,” but you folks are the experts working directly with students every day. We need to hear from you!

As an instructor, do you know where those materials are located? Do you know how to access them? Do you use any of the materials? What do you find most useful?

Do you teach with the materials as stand-alone lessons or do you imbed the content in reading, writing and math? If you don’t know about these materials in your program, ask your director about them.
Northeast Community College AE Program Receives Grant

By: Nancy Schultz, Adult Education Director—Northeast Community College

Funds Will Assist South Sioux City Students

In early April 2010, the Sioux City, Iowa John Morrell plant closed, leaving 1400 employees out of work. This came with little advance warning, and most of the 1400 employees were non-native English language speakers.

Many organizations, in both Iowa and Nebraska, came forward in an effort to meet the many needs of the displaced workers. In an effort to serve those who wanted to improve their English speaking skills, the Northeast Community College Adult Education Department attempted to absorb as many of these new students as possible into our existing classes at the department’s South Sioux City site.

With this marked increase in the number of students seeking services, our waiting list grew to the point where we began looking for alternate methods of funding service-delivery options. In September 2010, we submitted a grant application to the Dollar General Corporation, specifically requesting assistance in providing additional classroom instruction at our South Sioux site.

In December, we received word that we were awarded a $7,500 grant to be used specifically to address the needs of those students on our South Sioux City site waiting list. With this grant, we will be offering up to four classes to meet six hours each week for each class plus 1.5 hours/week of prep and planning time for each of the four instructors.

Classes are being held for 17 weeks beginning in January 2011. In addition to staff salaries and FICA, we were awarded travel costs for the director, and/or her designee, to visit the site and for the purchase of two additional laptops to be utilized in our classrooms.

The AE Department has had Dollar General grant funding in the past, and we are very pleased to be able to secure funding from this source again. In fact, we are eligible to apply for additional Dollar General funding. We submitted our request in mid-February for financial support for salaried instructor-led ABE/GED classroom sites in West Point, Wayne, and Madison. If this grant is approved, services will be expanded after July 1, 2011.

http://www.dollargeneral.com/dgliteracy/Pages/landing.aspx

By: Nancy Schultz, Adult Education Director—Northeast Community College

Complete each math problem. Then match the answer to the corresponding letter using the code found below. Place that letter in the box. (See example).

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39  3  98  7  60  3  2  21  114  4  10  4  48  5  27
-14 x 4 +14 +3 -40 x 2 +2 +4 -42 x 5 +2 +7 -42 x 2 +23

87  2  5  57  4  13  27  43  1  2  5  55  4
-42 x 6 +2 -42 x 3 +1 +3 -35 x 4 +12 +4 -46 x 3

48  8  3  86  25  59  10  22  30  90  21  216  21
+3 +2 +3 -36 +25 -14 +2 -15 +3 -70 +3 +3 +21

Code:
A  B  C  D  E  F  G  H  I  J  K  L  M  N  O  P  Q  R  S  T  U  V  W  X
4  72  15  6  25  31  42  20  14  12  16  10  50  9  7  11  8  45

Holiday Math Fun!
NDE Library Materials Available for AE Staff to Check Out

The State AE Office of NDE has a lending library of materials for both AE and ESL. Some are for instructors and others are resources containing practical ideas and exercises to be used with students: http://www.education.ne.gov/AED/documents/AEResourceLibrary.pdf. Many of the resources contain EXCELLENT material for students struggling in specific areas. Other materials would make WONDERFUL additions to, or a basis for, staff development sessions.

If you would like to preview or discuss any of the materials, just drop in or contact Jeanette. Materials can be checked out for 6 weeks (longer if not in demand). If you should decide you would like to peruse some, please call or e-mail Jeanette: 402/471-4806 - jeanette.evans@nebraska.gov

How to Become a U.S. Citizen
“You are thinking about becoming a U.S. citizen. You want to know how to do it. You can watch this video to learn about the process. Watch the whole video. Then go over any steps you want to review. Later, you will be able to print a checklist of the steps you need to take. As you complete each step, check it off to track your progress toward becoming a citizen.” http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/tln/files/dict_prod/

Dictation Practice
“When you take the naturalization test, the examiner will ask you to listen to a sentence and then write on paper. This will show the examiner that you are able to listen and write in English. This activity will help you practice listening to sentences and writing them in English. You will listen to a sentence, write it on a piece of paper, and check your work to see if you wrote it correctly.” http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/tln/files/dict_prod/

Reading Questions Outloud
“When you take the naturalization test, the examiner will ask you to read a question out loud. This will show the examiner that you are able to read in English. This activity will help you read questions out loud. You will listen to a question, drag and drop words to form the question, and read the question out loud and compare it to what you hear. http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/tln/files/cit_reading/

New Citizenship Test
“The purpose is to help students preparing to take the test for US citizenship by helping them to know what some of the major changes are, understand why the changes were made, understand the guidelines that determine whether they will have to take the new or the old test and practice with the new test format and vocabulary.” http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/tln/files/PL_web_TLN_citlesson_0109.pdf

Rights of Citizens
“In this lesson you will learn about how to become an American citizen, learn to compare and contrast, master the key vocabulary used in the article, and write sentences that tell what it might be like for an adult to become an American citizen.” http://literacynetwork.verizon.org/tln/files/PL_web_TLN_citlesson_0109.pdf
Users of MakeBeliefsComix.com make comics strips by selecting from 20 fun characters with different moods -- happy, sad, angry, worried -- and write words for blank talk and thought balloons to make characters talk and think.

This site is used by educators to teach language, reading and writing skills, and also for students in ESL programs to facilitate self-expression and storytelling, as well as computer literacy.

Some educational therapists use the online comics with deaf and autistic people to help them understand concepts and communicate. Parents and children can create stories together, print them to create comic books or email them to friends.

As the author of interactive books to help people find their writers' voices, Bill Zimmerman is often asked by educators and parents for help in reaching reluctant writers. With this goal in mind, he has added more than 100 FREE PRINTABLES on his online comic strip site, MakeBeliefsComix.com. You can print out, at no cost, interactive pages from his comic books to use for writing, reading, drawing and telling stories.

This enhanced MakeBeliefs PRINTABLES feature is the latest addition to the four-year-old online educational comics site where educators and students from 180 countries come to build their own comic strips and practice language, writing and reading skills.

The new printable pages are taken from the popular Make Beliefs books and drawn by cartoonist Tom Bloom, who illustrated the best-selling, Children's Letters to God.

Now, a teacher using the web site will be able to distribute graphic handouts to students in English-as-a-Second Language or literacy programs that ask for written or drawn responses to such imaginative questions as:

- Make believe you possess a magic flying carpet. Where would your travels take you?
- Make believe you have a net to catch a favorite moment in your life. Which would it be?
- Imagine you could talk to your favorite book character. Who would that be? What would you say?
- Make believe that with the snap of your fingers you could change yourself. Who or what would you become?
- Make believe you could create your own set of holidays. What would they celebrate?

For copies of these printables, go to http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Printables. The feature offers comix templates using characters from the web site along with blank talk and thought balloons that students can fill with text to create their own comic strips.

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**NDE Speakers Bureau**

**Update:** Program personnel across the state continue to share potential speaker and professional development ideas! When the list is more conclusive and we have received permission to share speaker’s names and contacts, the collected information will be shared. All of you can expect to benefit from the collaborative thinking! Thank you for your input and keep it coming!

If you have ideas for topics, suggested speakers or any pertinent info to share, OR you would like to present on a topic in your area of expertise, contact me by e-mail at: jeanette.evans@nebraska.gov.

It is always to our advantage to pool our talents and knowledge to share with each other and the AE programs of the state. We want to be able to assist in any way that we can!
Resource Materials Needing To Be Reviewed

NDE tries to add to the collection of resources available on a regular basis. A $25 stipend is paid to individuals who provide a review for publication in this AE newsletter.

This month, the following books are available for review:

We still have *Understanding and Facilitating Learning* by Stephen Brookfield. This is a solid background/theory type book for those who teach in or work with adult students. If you are interested in critical re-evaluation of research or reflection on the outcomes of the research, this is the book for you!

We also have *Adult Language Learners: Context and Innovation*. This book is book comes out of a TESOL Classroom Practice Series and addresses ESL classroom dynamics, curricula materials, tasks and activities that reflect trends in language acquisition. Contact me: jeanette.evans@nebraska.gov if you’re interested in reviewing either of these publications.

The TEAL Team

By: Maggie McLean, Instructor—Southeast Community College, Lincoln

The TEAL team has been exploring the connection between writing proficiency and a student’s awareness of his/her own strengths and weaknesses. We are seeking to help students understand and control their own style of learning, encouraging them to take the lead and engage in activities that allow them to be successful.

The TEAL Project has chosen writing improvement as their primary focus. We have studied ways we can help our students gain confidence in the writing process, regardless of their current level of proficiency. One activity, Quick Writes, has been popular with many TEAL Team members and I would like to share it and encourage others to use it. We welcome feedback as to its effectiveness.

Many of our writing students have difficulty getting started. What do I write about? Do I have enough ideas to fill a five paragraph essay? What if I get a weird topic on the GED test and develop a brain cramp? As instructors, we hear these comments from our students quite often. How can we get the ideas flowing? How can we help our students open the floodgates and allow their prior knowledge and experiences to spill out onto a blank page?

Quick Writes can help! It is a very simple activity that provides a great “jump start” to other writing lessons. The instructor begins by giving each student a blank sheet of paper to write on. A topic is introduced, and the students are asked to write whatever comes to mind. They have three minutes to write and they are asked to write without stopping until the time is up. Let the ideas flow! No talking is allowed. The instructor is expected to participate. Writers are not to be concerned with sentence structure or spelling.

When the three minutes are up, the instructor encourages students, if they are willing, to share what they have written. The instructor can write the ideas on a dry erase board or large piece of paper that all students can see. Special attention is paid to the vocabulary generated from the writing sample.

Every time I introduce this activity, I am constantly amazed by how much the students really enjoy it. They recognize, as their ideas are put on the board, how a real essay can be created. While they may still need help with sentence structure, punctuation, or grammar, students are motivated by the fact that they possess the ability to gather enough ideas to fill a five paragraph essay. The instructor then leads them through the ideas presented to map out an introduction, body paragraph, and a conclusion, based on the wealth of ideas presented.

The Quick Writes activity can transform a student, who thinks they cannot write a five paragraph essay, into a true believer! I encourage instructors to give Quick Writes a try; the lesson can be repeated and modified to include small group work. Students realize they need not fear the blank page staring back at them. All students can be shown that they have many ideas, opinions, and life experiences to contribute to any topic!

“Students who have learned to memorize symbols and who have a limited understanding of the equal sign will tend to solve problems such as 4+3+2=( )+2 by adding the numbers on the left, and placing it in the parentheses, then add those terms and create another equal sign with the new answer,” he explains. “So the work would look like 4+3+2=(9) +2=11.”

“This response has been called a running equal sign—similar to how a calculator might work when the numbers and equal sign are entered as they appear in the sentence. However, this understanding is incorrect. The correct solution makes both sides equal. So the understanding should be 4+3+2=(7)+2. Now both sides of the equal sign equal 9.”

After viewing the video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijPYMUe--OM&feature=player_embedded Chip Burkitt commented, “We should definitely do what we can to fix it. I agree with the professor in the video: proper understanding of the equal sign is crucial to understanding algebra. I never use the equal sign merely to indicate an answer, and if I use it in a running expression (e.g., x = y = z), I always make sure that the expressions do in fact have the same value.”

“When I talk about the equal sign, I explain it as a balance. The balance analogy also helps with explaining the relations "less than" and "greater than."

“Today, I had a student say, “An equal sign can be used when you are just simplifying an equation even though you are not trying to get the direct answer.” This made me cringe because this is an example of the misconception what the ‘=’ symbol symbolizes. But, it got me wondering about other math and numeracy classrooms. Are we cultivating this misconception? Is this misconception something we should fix or is it alright that we continue to instruct with misinformation?"

GED graduates represent a special part of the educational family. Millions of Americans drop out of school every year for a large variety of reasons. The GED testing program gives them the opportunity to return to school, apply for training, attend college and find better careers. GED graduates are encouraged to share their personal story by submitting a profile to be posted on the GED Testing Service’s webpage: http://www2.acenet.edu/gedtest/profiles/index.cfm

Check out some of Nebraska’s GED Graduates of Distinction at http://www.education.ne.gov/ADED/documents/successstories.pdf. Do you have a Nebraska GED Graduate Success Story to share? http://www.education.ne.gov/ADED/documents/successstoryform.pdf
Plan for BEST Plus Training

By: Jeanette Evans, Nebraska Adult Education Consultant

With the adoption of BEST Plus testing as the state-approved ESL assessment, comes the need to assure adequate training for all who administer the assessments. Since this is still a reasonably new requirement for the state, NDE is working to offer the training in a timely and consistent format for everyone involved.

Any program staff member in the state, who will be providing BEST Plus assessments for placing or post-testing ESL students, must begin the process by successfully completing a day-long BEST Plus New Administrators' Training.

Successful completion is determined by attendance for the entire training, participation, demonstration of knowledge and application. Successful completion is documented by the trainer in conjunction with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and NDE.

Registration materials are now out in the programs for directors to provide to their staff members who require this training. There are 2 training locations for the first BEST Plus New Administrator Training:

April 1, 2011
Kearney Holiday Inn, Kearney, NE
8:00 am - 4:30 pm

SCC Continuing Education Center Room 404
Lincoln, NE 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

Additional New Administrator Training sessions will be determined and scheduled based on need. After the successful completion of BEST Plus New Administrator Training, each person administering the assessment must recalibrate on a yearly basis. Each certified administrator should administer a minimum of 10 assessments per year to recalibrate. Program directors, if not certifying, should plan to observe at least 4 assessments to remain familiar with the process.

Because accountability is so important to student progress and reporting, it is vital that quality assessment is consistently and competently provided to students based on guidelines and the BEST Plus scoring rubric.

The recalibration process allows each administrator to refocus on the guidelines. Participants in the recalibration process will be required to prove competence by successfully completing a scoring activity. This year the results of that scoring activity will NOT be available on the day of the training. The results will be mailed to you as soon as possible.

Because of concerns expressed during the recalibrations last year, criteria for “successful” completion, as well as criteria for any necessary remediation, is being analyzed and adjusted to better meet the requirements of recalibration and the needs of the staff members doing assessment. You will note that most are scheduled in the afternoon to allow travel time. Additional sessions MAY be scheduled, if needed.

Registration information will be available from program directors soon. Recalibration sessions scheduled for 2011 are as follows:

April 26, 2011
Central Community College
Columbus, NE
12:00 Noon - 4:00 pm

May 4, 2011
Southeast Community College-L Continuing Education Center
12:00 Noon - 4:00 pm

June, 2011: TBA

July 20, 2011
Mahoney State Park Lodge
Cottonwood Room
8:00 am - 12:00 Noon

August 12, 2011
Kearney Holiday Inn Express, Kearney, NE
12:00 Noon - 4:00 pm

September 8, 2011
Ogallala site of Mid-Plains Community College or North Platte Mid-Plains campus (determined by construction)
8:00 am - 12:00 Noon

October 12, 2011
Kearney Holiday Inn, Kearney, NE
(During afternoon registration at the annual AE conference)
12:00 Noon - 4:00 pm

Sharon McClaren, Alliance; Carol Leonhardt, SCC-Lincoln; Kathy Croson, MCC; and Michael Pool, SCC-L are the approved trainers for the state. They will be providing the training for both new administrators and those in need of recalibration. Each of you requiring recalibration will receive a "Needs Assessment" to complete prior to the training. It will be important for you to bring your Scoring Toolkit Workbook with you to the recalibration session.

NOTE: Refreshments will be served, but no meals. Consider picking up food and coming early to visit with colleagues prior to training.