

adult learning

quarterly



Virginia ESL learners enjoy best of both worlds

HYBRID CARS ARE ALL the rage because they use the best of two very different technologies to increase fuel efficiency and performance. That same idea of blending different methods to increase results is behind the ESL (English as a Second Language) distance learning programs at Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) in Manassas, Virginia.

“We have developed a hybrid process for our distance learning ESL students,” says Debby Cargill, lead instructor for ESL and program developer at PWCS Adult Education. “Students must come in and get some face-to-face time with a teacher to get started, but then they can elect to come in and work with an instructor or work from a distance using *Project CONNECT*.”

Project CONNECT is an Internet-based software program that teaches English language skills in the context of work, education, and life in the U.S. for adults new to this country.

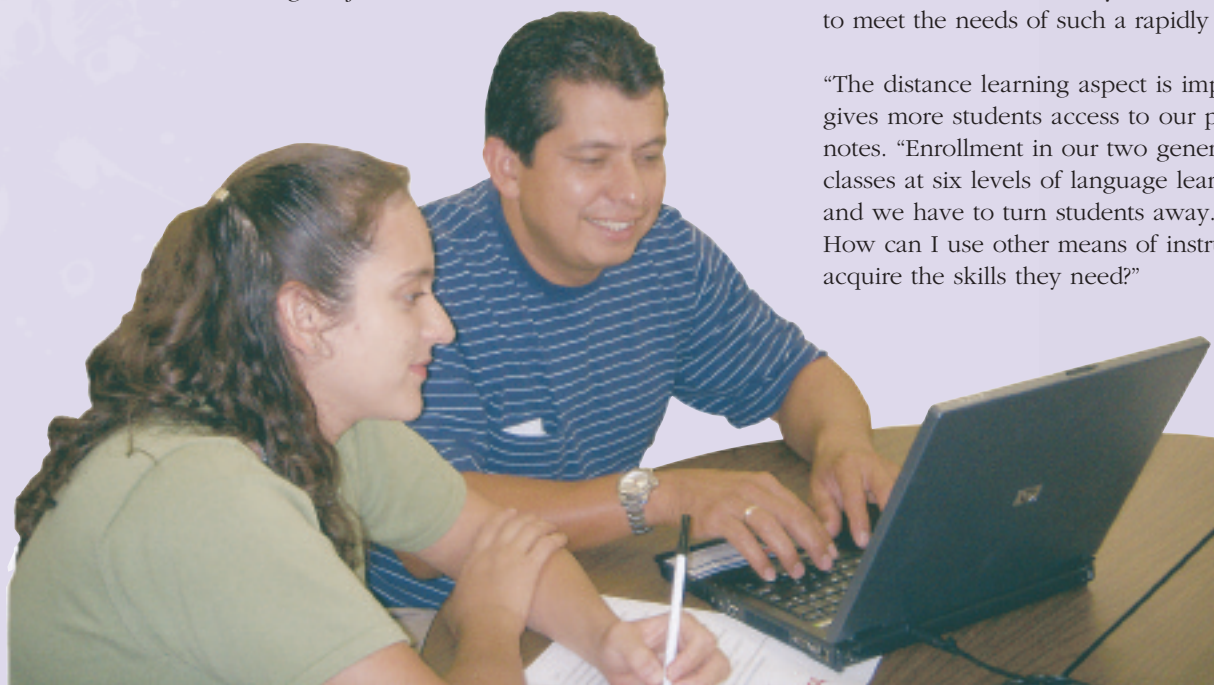
In Manassas, that covers a lot of people. Cargill says the Hispanic population in the area nearly tripled from 1990 to 2000, from 9,662 to 27,338, an increase of 182.9 percent. “We also have people from all over the world,” she says. “Within the county school system, we have students who speak 105 languages.”

Located in northern Virginia just outside Washington, D.C., Manassas County is also a large urban area, important because that size gives students greater access to technology but also stretches the ability of the adult education programs to meet the needs of such a rapidly growing population.

“The distance learning aspect is important because it gives more students access to our programs,” Cargill notes. “Enrollment in our two general sessions (40+ classes at six levels of language learning) is usually full and we have to turn students away. The question became: How can I use other means of instruction to help students acquire the skills they need?”

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New students try out one of the many features of Project CONNECT during an orientation session.



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Adult learners benefit from dedication of broadcast pioneers


AMONG MANY COVETED AWARDS

presented this summer, the GED Testing Service honored two who have made outstanding contributions in adult education by making televised GED instruction available to thousands of adult learners free of charge through public broadcasting.



Award recipients Molly Robertson (left) and Ginni Fox have enjoyed a warm friendship for many years.

With only six weeks to launch the new service to adult learners Molly K. Robertson had to hit the ground running in 1968 as the new founding director of a nine-county pilot project to get GED instruction on television. She not only met the timeline, but in the twenty years that followed, she spearheaded development of a student support system with a newsletter and a toll-free hotline; she convinced all eight public television stations and dozens of cable systems to broadcast the programs; she met with legislators and governors seeking support to expand the program throughout the state; and when funding was cut, she took a course in web design to create a *GED ON TV* website for Indiana learners. Today, Indiana's *GED ON TV* program serves as a model for statewide distance learning; the program will graduate its 8,000th student this year. GED Testing Service honored Robertson with the Cornelius P. Turner Award.

Virginia Gaines Fox, recently retired secretary of education for Kentucky and former KET CEO, was instrumental in production of KET's original GED series, also known as *GED ON TV*, which aired first in Kentucky, then nationwide in the mid-1970s. She worked tirelessly over the years to nurture collaboration between classroom teachers and public television, developing an educational partnership model now widely adopted across the country. The first *KET/GED Series* was followed by a second in 1986, then by the current *GED Connection* series, which is part of the PBS LiteracyLink system. All three were produced in conjunction with the release of new versions of the GED exam. Today, more than 105 million U.S. households have access to *GED Connection*, carried by 243 public television stations. GED Testing Service honored Fox with a 2007 Lifetime Achievement Award. 

To learn more about these and other award recipients, visit the GED Testing Service website at www.gedtest.org and click News Room, then Press Releases. Look for "Kentucky, Texas, and Utah Educators honored..." and "Washington, DC Police Chief and Indiana Educator." See Robertson's Indiana website at www.gedontv.org.

PD HELP IS ON THE WAY, WITH PAULA JOHNSON WILLIAMS



What's the best way to use multimedia in the classroom? How do I set up a virtual classroom? LiteracyLink's a big system—where do I start?

One more question: What if you could get the answers to these questions and more from one of the people who helped launch the PBS LiteracyLink website?


Now you can. KET has enlisted the help of Paula Johnson Williams to provide teacher training and train-the-trainer workshops on LiteracyLink and other adult education materials.

Williams was the original online teacher/technologist and part of the national training team for LiteracyLink. As the pilot teacher, she worked with more than 100 distance learners who were using the site for skills

enhancement. She also collaborated with content experts as they developed questions for LiteracyLink online activities, to ensure that the cognitive levels met with the specifications set by the GED Testing Service.

She completed a master's of education degree with a concentration in instructional design and development from George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. She also has more than 15 years of experience in adult basic and workplace education as a trainer, teacher, tutor, program coordinator, and consultant with organizations such as Wider Opportunities for Women, the Smithsonian Institution, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and the public library systems in Prince George's County, MD and Washington, DC.

Over the years, Williams has introduced many adult learners to computers, and she has conducted training workshops for adult literacy students, volunteers, adult education teachers and state-level administrators.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to share my knowledge of these materials with the education community," Williams said. "The multimedia components of *GED/Pre-GED Connection* and *Workplace Essential Skills* can breathe new life into a routine classroom, or can provide 'anytime, anyplace' opportunities for distance learners. Integrating multimedia components may require a little more time and effort on the part of the teachers but, when used appropriately, this approach can be very effective. And, the Online Management System provides a means for direct communication between teachers and learners." 

To learn more or to schedule professional development training, call KET at 800.354.9067.

Beverly Dorn-Steele interacts with children during one of the station's many programs for young people. Inset: Dorn-Steele is pictured with Seemore Goodstuff.



Charlotte's WTVI invites neighbors to come to the party—and they're staying

DURING A COSTUME PARTY for WTVI's Kid's Club, Beverly (Bev) Dorn-Steele noticed neighborhood children peering through the fence at all the festivities, no doubt wishing they were part of the fun but unable to afford membership in the club.

"There must be some way to break through this barrier," Dorn-Steele reasoned, taking her concern to the station's development director who ran the Kid's Club.

But during her 27-year career at WTVI, the PBS station in Charlotte, NC, Dorn-Steele had seen tensions mount between the mostly low-income neighborhood residents and the station. A fence between the neighborhood and the station was necessitated by minor acts of aggression such as tires of staff members being slashed. Still, Dorn-Steele, director of education and outreach services, vowed to put her diverse public television experience to work on the problem.

A Front Porch grant from the Community Building Initiative (CBI) enabled Dorn-Steele to begin breaking down that divide. That was in early 2005.

"Part of the proposal was coming to a mutual understanding with the neighbors," she recalls. "Through that project, we held the station's first open house and conducted tours in the summer, when children were out of school."

The apartment complex was changing also. It had been a low-income residence, but was now becoming a self-sufficiency unit, in which residents were required to acquire the skills that would enable them to get a job and their GED. Residents jumped at the opportunity to sign up for a GED program, some 90 percent of them signing up for

the program Dorn-Steele offered, using KET's *GED Connection*, a series of integrated videos, workbooks, and online materials to help students prepare for the GED exam. She purchased the videos and workbooks from KET and held quarterly sessions to give residents an opportunity to ask questions and get help on specific sections.

But there was still the issue of the children.

Dorn-Steele decided to marry the GED program with the station's PBS Ready to Learn initiative and create the WTVI Family Literacy Alliance.

"The program is really two-fold," she says. "We bring the two together so that both parents and children benefit. We primarily use *Reading Rainbow*, a popular children's program. We all watch a segment, do an activity, and then read a book. Parents and children alternate reading the book, and sometimes the entire group reads the book together, with each reading a small segment.

Started in November, 2005, the Family Literacy Alliance has grown to include 57 families.

Children receive a book of their own each month through the Ready to Learn program, and WTVI has created a library in a spare room of the apartment complex where children can check out other books. Two bulging bookcases contain books designed for children from ages one through nine, and the station adds to the collection each month, even

ordering numerous copies of the same book so there is no competition.

Parents still get help preparing for the GED exam.

"We get together quarterly to share," Dorn-Steele says. "It is basically a share and tell. We talk about frustrations and have simple potlucks. We provide resources for common problems such as geometry, one of the areas the adult students struggle with most."

The fact that Dorn-Steele is an on-air personality really helped break the ice with the kids, who see her each day with a purple elephant called Seemore Goodstuff. Dorn-Steele and Seemore talk to parents during the breaks between children's shows about going to the library, viewing tips, and getting involved with their children.

"Everybody recognizes me," Dorn-Steele notes. "They were impressed that someone who is on TV is coming to their neighborhood to work with them."

Today, there are no more flat tires at the station parking lot and no more children simply wishing they were a part of the fun. They are, and so are their parents.

"We truly believe the success of our station isn't measured alone by ratings, but rather in combination with the difference we make in the lives of people," concludes Elsie Garner, president and CEO of WTVI. **KET**

For more information, contact Beverly Dorn-Steele at 704.371.8840 or bds@wtvi.org

Today there are no more flat tires at the station parking lot and no more children simply wishing they were a part of the fun. They are, and so are their parents.

First teach your legislators

(then ask them for funding)



“There are hundreds of programs out there. There is no way legislators can know about every one of them. So much is based on how much they hear from their constituency.”

—Lynn Selmsler, NCL policy director

IF YOU WANT CONGRESS to better fund adult education, Lynn Selmsler says the main thing you must do comes naturally. You have to be educators—only in this case your students are members of Congress.

Selmsler realizes that members of Congress aren't going to show up as students for your adult education class. So how do you go about educating them?

We posed that question to Selmsler, who worked on Capitol Hill for 27 years and today is policy director for the National Coalition for Literacy (NCL), a policy analyst for the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, and a policy consultant for the Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) and ProLiteracy Worldwide. Selmsler started as a legislative secretary and worked her way up through the system, becoming a professional staff member to two congressmen—Bob McClory (R-IL) and Bill Goodling (R-PA). Although she dealt with numerous issues throughout her time in Washington, literacy and adult education were among the issues that spanned her career.

“There are hundreds of programs out there,” notes Selmsler. “There is no way legislators can know about every one of them. So much is based on how much they hear from their constituency.”

And that is the good news, according to Selmsler who has practical—dare we say easy—ways to make sure your legislators know the importance and impact of adult education.

It all begins with relationships.

Step one: Get to know your members of Congress.

“Members of Congress who want to be re-elected want and need to hear from you,” she says. “Do not be intimidated. They were elected to represent you and to do so, they need to know your views.”

Perhaps as important, get to know the staff members.

A lot of advice members of Congress receive comes from their staff. “There is frequent staff turnover,” Selmsler notes. “Know your staff. Even if you don't

talk to the member, your views will be heard. Members rely on staff to gather information and know how their constituents feel on issues under consideration.”

Other important steps: Understand the legislative process

Education programs must be authorized by Congress. Current programs, such as adult education, must be reauthorized by Congress every few years, based on the authorization period set forth in the law.

When time is near for a bill to be reauthorized, staff members on the relevant Congressional committee start collecting program information and talking to those involved in the program to determine if there are changes that can be made to improve the program. Hearings are also held by the committee to take testimony from witnesses about the need for program changes and the impact on the lives of program beneficiaries. Afterwards, the committee will “mark up” a bill to reauthorize the program. (Markup is the process whereby changes are made to a bill by the subcommittee and committee.)

Once this process is complete, the bill moves to consideration by the full House or Senate. Sometimes bills are moving through the process in both chambers of Congress at the same time. Other times they move on a separate timeline. Once both the House and Senate have passed a bill it goes to a conference committee to work out the differences and then back to the House and Senate for a vote on the final agreement. Finally, it goes to the president for his signature or a veto.

Stay in touch

“With staff turnover and other issues competing for their time and attention, I would encourage you to contact them at least every three or four months, updating information and asking if there is any information you can get for them,” says Selmsler. “By keeping in touch, they will use you for a resource. “You don't want to bug staff, but be sure to keep in touch even if nothing major has happened.”

Become a resource

Selmsler says the goal is to be able to capture for them what adult ed is all about. Two types of information are particularly helpful:

DATA— “Members need to know programs are working,” she says. They need numbers: how many GEDs, high school diplomas, individuals learning English, etc. They also like to know outcomes. For example, are students transitioning to postsecondary, getting jobs, etc.?”

PERSONAL SUCCESS STORIES— “They also need the human face,” Selmsler says. “Have a few success stories that really drive home the impact and importance of adult education.”

“Some members like soft, fuzzy stuff,” she says. “Others want hard numbers. Mix it up when contacting them. All of this helps legislators understand the importance of funding adult education projects. It can turn members from not caring to being advocates.”

Furthermore, you should blend local and national data, according to Selmser.

The state adult education directors have produced a document that contains data on adult education for each state and for the nation. You can add your local data to this information and provide it to policymakers. The document, referred to as the “Blue Book” can be found on their website at: <http://www.naepdc.org/>. It also contains a brief description of adult education, the types of services it provides, and the types of participants seeking program services. Many congressmen and senators do not know a great deal about adult education and this is a good primer.

The Farm Bureau is a good example of how this can work, Selmser says. Selmser explains that when she was working for Congress the Farm Bureau provided her with valuable information and became an important resource. Every year, they provided her with a list of all the commodities grown in each county in her bosses’ Congressional district and their value to the economy. When legislation was considered on an agriculture commodity important to her member’s district, she was able to tell him its value to the economy. She would also contact local members of the farm community to discuss the proposed changes, and they became a resource as well. She said you can be such a resource on issues related to adult education.

Invite them to see your program first-hand

“When you are graduating a class, invite them to attend. Invite members of Congress to see your program first hand. If the member can’t come, often a staff person can. Most members of Congress have a district office, so it may be that the people from their district office come. This is important because many times Selsmer says she has seen one visit turn a member into an advocate.

Provide them with photo opportunities

Get some press at the event when you know a legislator or staff member is coming, particularly in an election year. This benefits both the program and Congress.

Look for the hooks

“Members of Congress come from a variety of backgrounds and have varying interests and priorities,” Selmser says. “If you know those interests, you can target your message. Most members will have at least one area of interest that can be connected to adult education.

“For example, perhaps your legislator is not big on education but is big on health. Tie adult education to health. People have to be able to read to understand prescriptions and a lot of keeping people well is

keeping them educated.” See the sidebar for specific suggestions on how to do this.

Get business involved

A lot of members of Congress listen to business people. Without adult education, business wouldn’t have the skilled workforce they need. Some even have workplace literacy programs. Use business owners, members of your chamber of commerce, anyone you can get to speak out for you. You don’t have to do all the talking yourself.

Create a SPOC network

That’s a single point of contact network. Through a SPOC network, adult educators alert those in the field of the need to contact Congress on key adult education issues. One individual in the state receives the alert and sends it out to others in the state.


Through this system the field has been able to stop proposed cuts to adult education funding. For example, when Congress was considering changes to the existing welfare program, one proposal would have permitted governors to waive rules in several programs important to welfare reform...a “superwaiver.” Both adult education and vocational education were to be included in the superwaiver. The vocational education field flooded Congress with calls, e-mails, etc. and was taken out of the superwaiver. Adult education did not produce the same response and was included in the superwaiver. Fortunately, this provision was dropped in the final version. To be more responsive in similar instances, the SPOC network was created.

This type of system can also be used for contacting state and local policymakers.

Keep up

Check websites for relevant House and Senate Committees to see whether there are hearings, markups or other activities involving adult education. Selmser says you may also want to check websites for COABE, the State Directors of Adult Education, ProLiteracy, TESOL, and the National Center for Family Literacy.

Finally, some more good news and one caveat to end with.

“Adult education used to be the poor stepchild,” Selmser recalls. “People didn’t understand it, and we weren’t loud. We were a small voice in the wilderness. But we’re doing a much better job today. Still, if your voice isn’t heard, who is going to educate Congress?” 

For more information, contact Lynn Selsmer at 703.560.5541 or lselsmer@cox.net.

Attention Hooks

Members of Congress come from a variety of backgrounds and have varying interests and priorities. Most members, however, will have at least one area of interest that can be connected to adult education. Following is a resource sheet Selmser developed to help adult educators provide a hook.

HEALTH— Health literacy is very important for families. Proper health care keeps families working and children in school.

SENIOR CITIZENS— Low literacy skills can jeopardize the well-being of seniors who do not understand medical instructions. According to health literacy components in the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, seniors are among those with the lowest levels of health literacy.

BUSINESS— Helping improve the skills of the workforce is an important issue, and business and industry are important to members of Congress. We need to keep jobs from going overseas, and we need an educated workforce. Adult education can play a key role in keeping us competitive.

K-12 EDUCATION— Adult education can improve the ability of parents to help their children with their homework.

WELFARE— Adult education leads to self-sufficiency, reduces welfare rolls, and helps reduce the number of individuals living in poverty and dependent on government benefit programs. Is your member on a committee dealing with welfare reform legislation?

ENGLISH AS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE/ IMMIGRATION— In either case, adult education plays a role in helping new immigrants learn the English language and successfully assimilate.



Have you gotten your new catalog? If not, and you'd like one, please let us know by phone at 800.354.9067 or by e-mail at adulthood@ket.org, and we'll send one right out. If you're in a hurry, visit us online at www.ketadultlearning.org and click "Downloads" at the bottom of the page to see the catalog in PDF format.

And just so you won't be surprised, after many years of holding prices steady, we had to raise our workbook prices just a bit to cover the increase in our production cost. The prices haven't gone up much, though, and we think you'll still be delighted with the outstanding value.

We've been helping teachers help learners since 1968 and we're still at it. On air, online, in print and now on DVD. Let us know how we can help you!

teach. reach. each.

Virginia ESL learners enjoy best of both worlds *continued from page 1*



Distance teacher Katherine Gotthardt (standing) helps a student with computer work during an orientation session. Students can elect to work on-site or over the Internet.

also conducts a once-a-month orientation so that she, too, can meet students face-to-face.

"About 20 percent of our students want to come in weekly for the face-to-face instruction," Cargill notes. The rest primarily use distance learning.

Either way works, according to Cargill, who says the program enrolls 100-150 students during their two 12-week sessions. It is only the students who log in infrequently that do not make the kind of progress the teachers would like to see. "We're not sure how to work with them yet," Cargill admits.

The adult educators have developed some important tools. They applied for and received an EL Civics grant that enabled them to install wireless technology. They created a handbook that includes photos and a short biography of each teacher. They developed a computer flyer that talks about the class and has a PDF document that gives students information on registration. They conduct an orientation session the last Friday of every month. And Cargill says they are going to do more telephone calling in the future to check up on students whose usage is not where they would like to see it. The handbook and flyers are available in the ESOL Distance Education section of the PWCS Adult Education website at <http://www.pwcs.edu/curriculum/adulthood/?eslpwpcs.html>.

"We try to encourage what actually increases learning," Cargill says. "That is reading and writing practice, exercises and quizzes. We have found that students who participate do learn and show gains." Bratton, Gotthardt, and Cargill meet regularly to discuss what works and what doesn't, and work to refine the distance learning process for PWCS ESL students. **KET**

For more information, contact Debby Cargill at 703.791.8387 or cargildh@pwcs.edu. To take a tour or try a sample activity on Project CONNECT, go to www.pbslearnenglish.org.

With its flexible design, guided Internet activities, online discussion boards, and teacher management tools, *Project CONNECT* became a real answer.

Still, Cargill says they found that students needed some face-to-face time with an instructor, so they created the hybrid program, in which students are required to attend an initial session to meet the instructors and practice with the computer. Students are then allowed to choose whether they want to learn in the classroom with an instructor or over the Internet with an instructor.

The key, Cargill says, is that with either choice, every student has an instructor for guidance and feedback.

Teacher Lydia Bratton is on site for two hours every Friday night. During the orientation session, she walks students through how to get a user name and password and register. If they desire, students can return each Friday night and she will help them. She introduces distance teacher Katherine Gotthardt over the Internet, so students can see her and get a feel for the technology. They can send an email and get an immediate response. Cargill says previously, students didn't realize that Gotthardt was a real person.

Gotthardt helps students who wish to learn using the Internet. She logs in several times a week and checks her students' work, and sends them emails to comment on their postings or remind them to do their work. Gotthardt

P D T R A I N I N G A T K E T

Plans are underway for a LiteracyLink utilization and implementation/train-the-trainer workshop to be held at KET after the first of the year.

If you're interested in coming to Lexington for a day and a half to learn how you can get the most out of your *GED/Pre-GED Connection* and *Workplace Essential Skills* materials, please call us at 800.354.9067 or send an e-mail to adulthood@ket.org. We'll be happy to send you details.

Meet one of the people behind the educational materials you love— Forum guest Tonya Crum

EARLY IN THE NEW millennium, Tonya Crum answered an ad that would change her life and the lives of many others. It was an ad for a director of workforce development and training for Kentucky Educational Television (KET), originator of award-winning multimedia materials designed specifically for adults and used throughout the nation.

Back in 1996 when her professional story begins, however, Crum was an intern with Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. It was a tremendous opportunity for a young professional who had recently graduated with a master's degree in instructional systems design from the University of Kentucky after receiving a bachelor's degree in human services communication from Eastern Kentucky University.

That internship opened up a full-time job as manager of training for StudioPLUS Hotels, Inc. Crum was now responsible for setting up management training on a national level and discovered that she really liked working with adults.

Soon, Crum found herself back at Toyota, this time as a professional contractor. "The more I learned about adult education, the more I liked it," Crum recalls. That desire pulled her into another position working even closer with adult education students as training and development coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Adult Education.

Then in September of 2003, Crum was named the new director of workforce development and training for Kentucky Educational Television (KET), the position she still holds today. Crum is one of the forces behind many of the adult education materials used throughout the nation,

"What we did at KET is pull together the best resources so teachers can spend the majority of their time focusing on student needs."

— Tonya Crum, KET director of workforce development and training

including *GED Connection*, *Workplace Essential Skills* and *Project CONNECT*.

"One piece of adult education at KET happens through our study-at-home program where we enroll 400 students a year for these courses using *GED Connection*, *Pre-GED Connection*, and *Fast Track*," Crum says. "We also work with Kentucky's adult learning centers where we connect adults throughout the state so they can further study to earn their GED or get skills they need to succeed in the workplace. We not only help students that way, but we also develop the multimedia curriculum they use."

What Crum likes best is the focus.

"The majority of our time is spent focusing on student and teacher needs," she says. "When teachers

discover our products, they often tell me they didn't know we had already done the work for them. What we did at KET is pull together the best resources so teachers can spend the majority of their time focusing on student needs."

Crum also spends a lot of time training teachers on how to most effectively use KET's products.

"I train teachers in Kentucky and throughout the nation on how to use our products, particularly the video, to meet the students' learning objectives. It is important for them to know that it takes time to master the art of using video in the classroom, but once they do it opens up a whole new world of learning because students learn in so many different ways. Video is really an effective modality and KET is a master in that arena."

Crum also oversees KET College Courses, which are broadcast from the station and video-streamed over the Internet, as well as training for licensed and certified child care providers—professional development that helps them help their young charges and give the children a good start in life.

"Everything we do starting with adult education and going through college courses and professional development—all of those things make up a continuum, a journey for students to get to the position they want to achieve in life," Crum says. "We serve students who are moving along that continuum and the teachers who are trying to guide them."



For more information about Tonya Crum, visit the LiteracyLink website at www.pbs.org/literacy and click "Forum."



Find a job Keep a job Get ahead

Here are just *some* of the lessons covered:

- Matching skills and jobs
- Showing up on time
- Reading, understanding and following directions
- Estimating and problem-solving
- Communicating clearly with customers and co-workers

That's why we call it

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From PBS LiteracyLink® and KET

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TV411 on DVD!



To request a **FREE PREVIEW** with three full-length programs, call KET at 800.354.9067.

What could make Emmy Award-winning TV411 even better? Clickable menus! Want to show your class that segment on deciding whether it's better to rent or own, or the one about reading medicine labels? Each DVD has clickable onscreen menus that take you right to the segment you want—or allow you to play any of the 30 programs straight through.

Because *TV411*'s curriculum consists of discrete, non-sequential units, teachers can pick and choose from the video segments and accompanying workbook and Web lessons to accommodate the needs, interests, schedule, and pace of the learners. They can also design units along the *TV411* themes of money, parenting, and health or just as easily select segments according to the skills taught.

"This will make *TV411* an even more flexible learning tool that can be integrated in many creative ways," says Alex Quinn, former executive director of the Adult Literacy Media Alliance, who produced the series.

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