

The LINK

AEL—linking the knowledge from research with the wisdom from practice to improve teaching and learning

Vol. 17
No. 2
•
Summer
1998

Nurturing Student Writers

by Carla McClure, AEL Staff Writer

Teachers long to read student compositions as clear and strong as Hemingway's. But experts debate whether such writing can be taught. "Maybe not," says William Zinsser, author of *On Writing Well*, "but [the principles of good writing] can be learned."

Two years ago, a team of researchers set out to identify attitudes and conditions that nurture such learning. So far, team members from AEL and the Kentucky Department of Education have interviewed more than 100 teachers, 200 randomly selected students, and 50 administrators in 25 Kentucky schools. Some of these schools have been more successful than others in helping students improve their writing portfolio scores on the state assessment.

Preliminary findings show that teachers in the more successful schools received vigorous support from school and district administrators and focused their students on writing for its own sake rather than writing to produce perfect portfolios. Their students do many different kinds of writing across the curricu-

lum, both to enhance learning and to communicate.

Their students also are likely familiar with all five stages of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Teachers often encourage students to consult with them or with one another about their work. One fourth-grade student reported that she had taught her mother what types of questions to ask about her writing and which questions or suggestions to avoid.

"It's important that those who conference with student writers learn to stimulate improvement without taking ownership of the writing from the student," according to AEL researcher Pamela Coe. "Teachers can circle misspelled words, grammatical errors, or poorly developed paragraphs. They can write questions in the margins. But they can't correct students' portfolio pieces for them."

In Kentucky, student writing portfolios are assessed in grades 4, 7, and 12. Assessments are based on a four-

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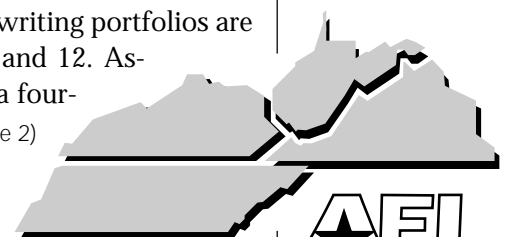
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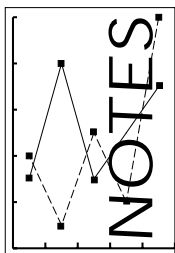
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AEL
more than
30 YEARS
OF SERVICE
to educators in
Kentucky,
Tennessee,
Virginia, and
West Virginia



RESEARCH NOTES

tiered scale: novice, apprentice, proficient, and distinguished. Students submit creative and reflective pieces and “real-world” writing such as editorials, business letters, and reports.

“Skilled teachers find ways to give children reasons to communicate to real audiences,” writes *Foxfire* founder Eliot Wigginton. The Kentucky Writing Program encourages *transitive writing* (written for and read by a real audience), which can reward writers with a response or a result. Residents of a western Kentucky community donated blood after reading persuasive pieces written by local students who organized a blood drive. One high school student wrote step-by-step instructions

for changing a tractor bearing that were so precise they were posted in the barn, where workers on the family farm consult them frequently.

Teachers who don’t teach language arts can integrate writing into their curricula by making assignments that allow students natural opportunities to write. “One reason writing portfolios have become an onerous part of the Kentucky assessment is that teachers are trying to teach writing separately,” observes Coe. The more successful schools have developed strategies for involving *all* teachers in the effort. “Language arts teachers may instruct other teachers in how to lead students through the writing process,” said Coe. “Their

Solicit Student Views About Your Writing Program

Consider using these questions in your classroom. You’ll find your students can provide valuable insight into your writing program. Ask someone from outside the school/class to conduct the interviews so that students will feel comfortable about giving complete answers.

The Writing Experience

- Do you consider yourself a good writer?
- How do you feel about writing? What kind of writing do you most enjoy? Least enjoy?
- What has helped you most to improve your writing?
- How many times a week do you usually write in English/language arts class? What about in other subjects?
- What kind of writing do you do in other subject areas? Give some examples.
- Do you do all your writing in school, or do you write other places?
- Do you write when you don’t have to for school?
- Do you use a computer to write in school? At home?
- If so, how do you use it (composing and revising, online sharing of writing or on-line discussions, listservs, searches for information, etc.)?
- Do you think writing helps you learn better?
- If yes, how does it help? Is it more helpful in some subjects than in others? In what subjects is it most helpful?
- Do you give your writing to other students to read? If

yes, do they give you suggestions for improvement?

- Do you give things you’ve written to people outside of school to read? If so, who, and do you give your writing to them to enjoy, to give you feedback, or both?
- Do any members of your family help you with writing? If so, who and how?
- Do you read things other people have written? Do you make suggestions for improvement?

The Writing Portfolio

- What do you like/dislike most about putting together a writing portfolio?
- How do you decide on topics and formats for real-world writing? (Give an example.)
- Where has your writing been published, used, or displayed other than in your portfolio?
- Do any of your teachers share their writing with you? If so, tell me about it.
- Describe a piece of writing that’s in your portfolio now that you really like. Why do you like that one more than others?
- Do you think you write better now than you did at the end of last year? If so, what’s better about your writing now?
- Do you think the level of writing being expected of students is too high for many students to achieve?
- Do you have any final comments or observations?

philosophy is, ‘You make assignments that prompt students to write, and I’ll lead them through the polishing process.’”

How will schools know if they’re doing the right thing? “We hope that what comes out of this study is something that can really be helpful for teachers and schools and students,” says Claudia Runge, Kentucky Writing Program consultant. Ultimately, the team’s findings will help them create a process schools can use to plan improvements in their writing instruction. Department staff also will use the information to evaluate and plan future professional development offerings.

Through the use of interview questions, “students can give teachers valuable feedback on what is and isn’t working,” says AEL researcher Marian Keyes. “The questions we have used throughout this study work well at all grade levels” (see box on page 2).

This research project, begun in 1996, is conducted by staff members of the Appalachia Educational Laboratory, the Kentucky Department of Education, and the Kentucky Regional Writing Consultants. An executive summary of preliminary findings is available on request and on AEL’s Web site at <http://www.ael.org/rel/state/ky/kyrpt97.htm>.

Characteristics of Successful Writing Programs: A Summary of Tentative Indicators

School/District Support

The district allocates resources and establishes policies that demonstrate commitment to the writing program. The principal provides resources, technical assistance, and/or professional development. A high degree of collegiality is found among teachers. Language arts teachers understand the writing process and how to develop and score portfolios.

Instructional Strategies

Teachers promote peer conferencing as well as student-teacher conferencing, spend substantial time on prewriting activities, provide latitude for students to choose topics and/or formats when they write, model parts of the writing process, teach the mechanics of writing in the context of students’ writing, and sometimes share their own writing with students. Students write frequently in all subjects for “real-world” audiences.

Student Attitudes and Behaviors

Students speak of themselves as writers, see writing as a routine part of their school day, carry a working portfolio with them from year to year, and expect that writing competence will be necessary in adult life. They believe they can become proficient writers and are able to describe how their writing has improved. They know how to work collaboratively with peers and use the vocabulary of the writing process.

One Design for Schoolwide Evaluation

by Nancy Balow, AEL Staff Writer

“For years we’ve gotten by with piecemeal evaluations,” says AEL senior researcher Merrill Meehan. “A district would evaluate its curricula when the state adopted new standards of learning. A school would evaluate teaching staff before beginning professional development. A county would survey parents to find out what they thought of school quality. But, during those years of piecemeal evaluations and assessments, we learned that real change generally happens when implemented comprehensively. Professional development programs may improve teaching, but they don’t do much toward increasing parent involvement. A new curriculum won’t necessarily improve students’ attitudes about school.”

This understanding of the importance of comprehensive change shows up in new program requirements. Recent Title I regulations put emphasis on schoolwide improvement, and

Congress has enacted the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, which supports total school improvement. Educators and administrators need schoolwide assessment and evaluation methods to help them implement change.

That’s where Meehan comes in, with a 1996 project he directed in West Virginia’s Monongalia County. Assisted by county Title I director Marie Alsop, coordinator Sandy Walsh, and consultant Debra Sullivan, Meehan took a comprehensive look at nine county elementary schools. The team set out to do a needs assessment, but the project’s methods can (and will) be used for both formative and summative evaluations.

“You should understand there’s nothing revolutionary in the methods we used; they’re four very familiar assessment and evaluation techniques. One difference between what we

did and what might have been done 15 years ago is that we used all four techniques, rather than using one or two,” Meehan explains. “And we were more thorough in applying them.”

The other difference, according to Meehan, was the project’s philosophy: “We wanted to involve the stakeholders. By that I mean we wanted them to buy in, to actively participate in the data collection and not just have it done to them.”

The Starting Point

Of the nine schools studied, most are very new (one or two years) to the Title I program. Eight of the nine are rural, and all are small, ranging in size from 66 students to 272. Alsop had an overall vision, based on Ernest Boyer’s Basic School, of what she hoped these schools could become. She outlined a strategic planning process and presented it to Meehan, asking for his help with the first two stages. (See Figure 1.) Together, they negotiated a strategy

for collecting the information she and Meehan wanted.

They ensured that enough time would be devoted to the project by setting aside half of each day during the 95-96 school year for each school’s Title I Reading Resource teacher to work with the principals on the project.

The Design

To answer the first two questions—Where Are We Now? and What Do We Want To Do?—Meehan and Alsop agreed on four methodologies. (See Figure 2.)

The first, **paper and pencil surveys**, employed standard *Dimensions of Excellence* forms. In addition to surveying school staff (everyone from principals to bus drivers and school cooks) and parents, they took the extra step of including students. The surveys filled out by staff and parents covered eight areas of interest: school climate, leadership, teacher behavior, curriculum, monitoring and assessment, student discipline and behavior, staff development, and parent involvement. Student surveys addressed school climate, teacher behavior, monitoring and assessment, and student discipline and behavior.

The second, **staff-compiled individual school data** reports, relied on each school’s staff to take a detailed look at demographics, school processes, student achievement, parent/community involvement, teacher demographics, and professional development.

While the above were conducted by people within the schools and with parents, Meehan himself handled the **structured interviews** and the **school and classroom observations**. He looked and asked for information related to questions asked on the surveys, but in a more personal manner and from slightly different perspectives. He paid particular attention to the school environment, curriculum materials, parent involvement, decision-making styles, student engagement, library facilities, school goals, and the like. He described himself as “Jimmy Gumshoe, wandering the buildings observing, listening, asking questions, and making notes. Some of the staff thought I might be there to help get them new buildings or new equipment, but really I was after anything and everything I could find about the school.”

Where are we now?	<p>Stage 1. Needs Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine beliefs/vision, teaching, and learning • Determine mission statement • Establish a school profile database
What do we want to do?	<p>Stage 2. Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze school profile data • Review research data • Develop written goals • Establish an academic framework • Create new thinking
What do we want to see more of in five years?	<p>Stage 3. Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an academic plan • Design organization structures • Plan strategies for management • Organize staff development • Extend new thinking
What is working? What isn't?	<p>Stage 4. Validation/Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement plan • Experiment/revise/rework/revisit • Seek collaboration among staff • Put support systems in place
How do we need to change?	<p>Stage 5. Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze data • Document evidence of success • Build new school profile • Provide feedback • Reflect for change • Revise

Figure 1. Monongalia County Schools Title I Program’s Strategic Planning Process (Designed by Marie Alsop, Monongalia County Title I Director)

The Recommendations

Once the data were collected, Meehan brought Sullivan on board and they began sorting and analyzing the information. Then the use of the four methodologies really began to pay off, according to Meehan. "We could look at so many aspects from so many points of view. We didn't need to infer from the reports of one group what another group might think. We had it right there in our interviews, observations, and surveys."

Then, where they could, they compared beliefs to actualities. They looked at the teachers' judgments of student achievement next to scores from standardized tests such as CTBS, WV Writing Assessments, and WV-STEP Reading and Mathematics.

Each of the nine schools received a report on its individual needs, and the results of these reports were then compiled into a needs assessment report on school improvement for the Title I program as a whole.

Each of the nine school teams used its individual report to help develop a schoolwide improvement plan. Also took the overall conclusions and recommendations and worked them into Stages 3 and 4 of her strategic planning process. She and the schools are now working on implementing those stages. Soon, Meehan expects, they'll repeat the four processes they used for the needs assessment, this time to create a progress report. And, eventually, those four processes will help the team produce a summative evaluation report.

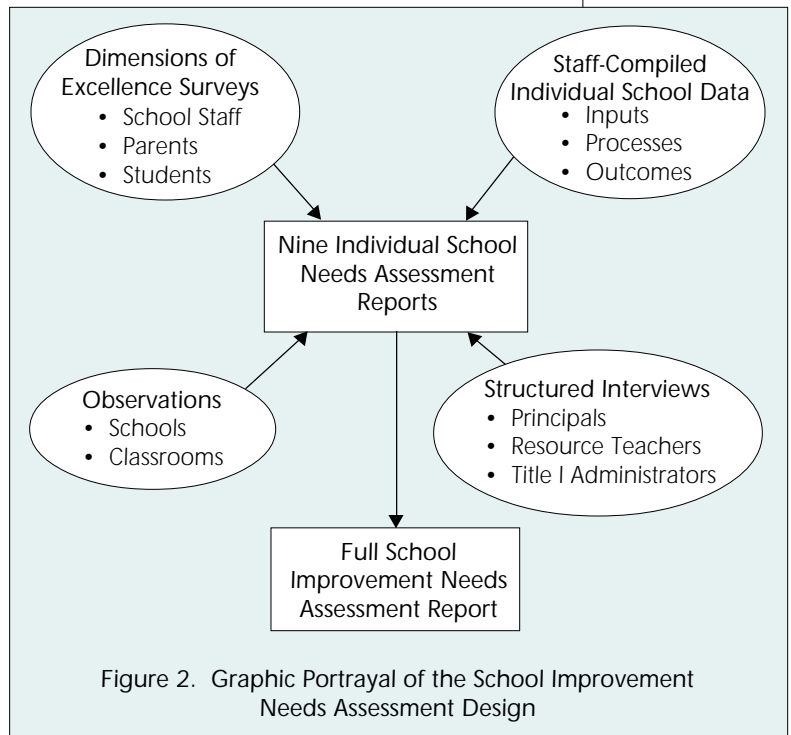


Figure 2. Graphic Portrayal of the School Improvement Needs Assessment Design

"The beauty of this design," says Meehan, "lies in its versatility. It provides a total picture of your target group—one school or a whole district—which can then be used for different purposes: needs assessment or evaluation. And, because the data collection is so comprehensive, it allows for a truly creative and comprehensive list of recommendations. I think that's what today's schools want and need."

For more information, contact Merrill Meehan at AEL; e-mail meehanm@ael.org.

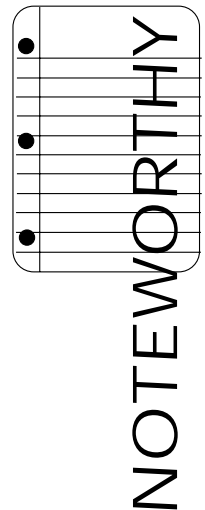
New One-Stop Web Site for Teachers www.ed.gov/free

In early April, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley announced a new Web site featuring hundreds of federal resources for teaching and learning. Titled "Federal Resources for Educational Excellence" (FREE), the site offers a treasure trove of historical documents, mathematical challenges, famous paintings, and other tools for teachers and students.

More than 40 federal agencies contributed resources to FREE, and, as a result, thousands of topics—including the Civil War, the Constitution, photosynthesis, immigration, Jackie Rob-

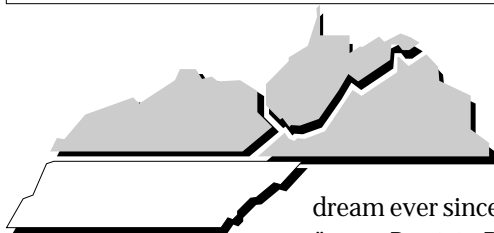
inson, the America Reads Challenge, famous FBI cases, the human genome project, and many more—can be searched.

"This Web site offers a glimpse of how government can use technology to serve citizens in ways barely dreamed of a decade ago," said Riley. "FREE is just a first step. And it is more than just another Web site. It is a place where federal agencies and teachers can begin forming partnerships to develop additional high-quality, standards-based resources for teaching and learning."



FOCUS ON INSTRUCTION

Featuring articles
about teachers in
the four AEL
states—this issue,
Tennessee



Environmental Classroom Connects Students to Nature

by Nancy Balow, AEL Staff Writer

“This has been my dream ever since I began teaching 20 years ago,” says Patricia Rutter, a 5th-grade teacher at Love Chapel Elementary in Tennessee’s rural Unicoi County. Her long wait ended on August 31, 1996, when she was awarded grants to build the outdoor classroom her students “can’t get enough of.”

When Rutter transferred to Love Chapel six years ago, her eyes lit up at the sight of the open space on the school grounds. Much of the acreage is reserved for a new school building, but an area 110' x 115' is dedicated to the new outdoor learning space. Maple trees more than 100 years old already lived on this space, and they provided proof of the need for the new facility.

“One day I showed my science classes a maple seed,” explained Rutter. “They had no earthly idea what it really was, they thought of it as a ‘helicopter’ or ‘whirligig.’ Only seven kids out of 75 knew that it was a seed. Even in our rural community kids are forgetting that you get food by growing it. They’ve lost the understanding of the relationship between people and the land.”

Rutter and her husband Ira, helped by two inmates from the Unicoi County jail, did the

early “heavy work that children can’t do,” digging beds and building fences. During the summer of 1997 everyone pitched in: Parents provided materials such as seeds, gravel, and mulch from their businesses at cost; local organizations and individuals made financial and in-kind contributions; a landscape architect helped with design ideas; and many parents turned out to spend a few hours working in the gardens.

Today the environmental classroom includes a colonial garden, which features plants used by American colonists; a literature garden, which includes nearly all the trees and herbs mentioned in Vera and Bill Cleaver’s *Where the Lilies Bloom*, one of Rutter’s favorite teaching books; a vegetable garden; a fruit and berry garden, which features three colors of apples, three colors of grapes, three colors of blueberries (“Burpee’s has everything!” exclaims Rutter), and the usual colors of peaches, raspberries, and strawberries; a butterfly garden; a water garden; and a special Iris garden, in the shape of the state of Tennessee and filled with three colors of hybrid Iris.

Picnic-type tables in the outdoor area provide working space for lessons, during some of which students have built baths, feeders, and

Raising the flag in the environmental classroom. Visible are parts of colonial, water, butterfly, vegetable, and literature gardens. Spring 1998. Photo by Charles Edwards

houses for the birds, as well as feeders and boxes for squirrels, bats, and butterflies. The children help with the garden according to their skill levels. Kindergarten students grow the gourds that become bird houses, for example, and everyone helps with planting and weeding.

In addition to botany and biology studies, the gardens provide opportunities to study math and fine arts. Many garden beds have geometric shapes—triangles, squares, circles—and the gazebo-like amphitheater is the perfect place to perform plays and recite poetry. “The kids love it,” says Rutter. “They beg to go out, even when it’s cold. And last fall, their eyes—to see potatoes come out of the ground instead of a bag—that was something!”

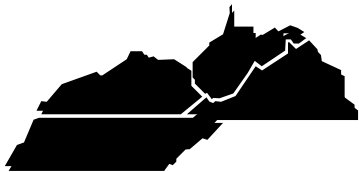
New this year is a composter built by a parent who’s a carpenter. Children save their lunch scraps, the school kitchen saves its scraps, and leaves and grass are raked, all to feed the compost pile, which the children love to stir. Other recent additions include dogwood trees, benches, and trash cans by the playground and basketball court, both of which get heavy use from community members outside of school hours. “We almost never see trash here now,” explains Rutter, “the whole environmental classroom project has instilled a vast amount of pride in

the school. I hope it’s never completed, that we just add on as we can afford it.”

The outdoor classroom project made Rutter the state finalist in the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in 1997. She’s been nominated again this year, and hopes to win the national award and the \$7,500 boost it would provide.

Rutter does what she can to encourage other schools to add outdoor classrooms. She gives workshops when asked; she did one at the National Science Convention when it was in Nashville last December, and will speak at Earth-Teach, a daylong workshop for teachers sponsored by the Appalachian-Northeast Tennessee Resource Conservation and Development Council (one of her original funders). She advises other teachers to do careful planning. “And, before you do anything else, take a grant writing course. After that, don’t give up. Talk to your state conservation department. Get your community interested and it will be easier to get the money you need to get started.”

The Love Chapel environmental classroom was built with a \$5,000 federal grant and a \$12,000 state grant, and donations of money, materials, and labor from the community. For more information, contact Patricia Rutter, Marty Crutcher (e-mail: crutcherm@tn-nash.ten.k12.tn.us), or Renee Lingerfelt (e-mail: lingerfeltr@tn-nash.ten.k12.tn.us) c/o Love Chapel Elementary, 1426 Love Station Road, Erwin TN 37650



Building a Virtual School in Tennessee

Condensed and reprinted by permission from the March 1998 (Vol. 15, No. 7) issue of Context, published by the University of Tennessee

This summer the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, will become the first university in the United States to offer a distance-education program to high schools via the Internet. Engineering professors and students will transmit the Governor's School for Manufacturing live over the Internet to Tennessee high schools and students, who will receive the broadcast on school and home computers.

By way of background, the Tennessee Governor's School for Manufacturing is an enrichment and educational program for state high school students. The only one of its kind in the nation, the school provides education and training on the engineering, technology, and business of manufacturing. Thirty Tennessee high school students will reside at UTK from June 15 to July 11, 1998, to attend lectures and work on projects, see manufacturing demonstrations, and visit several manufacturing companies.

A Virtual School in Your District?

If you're thinking about building a virtual school in your district, take a closer look at this UTK program. Anyone can access the Web site, but you'll need a password to receive the Internet broadcast. Request one through the Web site at www.engr.utk.edu/~gschool. You'll also need RealPlayer software to view the streaming video, and that's free from www.real.com. For more information, contact:

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This year, the expansion to a virtual school will benefit many students in metropolitan and rural areas across the state, and in both technical and academic tracks. An ordinary video camera in the classrooms will be connected to a classroom computer linked to the campus computer network. The live presentations will then "stream" through UTK's video server to the Internet. Remote students will receive this feed in near-TV quality, using dedicated software on an ordinary computer.

The remote students will join this virtual school to participate essentially in real time, by broadcasting back comments and questions over the Internet. The manufacturing school professors and instructors will address the remote students, invite and respond to their comments, and institute activities and dialogues between the resident and remote students.

This year, the virtual school will benefit from an interactive business-of-manufacturing simulation, offered by the College of Business Administration. Teams of students will start virtual businesses and compete with one another over the Internet for market share and profit. The remote students will also collaborate with the resident students on several projects within a central interaction area. Resident students will communicate live with the remote students, who will receive the video images of these study activities.

Joe Iannelli, director of the manufacturing school, conceived and proposed the project to the Tennessee Department of Education, which enthusiastically approved it and provided initial funding. Iannelli believes the virtual school is the "next best experience" to being at UTK. The Internet curriculum may eventually become an interactive "cyberspace" resource for high school students across the United States.

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program: Get Ready to Apply

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program, new in 1998, provides \$150 million for local schools to implement comprehensive school reform programs based on reliable research and effective practices, and which include an emphasis on basic academics and parental involvement. Schools in AEL's service area that are thinking about competing for pieces of this pie need to begin preparing soon. Each state will establish its own schedule for implementing this program, as well as its own competitive process.

AEL's Web site already includes information about comprehensive school reform, and state schedules will be posted as they become available. You can also use the site to download a copy of a catalog that contains information about many reform models, including the 17 named by Congress as examples of comprehensive reform. If you don't have Internet capabilities, you can get a copy of the catalog by calling AEL at 800/624-9120 and asking for the comprehensive school reform coordinator.

Here's a brief description of the program.

Funds:

Allocations to states in AEL's Region are presented below, along with the potential number of schools (at \$50,000 each) the allocation can support. Funds will flow from two

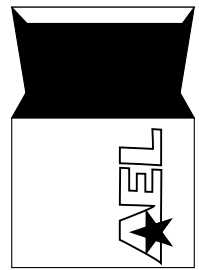
sources: ESEA Title I and Fund for the Improvement of Education.

Criteria:

School-based programs must integrate all nine criteria of a comprehensive school reform program that are specified in the law, and must draw on high-quality assistance from outside partners experienced in schoolwide reform. The program is intended to stimulate change covering virtually all aspects of school operations, rather than a piecemeal, fragmented approach to reform. The specified criteria address (1) effective research-based methods and strategies, (2) comprehensive design with aligned components, (3) professional development, (4) measurable goals and benchmarks, (5) support within the school, (6) parental and community involvement, (7) external technical support and assistance, (8) evaluation strategies, and (9) coordination of resources.

Assistance:

AEL will work with each state in its Region to develop a plan for providing technical assistance to schools eligible to apply; watch our Web site for more information as it becomes available. You'll find other information at the U.S. Department of Education Web site at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/compreform>. You may e-mail questions to compreform@ed.gov or to AEL at aelinfo@ael.org.



INSIDE

Comprehensive School Reform Allocations to AEL States				
State	ESEA Title I		Fund for the Improvement of Education	
	Funding level to state (in dollars)	Potential number of schools	Funding level to state (in dollars)	Potential number of schools
Kentucky	2,003,840	38	343,687	7
Tennessee	2,068,987	39	463,784	9
Virginia	1,832,367	35	569,772	11
West Virginia	1,144,363	22	152,551	3

New Publications From AEL

A Guide to Gender Fair Education in Science and Mathematics

We've seen plenty of research that shows how our cultural stereotypes about suitable occupations for girls have kept them out of math and science careers, and now we're finding ways to erase these stereotypes. This resource guide for math and science teachers—by Carol J. Burger and Mary L. Sandy, Virginia Space Grant Consortium—is packed with thought-provoking information and activities, all designed to increase awareness of gender equity issues in the classroom. Teachers may begin by evaluating themselves and their school environment, using assessment exercises from the booklet, a publication of the Eisenhower Re-

gional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education at AEL. Intervention and teaching strategies are described and actual classroom activities are suggested.

The activities highlighted are examples of programs supported by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation, as well as states, counties, and cities. The guide proposes ways to include parents and community organizations in boosting girls' performance and self-image, and provides a bibliography of publications, Internet resources, and organizations that can offer information and assistance.

Softbound, 34 pages, \$15 (see the Order Form included with this issue).

Graphing Calculators in Mathematics Grades 7 — 12: A Resource Guide for the Classroom and for Preservice/Inservice Training

“Technology has revolutionized the way mathematics and science are taught, and few innovations . . . have had as much impact as the graphing calculator. Perhaps the only instruments more important in developing sound mathematical foundations are our student's minds. . . . Our challenge as teachers is to harness and exploit the graphing calculator as a tool to enhance learning.” (Ron Stewart, in the opening paragraph of the preface.)

During the summer of 1997, 14 mathematics teachers were brought together for a week to produce a series of lessons covering a wide variety of mathematical concepts and topics. The result: a guide for teachers with no experience with graphing calculators, as well as those who have used the instruments since their inception. The lessons emphasize hands-on, problem-solving approaches, with connections to science and the real world.

The project is a collaborative effort of the Center of Excellence for Science and Mathematics Education at The University of Ten-

nessee at Martin and the Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education at AEL.

Here's a peek at some of the lesson topics:

- Fun with Function Families—transformation of graphs when parameters of equations are changed
- Starting with Stats—collecting, organizing, and analyzing real-world data
- Constructing Trigonometric Concepts
- Traveling through the Solar System—an exploration of mass vs. weight
- A sick astronaut—measures of central tendency and line of best fit
- Topographic maps and whitewater rivers—rates of change

The guide—developed by the Center and published by the Consortium—also includes activity packets covering basic calculator concepts and calculator-based lab activities. Notebook binder, 250 pages, \$39 (available early summer; see the Order Form included with this issue).

Family Connections Parent Notebook

The popular Family Connections learning guides—previously available only to educational programs—are now offered in a notebook for par-

ents. The colorful, user-friendly guides are available in three volumes: *Family Connections 1*, for families of preschool children; *Relaciones Familiares 1*, the Spanish-language version; and *Family Connections 2*, for parents with kindergarten children. Each notebook contains a set of 30 four-page guides, plus tips on using them. Each guide includes one or more read-aloud selections and fun activities for parents and children. \$12.95 each (\$9.95 without 3-ring binder); see the Order Form included with this issue.

Improving Classroom Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Developers

Improving Classroom Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Developers (Toolkit98) is about assessing student achievement. It's about making students partners in the educational enterprise by clearly defining expectations for performance. It's about developing assessments that demand intellectual quality, while honoring student diversity. And, it's about performance-based instruction and the central role of ongoing student assessment to guide and invigorate practice.

Toolkit98 contains 35 activities organized in four sequentially developed modules with instructions for trainers, overhead masters, readings, 48 sample assessments, student work samples, and an assessment evaluation form for use in training. A hands-on document, it's filled with activities designed for workshop presentation.

The primary users of *Toolkit98* will be those responsible for coordinating and facilitating professional development in assessment. The Toolkit is a product of the network of Regional Educational Laboratories and is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

To order: Contact Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 SW Main Street, Suite 500, Portland OR 97204. Phone 503/275-9519. Notebook binder, approximately 1200 pages plus a CD-ROM with overheads, \$66.50 (includes UPS).

Summer Professional Development Events

Student Assessment

- **Regional Assessment Institute (*Toolkit98* Training)**
July 13-15; Atlanta, GA

Those interested in becoming trained as a trainer or adding *Toolkit98* (see story at left) assessment ideas to their classrooms should consider attending the Institute. It begins at 1:00 p.m. Monday, includes a full day Tuesday, and ends at 1:00 p.m. Wednesday. The registration fee (\$280) includes a copy of the Toolkit, Tuesday lunch, and all break refreshments. Cosponsored by AEL and the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE), the training welcomes classroom teachers and those responsible for teacher professional development. Presenters are Toolkit developers, all experienced assessment implementors and trainers. Register by June 1; the number of participants will be limited to 100. For more information or to obtain the Institute brochure and registration form, contact Jane Hange (hangej@ael.org).

AEL consultants are trained to use the *Toolkit98* materials and can assist schools and districts in expanding their skills and in designing standards-based authentic assessments. If you are interested in sponsoring a workshop or talking with a consultant, call Jane Hange at 800/624-9120.

Continuous School Improvement

- **Energizing for School Improvement**
June 10, Gatlinburg, TN

This one-day, preconference workshop, presented in conjunction with the Tennessee Association for School Supervision and Administration, takes place the day before the Association's conference begins. Designed to help attendees explore values and beliefs about leadership for school improvement, the workshop will engage school leaders in dialogue, using a model of sharing leadership for learning. School principals, assistant principals, and other school administrators are invited, with district- and school-level teams preferred. Cost: \$50/person; enrollment limited. Con-

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tact Jim Ward, Executive Director, TASSA, PO Box 24269, Nashville, TN 37202-4269; Fax: 615/963-7203.

- **Inquiry Into Improvement: Focus on Student Work**

August 10-11, Gatlinburg, TN

Symposium participants will explore student work through three processes—standards, assessment, and instruction—as a way to rethink teaching and learning. Schools can send teams that include parents, students, teachers, and administrators. For more information, contact Shirley Keene at AEL (keenes@ael.org).

Questioning Skills

- **QUILT Training-for-Trainers**

June 15-20, Lexington, KY

You can help your students become better thinkers with a staff development program called QUILT—Questioning and Understand-

ing to Improve Learning and Thinking. This is a nationally validated program, certified by the U.S. Department of Education's Program Effectiveness Panel as a "program that works." For more information, contact Sandra Orletsky (orletsk@ael.org) or Beth Sattes (sattesb@ael.org).

Curriculum Integration

- **Sixth Annual Institute on Curriculum Integration**

June 22-26, 1998, Lexington, KY

July 13-17, 1998, Nashville, TN

The Institute provides school and district teams and curriculum leaders with the tools and resources for planning integrated courses, units, and lessons. It offers a perfect setting for school and district planning in these areas: interdisciplinary curriculum, block scheduling, school-to-work activities, and multiple assessment strategies. For more information, contact Rebecca Burns at AEL (burnsr@ael.org).



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