DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 352 810 FL 020 786

TITLE	Bilingual Vocational Education: A Model Project of Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc., Chesterfield County Public Schools, and Henrico County Public Schools. Dropout Prevention and Retrieval through Vocational Education.
INSTITUTION	Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc., VA.; Education Development Center, Inc., Newton, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	[92]
NOTE	67p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Bilingual Education Programs; Bilingual Teacher Aides; *Dropout Prevention; *English (Second Language); High Schools; High School Students; *Limited English Speaking; Program Effectiveness; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Chesterfield County Public Schools VA; *Henrico County Public Schools VA

ABSTRACT

A 2-year bilingual vocational education program in the Richmond (Virginia) area for language-minority secondary school students is profiled. The students are generally limited-English-speaking refugees, and the program is designed to prepare them for educational mainstreaming or transition to jobs. Incoming students (61 in 1990-91) are assessed for English and math skills and for vocational interests and abilities. They attend separate English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL), job readiness, and independent living classes for half the day and mainstream vocational classes for the remainder of the day. Bilingual teacher aides are an integral program element, used for translation, counseling, and mediation. The program has reduced substantially the dropout rate among the target population. The profile offered here describes the community in which the program is situated, the particular needs that shaped the approach, key management and design elements of the dropout prevention program, and plans for the future. Effective features of the program are discussed. The objective of the report is to provide other school systems, organizations, and agencies with information for adapting this or developing a similar approach. Sample forms (initial interview, student information sheet, and exit interview) and a brief bibliography are appended. (MSE)

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Bilingual Vocational Education

A Model Project of
Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc.,
Chesterfield County Public Schools, and
Henrico County Public Schools

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Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc.

Education Development Center, Inc.
Newton, Massachusetts

Contents

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared under contract to Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc., by staff members of Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), of Newton, Massachusetts. This booklet and the program described herein are funded by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education of the U.S. Department of Education.

The report was written by Sundra Flansburg, associate director of the Women's Educational Equity Act Publishing Center at EDC, and is based on a site visit conducted May 22–23, 1991, by Flansburg and Tomás Kalmar, senior development associate in EDC's Center for Equity and Cultural Diversity.

We would like to thank Vivian Guilfoy, director of the Center for Equity and Cultural Diversity, for her invaluable input in framing the discussion for this project, providing overall direction, reviewing drafts of the booklet, and offering numerous insights and suggestions for improving it.

We thank Katherine Hanson, associate director of the Center for Equity and Cultural Diversity, and Maria-Paz Avery, project director at EDC, for their ideas and reviews of the drafts. We would also like to thank Anne McAuliffe for editorial and printing assistance, Sandy Belk for the design and format of the text, Annie Grear for design of the cover, and Michele Caterina for production assistance. Stu Cohen, associate director of the Center for Health at EDC, deserves thanks for some of the presentation of this booklet—which is based on a format that he developed in 1990—and for sharing with us some journalistic techniques and strategies.

Administrators and teachers at the Chesterfield Technical Center and the Hermitage Technical Center were more than generous with their time, thoughts, and experiences with the program. We would especially like to thank C. Victor Sorrell, assistant principal of Hermitage, and Jeffrey L. Baughman, principal, and Jane C. Chandler, assistant principal, of Chesterfield, for their time and

tours. Jane Baskerville, instructional specialist–foreign language and ESL, and Jane Cox, educational specialist–foreign language and ESL, shared their memories of the project's development. We would also like to acknowledge the project staff with whom we met—Mary Jo Bateman, Jan McCarthy, Dr. Oanh Le, Hong Nguyen, Sophal Ork, Tuyet Pham, Hilda Tucker, and Margaret Woods. ESL teacher Norma Rogers provided invaluable information on how the project developed and how it fits into the school systems, and Maxine Derrer, ESL teacher at Hermitage, offered an important perspective.

Finally, we want to thank the many students who offered their frank impressions of the program and shared a part of their lives with us. We hope that this booklet will give other students like them opportunities to show that, given the chance and the tools, they, too, can contribute a great deal to their schools and communities.

Program Bilingual Vocational Education for Limited English Proficient Students

Mission To provide refugee speakers of minority languages, who are from 16 to 21 years of age, a marketable trade, English language skills, and the confidence and skills to function successfully in the community. The program is designed to keep the students in school and help them find success in their personal and work lives.

Description Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc., in collaboration with Chesterfield and Henrico County Public Schools, offers at-risk refugee students English as a second language, independent living, and job readiness instruction. Students are mainstreamed into regular vocational education classes with the help of bilingual teacher aides, who translate, tutor, and counsel students.

Staff Jan McCarthy, project officer
Mary Jo Bateman, project director
Sophal Ork, bilingual aide–Khmer
Hilda Tucker, bilingual aide–Spanish
Dr. Oanh Le, bilingual aide–Vietnamese
Hong Nguyen, bilingual aide–Vietnamese
Tuyet Pham, bilingual aide–Vietnamese
Deborah Pauley, job readiness and independent living instructor, Henrico County
Margaret Woods, job readiness and independent living instructor, Chesterfield County
Norma Rogers, ESL teacher, Chesterfield County
Maxine Derrer, ESL teacher, Henrico County

Budget $109,213 during school year 1990–91 (plus in-kind contributions of $55,690). Funded from June 1989 through June 1992 by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education.

Clients Approximately 61 students in school year 1990–91

Cost Approximately $2,703 per student

Contact Mary Jo Bateman
Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc.
1010 N. Thompson Street
Richmond, VA 23230-4911
(804) 354-0720

Introduction

As we walk into the Meadowbrook High School classroom at 8:00 A.M., the lesson is already in full swing. There are about ten students at the front of the room, all with maps spread out on their desks. "How do you find Covington on the map?" asks Norma Rogers, the English as a second language (ESL) teacher. There are murmurs around the room. Finally, one of the students points to the index. "Use this," he says. "Right," Norma responds. The lesson carries on as Rogers and the students discuss parts of the map and the information they provide.

At the end of the map-reading session Rogers walks over to us and explains that this lesson was an impromptu one. "Hai* walked in today and said 'I'm so mad at you!' I asked why, and he said 'Because I don't know how to read a map.' Hai has a job in the afternoons doing diesel truck repairs and yesterday they sent him to Covington to do a repair on a truck that had broken down. He ended up driving 70 miles out of his way because he didn't know how to identify a good side road!"

This class is called content ESL, and is designed to teach English by looking at issues that are directly applicable to students' study and work. They have had sessions on social studies and math and the English that is needed to do that work in the classroom. The ESL classes switch between this class, general ESL that focuses on basic vocabulary and sentence formation, and vocational ESL, English that the teachers and students have identified as important for the vocational education classes the students attend.

As Rogers explains about the class, several students are working at their desks on homework. Several others are grouped around a computer, including two Vietnamese young men who have just enrolled. Both speak and understand very little English. One of the other Vietnamese students, a two-year veteran of the

*This student's name has been changed to protect his privacy.

program, is explaining in Vietnamese how to use a program that teaches the English names of fruits and vegetables. There is laughter as several students get into a discussion about how realistic the picture of a head of lettuce really is.

* * *

Because vocational education is always trying to respond to the needs of the job market . . . it is clear that now, more than ever, programs must effectively reach and serve students who speak minority languages.

In the last decade there has been increasing interest in how the U.S. educational system works or does not work for students with limited English skills. This is in part due to the fact that linguistic minority students make up a growing number of all students in the educational system. Interest is also increasing because their skills and talents will be crucial in the development of our communities, and in the U.S. economy. The Hudson Institute's *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the Twenty-First Century*, as well as a number of other studies, documents the change in demographics taking place in the United States. *Workforce 2000* has estimated that immigrants will make up 22 percent of those entering the work force during the 1990s; this is compared to 7 percent in 1985.

In addition, schools are concerned with the high dropout rate among linguistic minority students who do not speak fluent English: it averages 40 percent across the United States, compared to 11 percent overall (Steinberg et al., 1984, cited in Lopez-Valadez, 1989). Vocational education programs are one way to make education more relevant to students' lives, and, thus, a valid approach to the dropout issue. A number of studies back up the effectiveness of this method (Lopez-Valadez, 1989; see Azcoitia and Viso, 1987; Dronka, 1988; Holmes and Collins, 1988; and Weber and Mertens, 1987). Because vocational education is always trying to respond to the needs of the job market—in order to ensure that students are well prepared—it is clear that now, more than ever, programs must effectively reach and serve students who speak minority languages.

Bilingual vocational education programs are one option for helping the growing number of linguistic minority students gain access to vocational education. Programs around the country that fit this description run the gamut from informal peer tutoring and volunteer student translators to fully bilingual vocational instructors who conduct classes in two or more languages. Most

programs now rely solely on student tutoring and translating, a practice with obvious limitations. One-third of the schools use bilingual teacher aides to translate, tutor, counsel, and mediate between students who speak minority languages and vocational teachers who do not (Lopez-Valadez, 1989).

The Bilingual Vocational Education (BVE) Program described in this booklet is one such program. The Richmond, Virginia, area faces many of the same challenges just described in recruiting and retaining linguistic minority students in schools. The school systems surrounding Richmond are working to provide access to a particular group of these students—those who come into the United States as refugees. During the last decade, this area experienced an increase in the numbers of Southeast Asian and, recently, Salvadoran refugees. The Richmond Area Refugee Advisory Council began looking at how the area school systems were responding to the needs of refugee youth and determined that they were not reaching these students. For instance, five years ago, one of the area school systems was experiencing a 35 percent dropout rate among school-aged refugee youth. Members of the refugee advisory council decided to design a program that addresses the special needs of linguistic minority refugee youth.

Members of the refugee advisory council decided to design a program that addresses the special needs of linguistic minority refugee youth.

The program designed by this collaborative works in two counties that surround the city of Richmond—Chesterfield and Henrico—and is coordinated by Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc. Because the size of this student population is relatively small when compared to the larger student body—refugee youth make up about 2 percent of the students—developers felt that the best use of resources would be to provide the staff and support necessary to mainstream these students into the already-established vocational education program.

Students who take part in this program are generally recommended by guidance counselors at the time of their enrollment in school. The incoming students are assessed on their English level, math level, and vocational interests and abilities. Students attend separate ESL, job readiness, and independent living classes for half of the day, and mainstream into vocational classes for the other half of the day.

The program has so far been very successful in reaching refugee students: the school system that four years ago had 35 percent of these students dropping out is now losing only 3 percent.

An integral part of the program is the use of bilingual teacher aides. The program relies heavily on these aides to translate lectures and class materials, to counsel the students, and to mediate between the students, their families, and the schools. Two years in length, the program is designed to be transitional, either by providing students with enough vocational and basic English skills for employment, or by encouraging students to move into mainstream academic classes. The program has so far been very successful in reaching refugee students: the school system that four years ago had 35 percent of these students dropping out is now losing only 3 percent.

This booklet will describe the community in which the program is situated, the particular needs that shaped the approach, the key elements of the dropout prevention program—its clients, development, components, and management—and its future plans. We will close by identifying some of the reasons that this program is working. Our goal is to provide other school systems, organizations, and agencies with enough information to either adapt this program to their schools' needs, or learn from and build on the successful elements of this project when creating a new approach. If you are developing your own program, we encourage you to contact Catholic Charities to follow up on what we present here.

Program Environment

Richmond Area

The Richmond, Virginia, area sits on one of the major coastal highways and is approximately 100 miles from Washington, D.C. Richmond is the capital of Virginia and home to about a quarter of a million people. The mixture of old and new in this city gives it a feeling of historical richness with a modern edge. Walking down the streets, one can see a public office building occupying a nineteenth-century warehouse, or an upscale restaurant occupying a former tobacco factory.

The major industries in the Richmond area are tobacco, chemical, publishing, food, machine, textiles, and lumber. Unemployment was fairly low in the area, holding at about 3 percent, until the the last few years, when it climbed to 5 percent.

Richmond City, as the residents call it, experienced the "white flight" that a number of urban centers saw in the sixties. The population is now 55 percent African American in the city, with outlying counties predominantly white. Henrico and Chesterfield Counties form a circle of smaller towns that surround the city of Richmond. Made up mostly of white-collar, middle-class whites, the towns in these counties have been built up in the last 30 years.

This area is also home to approximately 6,000 Southeast Asian refugees and a small number of families who have fled El Salvador in Central America. It is in these two counties that the majority of the Southeast Asian and Hispanic refugees in the community have settled. Though their numbers are growing, they still make up a small percentage within the white population, their communities forming small enclaves.

Although, by definition, these refugee families and individuals share a common experience of flight from danger or persecution, the ethnic groups that comprise this population have experienced widely varying living

and educational situations both in their native countries and in the United States.

The Richmond area provides a support structure of sponsors, bilingual assistance, counseling, and social services to assist incoming refugees.

The Southeast Asian families and individuals come to the area mainly through refugee resettlement programs. The state of Virginia is ninth in the country in the number of refugees who settle there. The Richmond area provides a support structure of sponsors, bilingual assistance, counseling, and social services to assist incoming refugees. Henrico and Chesterfield Counties were selected as resettlement sites because they both have strong church support—from Jewish Family Services and Church World Services, in addition to Catholic Charities—and programs have been able to recruit foster parents and sponsors and find housing in these communities. The job market, too, is still good in comparison to other areas of the country.

Southeast Asian refugees settling in the Richmond area are primarily from Cambodia and Vietnam. The Cambodian families are mainly from rural, peasant backgrounds, where working to help the family took priority over school attendance. They experienced the rule of the Khmer Rouge beginning in 1975, during which 35 percent of the population—almost all the professional and academic community—was killed. During this time, many families were separated and most lived in refugee camps in other countries for long periods of time. A great many of the young people had little chance for schooling, having been most concerned with surviving this unstable and often dangerous life.

The Vietnamese families and individuals in the Richmond area come from diverse backgrounds. Some of the families are from a rural, lower-income background, where children were often needed to help support the family. Many did not attend school, or attended only a limited amount.

Some families are from the middle- or upper-income levels in Vietnam and fled after the Vietnam War, when individuals who were seen as collaborators—those who had connections with the Americans or the former government—were persecuted by the new government. Though sometimes young women and men from these families have not had much opportunity for formal schooling, their families, often highly educated, place a great emphasis on education.

Dr. Oanh Le, a Vietnamese bilingual aide for the Bilingual Vocational Education (BVE) Program, explains that Vietnam has a testing system, similar to other countries, whereby students are given national examinations in the fifth grade to determine if they will continue in school. Le states that there are a number of students in the BVE Program who have only a fifth-grade education from Vietnam. For those who continue in the school system, however, academics are rigorous and, in many cases, at a higher level than in U.S. schools. There are some students in the BVE Program, for example, who have entered with math skills far above their U.S. counterparts.

"I grew up with chickens and I looked like a duck. And I came to the United States to be with the ducks and I sound like a chicken."

In 1988, as part of the national refugee resettlement effort, Richmond was selected as a cluster site for incoming Amerasians, children of Vietnamese mothers and North American fathers. These minors, usually male, sometimes arrive alone, sometimes with family members, but all have experienced the trauma of being ostracized by Vietnamese society for being a reminder of the U.S. presence in their country.

Many of these youth have grown up in the streets and have never been inside a school. Most came to the United States hoping to "fit in" more than they did in Vietnam, but have encountered other problems here. One Amerasian young woman described her experience thus: "I grew up with chickens and I looked like a duck. And I came to the United States to be with the ducks and I sound like a chicken."

The rise in Hispanic immigration to the Richmond area is recent and mirrors a similar increase in other parts of the country. Although this population is still very small, more Hispanic families are settling in the area as a core group of family and friends are established. Most of the Hispanic population that is considered refugee is made up of people from El Salvador. The Salvadorans who have begun settling in Richmond have fled a political situation in which army and guerillas are fighting around them. Although there are some exceptions, children have often had little education and have seen family and friends killed by those in authority.

The growing diversity that the Richmond area is experiencing is bringing an enriching influx of cultures

and languages. It is also challenging the school systems to think of new ways to reach and serve students who bring different kinds of experiences and skills. The BVE Program is one of these new approaches.

Program Description

Established in 1987, Catholic Charities' Bilingual Vocational Education (BVE) Program is designed to work with refugee students who enter school with limited English skills and who are considered at risk. Prior to the program, over a third of these students dropped out of school, often with few or no skills that would help them succeed in the job market. "The school system was just not reaching these young people," explains Mary Jo Bateman, BVE project director. "Without any help, they were experiencing failure, after failure, after failure."

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The BVE Program was developed with the twofold purpose of trying to keep this at-risk group in school, or in the event that they did need to leave early, equipping them with ESL and job skills so that they would have more opportunities for good employment. The program is designed to be transitional—to move students toward employment or toward mainstream academic classes. By providing an atmosphere where students can succeed, program staff work to build both students' skills and their confidence.

"Nobody ever wanted the Bilingual Vocational Education Program to be a terminal program," states Jane Baskerville, ESL–foreign language coordinator for Chesterfield County, and one of the developers of the program. "We always wanted the options there for the students if they could manage to get credits and all. We wanted it to be open-ended enough for them to get a regular diploma and go on to college."

And the program has had some real success stories. One Cambodian student just placed third in a statewide brick masonry contest. Another graduated in auto mechanics and is now working for an area auto business that is paying for advanced training in Washington, D.C. One Vietnamese young man just won two scholarships, one of which will cover two years of expenses—tuition,

room and board, books, transportation, and a stipend—to do vocational study at the university of his choice. He spent part of his last year taking a number of academic classes that enabled him to graduate with a high school diploma. He plans to study computer programming or engineering at a Norfolk, Virginia, area university.

Student Pool

If a "typical" student in the program can be described, that student would be a male in his late teens who is semi- or nonliterate in his native language, and who bears social/emotional scars from a highly traumatic childhood.

Bateman recounts a recent incident at Chesterfield Technical Center: "There's a firing range across the woods and one day the horticulture class was outside working. You could hear the practice shots from the range and one of the Cambodian girls looked up at her teacher, and she smiled. She said, 'Sounds just like home' and went back to her work. Another day, when they were doing something with those big pruning shears, that sweet girl demonstrated to her teacher how she had seen somebody killed with one of those."

"You could hear the practice shots from the range and one of the Cambodian girls looked up at her teacher, and she smiled. She said, 'Sounds just like home' and went back to her work."

The BVE Program has served approximately 97 students over its lifetime. During the 1990–91 school year, the program enrolled 19 girls and 42 boys. Of these students, 20 were Vietnamese, 19 were Cambodian, 13 were Amerasian, and 9 were Salvadoran. All of the students who speak Spanish are in the program in Chesterfield County, while most of the Amerasian students are in Henrico County.

The refugee youth that the BVE Program serves are considered at risk for several reasons.

The students have limited or no English skills when they enter the school systems, and would not be able to function in classes without bilingual assistance. Both school systems have a "regular" ESL program in place, designed to provide English instruction for several years, until students can be mainstreamed into regular academic and vocational classes. It is understood, however, that this process takes at least a few years while students slowly replace ESL classes in their schedules with academic and vocational classes. This leads us to the next characteristic.

Students generally enter into the U.S. school system at age 16 or above, making the acquisition of the required high school

credits by age 21 doubtful. Most of these students would require two or more years of traditional ESL before they could enter a vocational class without bilingual assistance. A student 16 years or older often does not have the time to take this path and complete necessary credits for graduation.

The BVE Program is finding that, increasingly, students are arriving who are not literate—not able to read and write—in their first language.

Most of the students have had little or no formal education in their native countries. The BVE Program is finding that, increasingly, students are arriving who are not literate—not able to read and write—in their first language. There are some spectacular exceptions to this generalization, such as the Salvadoran girl who was studying law before coming to this country. In general, however, illiteracy presents problems to the traditional ESL programs and means that learning to read and write enough English to function without bilingual assistance is a much longer process. It also means that the areas that schools are addressing with "traditional" students—such as why education is important, sitting in a classroom for several hours, and working on and completing a school project—are greatly intensified for this group.

Finally, students need to gain quick entrance into the job market, either to support themselves or their families. Many students come from large families with few wage earners, where there is constant worry about meeting basic needs. There is often pressure for the students to quit school and contribute to the family income. Also, teenagers who have entered the country alone often feel that they want to "get on" with their life, to get a job that will allow them the independence that they relied on when leaving their native country. Sometimes the skills taught in traditional classrooms are not applicable to their situations.

In summary, because these students need English and job skills, often in a short period of time, they would not be well served by the traditional ESL programs already in place. Before the program was instituted, the school systems were experiencing a dropout rate of up to 35 percent among these refugee students. Some would come for several weeks and never appear again. Now that rate is down below 5 percent among the program participants.

The Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984 requires technical centers to recruit linguistic minority

students, as well as provide them with special services to ensure full participation in classes. However, prior to this program, the Hermitage and Chesterfield County vocational schools were uncomfortable accepting students with limited English skills. Because schools did not offer the assistance of bilingual aides before the program, they were concerned that, among other things, the students had difficulty understanding the safety requirements and the technical vocabulary used in classes.

With the BVE Program in place, and based on their recent experiences with students in the program, teachers and administrators are changing their viewpoints. "Teachers didn't want them, and now they're coming up to me and saying, 'Got any kids for me? Got any kids for me next year?' Like next year, we're going to have one going into welding. That teacher immediately started collecting vocabulary lists," reflects Meadowbrook ESL teacher Norma Rogers.

School Facilities

Chesterfield Technical Center serves eight high schools from Chesterfield County. Out of a pool of 40,000 eleventh- and twelfth-grade students in the county, Chesterfield enrolls approximately 850 students. The technical center offers 23 different two-year programs, including electronics, practical nursing, television production, and plumbing and pipe fitting. They have one of the most comprehensive vocational assessment centers in the state.

Hermitage Technical Center offers its services to seven high schools in Henrico County, including Hermitage High School, to which it is connected physically. Hermitage has 19 technical programs, including emergency medical technician, drafting/CAD, electricity, and legal office procedures. Approximately 500 students are enrolled at the technical center, drawing from a pool of about 32,000 eleventh- and twelfth-grade students.

Although participation in the BVE Program during the 1990–91 school year was balanced almost evenly between Henrico and Chesterfield Counties, Hermitage (in Henrico County) does serve a much higher percentage of ESL students that aren't enrolled in the BVE Program. Chesterfield County has approximately 150 ESL students, while Henrico County—which has one other technical center besides Hermitage—has about 500.

School System Intake and Assessment

The vocational centers draw their students, including BVE participants, from feeder, or "home," schools, where students are enrolled and from where they are bussed.

By the time students enter the BVE Program, they have already been through an assessment by the school system. When new refugee or linguistic minority students enroll in one of the home schools, they are assessed for their English and math skills, as well as to determine if they can get credit for previous classes taken in their native countries (see figure 1, "Typical Student Path Through BVE Program").

In Henrico County, students are evaluated by the ESL teacher in their home school. Chesterfield County has an ESL Assessment Center in one of the elementary schools, which is run by a former ESL teacher. When a new linguistic minority student enrolls in the Chesterfield County Public Schools, the assessment center spends about half a day with the student to determine skill levels.

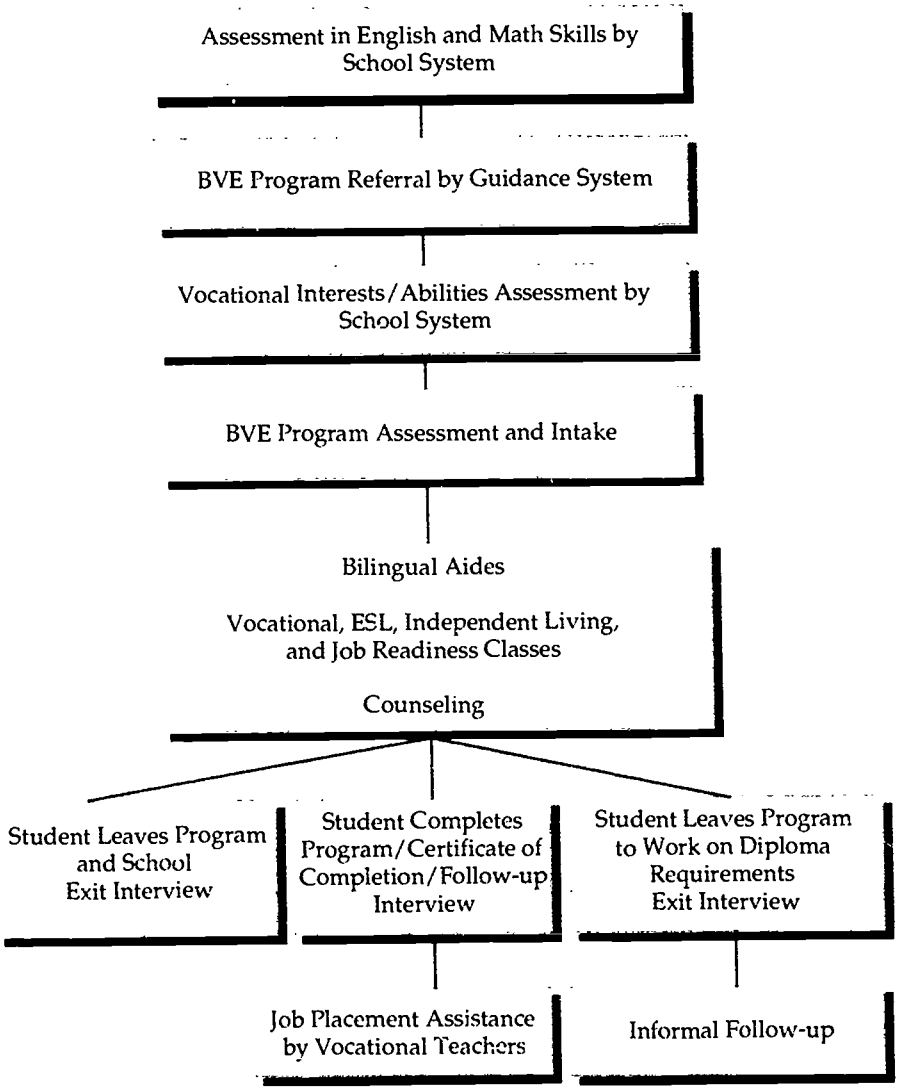
In both counties, the person who performed the assessment and the home school guidance counselor recommend whether the student should go into mainstream classes, into the regular ESL program, or into the BVE Program. The final decision is made by the guidance counselor, the student, and the student's parents or foster parents.

Recruiting Students

Most students who enter into the BVE Program are referred by school guidance counselors. "If they get a student who's 16 or older and not literate in their native language, or who's old enough that they just don't have time to learn English and get the credits to graduate, the counselors will enroll them through their home school," Director Bateman explains. Although participation in the program is strongly encouraged for refugee youth with limited English skills, involvement is voluntary. Students, with their families, can decide not to be a part of the program, although few have done this.

Some of the program participants are students who took part in the regular ESL program, but did not find much success in it. In these instances, the guidance counselor will suggest that they transfer into the BVE Program in the hope that it will better meet the students' needs.

Figure 1. Typical Student Path Through BVE Program



Still other students ask to enter the program after hearing about it through word of mouth. Many of the Spanish-speaking students have come to the program this way. "You know, one tells the other, 'Hey, you know, you can go to the tech center and learn a job, learn English, and they've got somebody there who speaks Spanish.' And all these other kids come," relates Bateman.

During the first few years of the program, program staff did a lot of outreach to refugee communities and churches, talking to families and young people about the program. The program's bilingual aides were an integral part of this effort. "But we're at capacity right now," says Bateman. "If we had more money, the kids are out there." The program does, however, still advertise heavily within the schools, keeping the enrollment to its limit. Program staff have fliers about the program in Khmer, Vietnamese, Spanish, and English, and these are distributed to all guidance offices and ESL teachers in each county.

BVE Program Intake and Assessment

Once students are enrolled in the BVE Program, the bilingual aides work with the students to determine the level of education they achieved in their native countries, and level of literacy in their first language. They also complete an initial interview that documents students' attitudes and experiences with school and any special counseling needs or other considerations that would be useful to the program staff. These considerations might include whether students plan to graduate from high school, whether they think that graduating would help them obtain a better job, their previous school experience in the United States (if any), whether they are currently holding an outside job, and whether they are living with their families or not (see samples in Appendix).

At approximately the same time as the program intake, the students go through an additional assessment by the school system to determine their interest and ability in various vocational programs. Chesterfield and Henrico use different methods for determining these skills and interests.

Chesterfield has an elaborate, hands-on vocational testing center that allows students to explore different

types of jobs and test their abilities in some of their areas of interest. New students first see a video (*The Pictorial Inventory of Careers*) that gives an overview of a number of job areas. The video describes what each job entails and the interests and skills needed for each. As the video is playing, students check off, on a form, if they are interested in exploring each specific field, if they might be interested in that field, or if they are not interested. This is done with the help of a bilingual aide.

Program staff feel that the hands-on approach to testing students' interests . . . is extremely effective with students who have limited English skills. . . . "I had one student two weeks ago literally standing on that engine over there tearing it down, he was so excited to get his hands on it."

Once students have expressed their interests, the vocational evaluator, Frank Maurer, starts them at a series of work "samples." These samples have been collected from many sources—Singer, Choice, Valpar, JVS, and some that have been developed at Chesterfield. Each sample is a carrel where students listen to a tape that tells more about jobs in that area. If they are still interested in exploring, they try out some hands-on tasks that are basic to that job area. For instance, if they are at the plumbing sample, they follow step-by-step instructions that help them to hook up plumbing between a wall pipe and a sink. If they are at the electricity sample, they wire a circuit from an electrical source to a light bulb. "This is all very task oriented," states Maurer. "You don't need any extra or previous knowledge on any of the samples."

Program staff feel that the hands-on approach to testing students' interests at Chesterfield is extremely effective with students who have limited English skills. Maurer says that he is always careful to make sure that the students understand the safety issues at each station. "Some of them can understand enough English that they have no problems going right through," he states. But even those students who need to work closely with the bilingual aide often jump right in once they understand the task. Maurer recounts, "I had one student two weeks ago literally standing on that engine over there tearing it down, he was so excited to get his hands on it."

This vocational assessment usually takes from two to four days. Once students have completed the exploration, their preferences are combined with the evaluator's observations and a recommendation is made about which vocational program is most suitable. "In most cases, if the kid's got an aptitude, they'll put him in that class even if it's full," says Bateman.

In Henrico County, the assistant principal talks informally with the students, with the assistance of the bilingual aides, to determine their interests. He takes each student on a tour to look at classes that still have openings, and the student makes the selection based on observation of the classroom. Sometimes students are given the opportunity to audit selected classes for one or two weeks before making a choice.

Once a student has been registered in the program, and been through all of the assessments and intake, they start immediately in BVE's ESL classes. In Chesterfield County, because the bus system is more complex—students must be bussed to a central high school for ESL classes and then to the technical center for vocational classes—staff usually keep the student just in ESL classes for a week or two. This plan is to give the young person some time to get to know some of the other students and some teachers, and to feel a little more comfortable before sending them between, in some cases, three schools. In Henrico County, since the ESL classes and vocational classes are in the same building, students usually start in both types of classes within a day or two.

Components of the Program

Students who take part in the full BVE Program spend half a day in ESL and independent living classes, and half a day in mainstream vocational classes. The program is designed so that students gain some vocational and English skills, and get basic independent living instruction by the end of the first year. The great majority of students continue through the second year, complete the vocational course, and get more in-depth independent living skills while, of course, improving their English all the time.

Students enrolled in the BVE Program at Chesterfield spend half the day at Meadowbrook High School for ESL and independent living classes, and the other half at Chesterfield Technical Center, where they take their vocational classes. At Hermitage, students also spend half a day in each component, but since the ESL and independent living classes are offered in the vocational center, students can take both in the same building.

In both ESL and independent living classes, first-year students meet together and second-year students meet together, regardless of their English level. This is done

mainly because their schedules must match with the first- and second-year programs at the vocational centers. This means that teachers spend a lot of time working with students individually or in small groups, and peer tutors are sometimes used. As Chesterfield job readiness and independent living instructor Margaret Woods says, "The main thing is you just have to be flexible. I try to teach them all the same thing, but I work with them at their own level." Peer tutoring is done informally. "Sometimes I use other students to teach the new ones, and that way the longer-term ones see how much English they've learned when they can help somebody else," continues Woods.

"The main thing is you just have to be flexible. I try to teach them all the same thing, but I work with them at their own level."

Bilingual Teacher Aides

Bilingual teacher aides play an integral role in every part of the program's services. They assist with the outreach; work closely with schools, parents, and students during assessment and intake; translate lectures and materials; tutor students in their vocational and independent living classes; and counsel and mediate between students, parents, and schools.

Bilingual aides are hired and supervised by Catholic Charities. Staff feel that because aides are not employed by the school system, they are better able to serve as mediators between the system and the students and their families. They are also often the staff members most in touch with the students and any issues that arise, because the aides are the only ones who are listening on both sides of the language "barrier."

For instance, Bateman says that it is usually the bilingual aides to whom a student will talk when thinking about dropping out of the program, in part because the student can talk in her or his native language, in part because the aides serve in this mediator position, and in part because of the aides' ability to effectively counsel students. Part of the aides' role, then, is to pass along information between the many parties.

The program lists the following qualifications they look for when recruiting bilingual aides: (1) ability to read, write, and speak both English and their native language; (2) knowledge of U.S. customs, institutions, and systems; (3) ability to work well with cultural differences; (4) ability

to serve as a role model of an independent, working adult; (5) successful work experience in the United States; (6) successful work experience with youth and adults; (7) comfort with own authority and the authority of others; (8) familiarity with community resources; (9) advocacy skills; (10) good work habits; and (11) ability to participate in group meetings and counseling sessions.

They are also often the staff members most in touch with the students and any issues that arise, because the aides are the only ones who are listening on both sides of the language "barrier."

In addition to these qualifications, the aides must have or learn vocabulary and master basic skills in all of the classes that they assist in. For instance, in auto mechanics, Sophal Ork, the bilingual aide in Khmer, has to know all of the Khmer words for car parts, and also know the basic principles of how the car works, so that he can translate the lectures. For data processing, he must explain to students what the teacher says about writing programs and often tutors the student in this. For a student in horticulture and landscaping, he must be able to translate plant names from English to Khmer.

In reality, the bilingual aides have these skills and more. Dr. Oanh Le, one of the Vietnamese bilingual aides, was a neurosurgeon in Vietnam and holds U.S. teaching certificates in French, biology, and math. Hilda Tucker, the Spanish bilingual aide, has a master's degree and taught biology in Peru before coming to this country. She was also integrally involved in a school system reform that took place in that country, helping to train over two hundred other teachers, mostly elementary school level. Another Vietnamese bilingual aide, Hong Nguyen, was a lead teacher in Vietnam, supervising a number of other nursery school teachers.

The nature of the job—part-time and only nine months out of the year—makes keeping the aides a challenge, but many work one or two other jobs in order to be able to do the work they feel is so important to their community. "We've been extremely fortunate with the aides that we've been able to hire," says Bateman. Jan McCarthy, BVE Program project officer, agrees, "One of the concerns we had initially was finding bilingual aides, and finding good, qualified people to do that. This was mostly because of the number of people that you have to choose from. It's not like putting an ad in the paper and you get 50 resumes and you choose the best. We had to go by word of mouth to find most of these people."

ESL Classes

ESL classes are taught in three main divisions: general, content, and vocational. General ESL is basic English. The instructors work with students on basic vocabulary and sentence formation. Content ESL focuses on English, but within the context of social studies or math skills needed for successful acculturation and job performance. For instance, students may learn about reading a map or about vocabulary used when opening a bank account. Vocational ESL covers English that is directly related to the vocational areas that the students are studying. "Norma [Rogers] spends two afternoons a week at the tech center," explains Bateman. "She goes around to all these classes and works with these kids just like one of the bilingual aides. She picks up the vocabulary they need, then goes back to Meadowbrook and the next vocational ESL period she says, 'Well, Huang, you need to learn how to use a ruler and how to measure.' Or, 'You need to learn the names of all these tools.'"

Both job readiness and independent living focus on teaching the written and unwritten rules of living in the United States, things that students need to know to live successfully in North American society.

General and vocational ESL classes are taught for a period every day. Content ESL alternates with independent living classes, and so is taught for only three periods a week. When students begin to master English, the content ESL classes are replaced with regular academic classes, such as math, which are required for graduating.

Job Readiness and Independent Living Classes

Students receive job readiness or independent living classes two periods a week, and bilingual aides sometimes assist in these classes. Both job readiness and independent living focus on teaching the written and unwritten rules of living in the United States, things that students need to know to live successfully in North American society. For instance, one of the things that is covered in job readiness classes is the importance of looking the person who is interviewing you in the eye. "This is something that is hard for many Southeast Asian students," observes Bateman, "but job interviewers don't understand that. They just get an impression that that particular person wasn't being direct."

Job readiness is taught during the first semester of the year. These lessons include such skills as where to look

for jobs; how to prepare resumes, business letters, and job applications; and how to participate in job interviews. Job retention skills, such as learning work habits and employability skills, are another important part of the class. Students also explore the kinds of careers available in the United States and the preparation needed for them (see figure 2 for course outline). One of the most popular things covered in this class is the practice interviews. "For a lot of them, jobs are a big thing for them. And they say they feel more comfortable because they had practiced some in class, things like going into an interview and talking to people," relates Margaret Woods, job readiness and independent living instructor, Chesterfield County.

The goal, always, is to provide an atmosphere where students can experience success in steps.

The second semester focuses on various kinds of skills helpful for living independently in the United States. "It's everything you can think of from opening a bank account, how to cook on your own, to how to look for an apartment and live by yourself," explains Woods. The course covers social issues, money management, nutrition, and health and safety (see figure 3 for course outline).

Vocational Education Classes

Since bilingual students are mainstreamed into already existing vocational programs at both Hermitage and Chesterfield Technical Centers, students experience slightly different structures at the two centers. What both have in common is (1) students spend three periods in a particular vocational program each day, (2) both schools have two-year programs, (3) both schools limit the programs the bilingual students can enroll in, and (4) bilingual aides assist in these classes, interpreting instructors' directions and translating materials.

At Hermitage Technical Center, bilingual students go through the same vocational course as other students, though Assistant Principal C. Victor Sorrell emphasizes that they may allow BVE students more time to complete the two-year program or to do a class project, if needed. The goal, always, is to provide an atmosphere where students can experience success in steps. Sorrell guides the students into classes where he feels their skills lie, and also with teachers who he feels are receptive to working with students in the program. In the 1990–91

Figure 2.
Course Outline for Job Readiness Classes

Job Readiness

I. Employment in the United States

A. Individual Aptitudes and Preferences
B. Types of Jobs Available in the United States
C. Personal Career Plans

II. Job Search Skills

A. Using the Classified Ads
B. Job Applications
C. Resumes
D. Business Letters
E. Interviews
F. Paycheck Math

III. Job Retention Skills

A. Employer-Employee Relationships
B. Relationships Between Coworkers
C. Customer-Employee Etiquette

IV. Income Tax

A. Introduction to Taxes
B. Filling out a 1040 EZ Form

Figure 3.
Course Outline for Independent Living Classes

Independent Living

I. Life in the United States

A. Survival Vocabulary
B. United States Teen Culture
C. Cliques and Gangs
D. Setting Realistic Goals

II. Money Management

A. Budgets (addressing credit issues)
B. Banking
C. Informed Consumerism

III. Nutrition

A. Food Groups
B. Meal Preparation

IV. Health and Safety

A. Securing Health Care
B. Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco
C. First Aid

school year, BVE students were enrolled in the following courses: data processing, machine shop, electronics, printing, auto mechanics, cosmetology, heating and air-conditioning, landscaping, and medical office procedures.

"One of the students and I would go to the greenhouse and he would explain to me, in hand signals, how he used to go up to the mountains and collect orchids off the tree branches. . . . And we could communicate fine."

They use a slightly different strategy at Chesterfield Technical Center. Because the vocational programs tend to be more book-oriented in the first year and more hands-on in the second year, the bilingual students are placed in the second-year class first, and in the first-year class afterwards. As Principal Jeffrey L. Baughman explains, "We try to get them as quickly as possible into the process. And another thing is that [when the bilingual students are entering], the traditional kids have already had the first-year program. They then know how to operate the equipment and safety and all of that. We team the BVE kids with them, so that they can teach the BVE kids those things." Another reason this strategy works well at Chesterfield is that second-year classes tend to be less crowded than first-year ones, so that teachers can then work in small groups and have more time to spend with individual students.

BVE students at Chesterfield are channeled into programs that require more hands-on work and learning, rather than theoretical skills or book work. The staff also avoid putting these students into programs that require passing a written test for certification. Baughman remembers, "Originally, we went through the programs and we tried to determine where we thought the kids would have the most success. We also tried to identify teachers who we felt would be more inclined to want to make an extra effort." During the 1990–91 school year, students were enrolled in data processing, printing, auto mechanics, diesel mechanics, child care, electricity, food service, heating and air-conditioning, masonry, and metal fabrication.

At both schools, the bilingual aides are an integral part of the vocational classes. Although they cannot attend every class, they do go regularly and spend time with students, making sure they understand, explaining materials, and otherwise assisting students to succeed in mainstream classes. When teachers are lecturing, the aides and students sit together and the aide, if needed, quietly translates the lesson to the student. At other times, when students are working on hands-on projects,

aides get right in and help translate assignments or parts of a car, and so on.

Many vocational teachers say that they were worried that this process would disrupt the other students in the class. But, for the most part, teachers report that it works fairly smoothly. Most agree, however, that if there were more than one or two languages being translated, this could be a problem. When bilingual aides are not in class, the teachers and students communicate as best they can. This works best when teachers take the time to show that students' previous experiences are important and that they want to bridge the language/cultural gap.

For instance, horticulture teacher Dick Seltzer remembers, "One of the students and I would go to the greenhouse and he would explain to me, in hand signals, how he used to go up to the mountains and collect orchids off the tree branches. Then he would carry them down, build a wooden container, and put the orchids in it. Then they'd grow them and classify them, and sell them in the market. And we could communicate fine."

Counseling

The counseling provided to students in the program comes primarily from the bilingual aides. If a student seems to be having trouble, or if a student does not show up at school, the aide will contact the family to see if the teenager needs help or to explain the school system to the parents. One of the ESL teachers also makes home visits and maintains very personal relations with her students.

One of the most valuable things the aides do in this arena is spend time explaining U.S. culture to students. Sophal Ork, the Khmer bilingual aide, has been with the program since its inception. He explains that in Cambodia, schools had civics classes where they taught students to respect parents and teachers, how to behave in school, and related things. "But this doesn't happen here," he continues. "The first time I meet students, I have to explain to them about the culture here, about how to behave in class. I'll show them how the teacher will call on them in class. . . . When a kid comes to this country, they want to be an American kid. So I tell them that when you come to this country you have to work and live in this country, but don't forget about your own country."

Dr. Oanh Le, a Vietnamese bilingual aide, also stresses the importance of sharing information on "civic education." He explains, "Even when we are hired as a translator or interpreter, it seems to me more than that. Because if students commit some fault against the school, we have to talk with them. But not just to ask them to behave according to the rules of the school. We have to talk with them, talk about civic education. That means remind them, like in our own system, to respect older people, to respect the teachers because they share their knowledge with you."

The aides also are called upon to work with guidance counselors and school administrators at times. Bateman tells about one experience Ork had with a Cambodian girl who had been having some behavior problems in school. She was suspended, and to be reinstated, she had to meet with an administrator and apologize for her behavior. "Sophal was translating, and the administrator would say, 'Do you know what you did wrong?' and Sophal would say—and the young woman understood every word the administrator was saying—and Sophal would say in Khmer, 'Sit up, quit playing with that piece of string, look at him in the face, and say 'Yes, sir.'" In this particular instance, it was important that, as an interpreter, Ork was able to translate not just the words of the administrator, but also the expected behavior.

Leaving or Completing the Program

When a student decides to drop out of school before completing the two-year BVE Program, staff make every effort to avoid losing the student. A student who is considering leaving will, in most cases, tell the bilingual aide with whom he or she works. The aide shares the information with the ESL teacher and Bateman and tries to talk with the student and the family to determine why she or he wants to leave.

Bateman reports that in most cases the students' families are experiencing financial problems and they need the income that the young person could provide by working. The aides can often suggest to the families that an evening or weekend job would provide some income and would also allow the student to stay in school, and receive more academic skills and job training. Bateman says that in about half of the cases this solution works.

Aides, and one of the ESL teachers, have on many occasions gone to the extent of driving the young person around to apply for evening jobs.

But sometimes staff cannot work out a solution that will keep the student in school. In this case, they conduct an exit interview with the student (see sample form in Appendix). During this interview, they ask for information in a number of areas: (1) why the student is leaving and if she or he is leaving just the BVE Program or the entire school program, (2) what changes in the school would have made the student want to stay, (3) if the student currently holds a job, (4) the student's plans for further education or work, (5) if the student has talked with anyone else about the decision to leave the program, (6) her or his feelings about the BVE Program, and (7) if he or she is willing to be in contact with the program in six months. The staff also stress, during the interview, that the decision does not have to be permanent, and that the student can return at any time.

Aides, and one of the ESL teachers, have on many occasions gone to the extent of driving the young person around to apply for evening jobs.

The same exit interview is conducted with students who decide to leave the program but who are staying in school. For instance, some students decide to leave the program so that they have the time to take more required classes for their high school diploma. In these cases, says Bateman, the aides and ESL teacher try to keep up with the student informally, to make sure that things go well. They also let the student know that the door is open if she or he should want to return to the program.

But about 95 percent of the participants stay and complete the BVE Program. When students finish the program, they complete a follow-up interview that covers the same topics as the initial interview. In this way they have a record that documents whether students' attitudes about school and their future education and career choices have remained the same or have changed, and what their experiences have been in the school system.

Job Placement and Follow-up

Placement services are a part of every vocational student's program, including the students in the BVE Program. Both schools maintain a close connection with businesses in the area and try to assist students who are seeking jobs. "That's part of our teachers' extended time, to place their graduates," relates Chesterfield Principal Baughman.

"We are in an expanding economy, at least it was until last year. There are construction trades, the auto dealerships have sprung up all over the place. Just about everything—landscaping businesses, commercial foods, restaurants. There are really more job opportunities than we have kids."

"I think that just the learning of the job is important. Our school rules and regulations, basically the majority of the rules, are set up like they would be in industry."

Vocational instructors do a regular follow-up with all of their graduates the August after they graduate. "It's an informal, not a formal, survey," Chesterfield Assistant Principal Jane Chandler explains. "They call and say 'What are you doing? Where are you working? What's going on in your life?'"

The BVE Program did its own follow-up in spring of 1991, as part of a formal evaluation being conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Psychology. "Out of the kids that have completed the program, that we were able to contact, we only found one that isn't working. All the rest of them were either continuing their education or employed," Bateman reports.

One of the students that participated in the program, an Amerasian young man who took a year and a half of masonry classes, now has a job as a mason for $10 an hour. Another student graduated in auto mechanics and now holds a job with an area auto supplier, where they are paying for him to attend school part-time. A number are working in other areas, many in restaurants owned by family or friends. "They're not in the field they went through in," says ESL teacher Rogers, "but now they have good, responsible jobs."

This "change" of job fields is not uncommon in vocational education. In fact, recent literature stresses the importance of vocational "career education"—learning general work skills and behavior and being comfortable in the work world—as much as specific training. While a short-term goal of technical training is to build skills in a particular trade, a long-term goal, which can be transferred to a number of other areas, should be to help students be adaptable to changing technology or job requirements (Cheek, 1990).

Chesterfield Assistant Principal Chandler echoes this finding: "I think that just the learning of the job is important. Our school rules and regulations, basically

the majority of the rules, are set up like they would be in industry. The safety, the dress code, all of those kind of things. Those kind of things apply whether they stay in heating and air-conditioning or whatever."

Program History

Developing the Program

The BVE Program was first funded in 1987, but the idea was long in the making. The program was a collaborative idea discussed by the Richmond Area Refugee Advisory Council as early as 1983. The advisory council's education committee was made up of representatives from Catholic Charities, the Catholic Diocese's Office of Refugee Resettlement, Chesterfield County Public Schools, Henrico County Public Schools, Richmond City Public Schools, Chesterfield and Henrico Counties Public Mental Health Departments, social service agencies, and community representatives from the refugee populations. When this committee began discussing education needs and concerns, they immediately identified the importance of the school-to-work connection, as well as the need to curb the high dropout rate among the refugee student population. The vocational education programs were seen as having strong potential to address the students' need for gaining job skills and also provide a hands-on approach to education that could be more successful with students who spoke little English.

One of the reasons that Catholic Charities was involved in the development and management of the BVE Program was because of its work with the Refugee Unaccompanied Minors Program. Since 1982, Catholic Charities has run this program for refugee youth, mostly from Southeast Asia, who come to the United States without families. This statewide program serves approximately 220 young people at any one time, placing them in foster homes around the state. The program also offers a wide range of services for these youth and their foster families: school placement and enrollment, academic tutoring, assistance finding medical care, counseling, individual and group independent living instruction, training and support for foster parents, support groups for young people, and regular social activities. "One of the main focuses of the program," explains BVE Project Officer Jan McCarthy,

"is to organize ways for the youth to see each other and to encourage them to keep a support system going with each other."

The Refugee Unaccompanied Minors Program works with approximately 75 young people in the Richmond area. Because of Catholic Charities' work with these high school-aged refugee students, they saw the need these students had for special services that were not being offered through the schools at that time.

"Chesterfield couldn't do it by themselves. Henrico couldn't do it by themselves. But the two of them working together can."

A collaboration was initiated between Catholic Charities, Chesterfield County, Henrico County, Richmond City Public Schools, and another nonprofit organization, in order to share resources and offer as many services as possible to students within all of those systems. They decided to work within the existing system--mainstreaming refugee students into vocational classes, while providing separate ESL instruction and bilingual assistance and counseling. Although Richmond City and the other nonprofit agency eventually left the collaboration because of decreasing numbers of refugee students, Henrico and Chesterfield Counties, which have increasing numbers, have continued to work together.

In these early stages the job readiness and independent living instructor and the bilingual aides were shared between schools. Although there are now two independent living instructors and several Vietnamese bilingual aides, all of the program management and some of the other bilingual aides continue to be shared between the two systems. "Chesterfield couldn't do it by themselves. Henrico couldn't do it by themselves. But the two of them working together can," affirms Bateman.

Implementing the Idea

"When we first started the program, the school would not place anyone in the program who hadn't been in an ESL class for a year," remembers ESL teacher Norma Rogers. "And now we say, 'No, they're the kids you lose. Get them in now and I'll teach them.' And you see how they're doing. They're coming in with no English and they're doing well."

The program has seen both school systems move from having initial reservations to being very supportive of the program. But this took some work on the part of

those individuals involved in the beginning stages of the program. An integral part of this effort was the fact that the ESL–foreign language coordinators in Chesterfield and Henrico Counties had a long-standing relationship with the vocational schools.

In general, the apprehension that both technical centers had as the program started was soon dissipated. . . . Most of the fears were allayed by the students themselves.

Early involvement of the ESL teacher in one county was vital to the ease with which the program was instituted there. She made daily visits to the vocational center and talked with teachers, encouraging them and troubleshooting. She even held a Saturday meeting for vocational instructors to talk about the program and their experiences with it. Five teachers came on their own time, without stipend. Because of her extra effort, vocational teachers felt supported and knew that she would be a communication link when there was a problem.

Starting the program was a challenge in the early stages, but administrators and teachers became more supportive when they began working with the students. "I remember it seemed like when they were trying to get kids scheduled, they were trying to get their vocational assessments done, it was like we were hitting a brick wall for a while," remembers one ESL–foreign language coordinator. "It was like, 'Well, no, I'm sorry, they don't fit, we can't do it that time.' It was real hard at first. We had to really do a lot of negotiating, a lot of giving up what we thought was the best idea. And then by the second year they were very accommodating about scheduling, about everything. Because the resistance that they felt at first was just from lack of knowledge, or fear, as to what having these kids would be like. So they were hesitant to do anything out of the ordinary to accommodate them."

In general, the apprehension that both technical centers had as the program started was soon dissipated. One worry that some teachers had was that the students would lean too much on the aides and not learn English, remembers Bateman. "And it's just not been so. It takes a lot less time for a bilingual aide to explain in their student's native language that 'pencil' is the English for this thing, than it takes for a student to have to figure it out." This has helped students to focus better on the course work to be done, rather than becoming mired in English problems.

Most of the fears were allayed by the students themselves. Chesterfield Principal Baughman remembers, "The kids would sit up in front where the instruction was going on. The kids were there every day. The kids were eager to learn from the standpoint of asking questions the best they could. The kids were trying extremely hard to be successful on a written exam. So as a teacher, what are you going to do? You are certainly going to appreciate that effort and start making an effort on your part even though you might perceive this as being an additional burden. Eventually it isn't a burden anymore."

Program Management

Collaboration Among Organizations

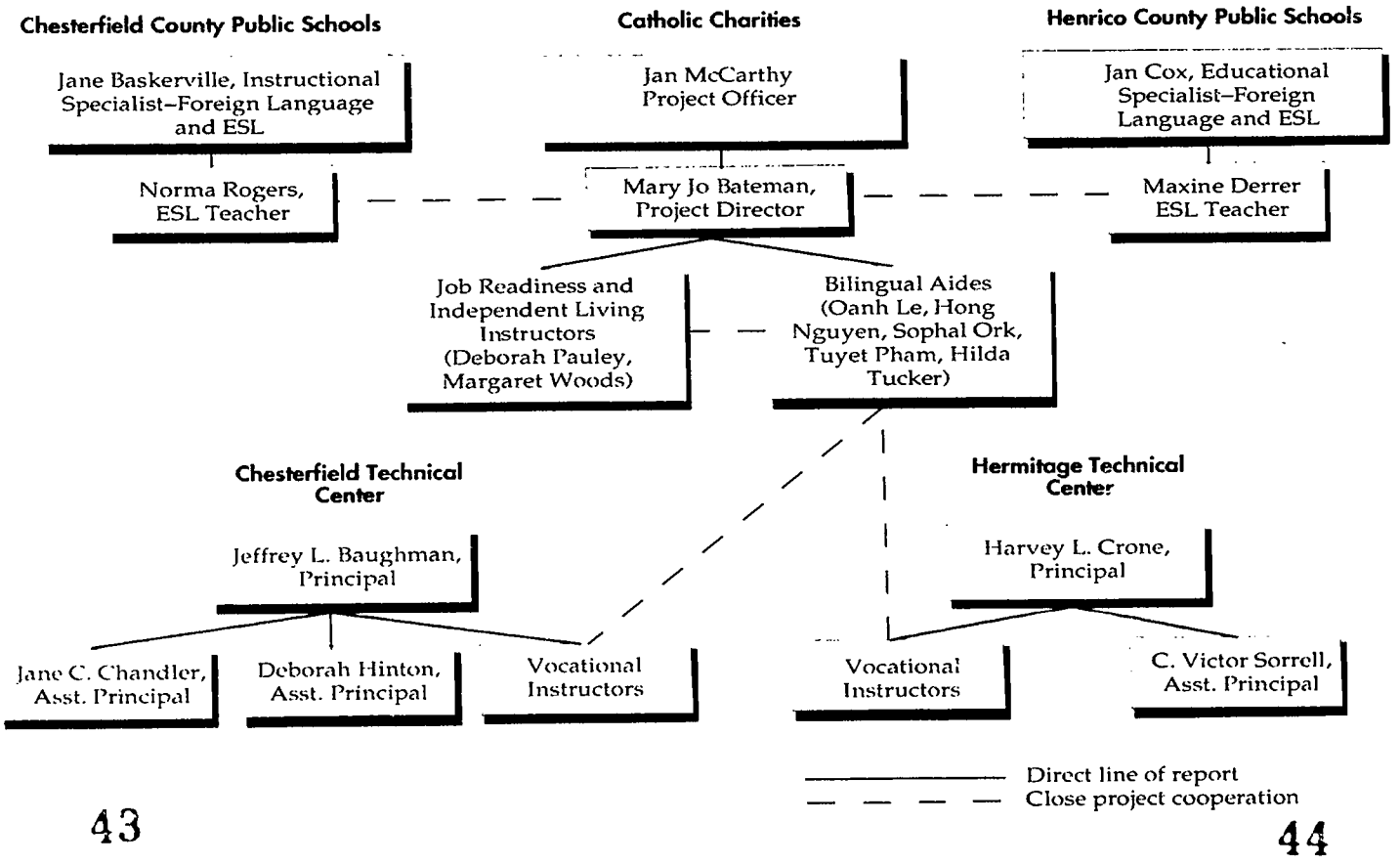
An integral part of the program on many levels is the importance of effective collaboration. This occurs between the school systems and Catholic Charities, the organizations that make up the program; among ESL staff, vocational instructors, bilingual aides, and independent living teachers, who report to different organizations; and between the program itself and outside organizations. And central to this is the key position that Catholic Charities takes in making that collaboration effective.

Although the program is currently federally funded through the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, the first source of funding for the BVE Program, in FY87 and 88, was a Carl Perkins grant. This state grant required that the project be a cooperative agreement between a school system and a nonprofit agency. Management of the BVE Program is divided between the two school systems and Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc., with all of it being coordinated by the latter (see figure 4 for an organizational chart). Bateman has not found coordinating the many players difficult. "The ESL–foreign language coordinators from the two counties are good friends, so that's part of the secret. Part of the secret is just nice people," she explains.

An integral part of the program on many levels is the importance of effective collaboration.

In order to help the many school system teachers and administrators who work with the BVE Program, the program has developed a series of suggested guidelines for working with BVE students and bilingual aides. These are targeted to guidance counselors, vocational instructors, vocational assessment centers, and ESL teachers, and range from allowing bilingual aides advance time to review lesson plans and tests to suggesting that teachers print main points on an overhead or chalkboard. They also include information for staff, such as how the aide will work in the classroom and suggestions for counseling Southeast Asian students.

Figure 4. Organizational Chart



One of the tools Bateman has recently tested to communicate among all of the program staff is *The BVE Bulletin*, a newsletter that she sent to academic teachers, ESL teachers, central office personnel, school guidance departments, technical center administrators, and vocational instructors. The newsletter contained highlights of program activities, examples of students' achievements, and other news to help the school system keep up-to-date on the program.

"I think it has a definite positive influence as an educator to get outside opinions, because sometimes you get so involved down in what you're doing and you think there's no other way. Then somebody else walks in and says, 'Hey, you know, what about this?'"

When talking about collaborating with an outside agency, Chesterfield Principal Jeffrey Baughman remarks, "We're headed in that direction more and more, and I think that's fine. I think it has a definite positive influence as an educator to get outside opinions, because sometimes you get so involved down in what you're doing and you think there's no other way. Then somebody else walks in and says, 'Hey, you know, what about this?' Or, 'Have you thought about something else?' I think it's a very positive relationship."

Within Catholic Charities, the BVE Program fits under the Connections Program, which includes a number of other programs and services, among them, programs for refugee unaccompanied minors, children's individualized residential treatment, foster care for foreign youth, and intensive family services. The BVE Program makes referrals to the Catholic Diocese's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which has both social workers and bilingual workers. For instance, if one of the BVE bilingual aides feels that there is some kind of family problem that is beyond the scope of her or his purview, the program will alert ORR to the need for specialized assistance.

Staff

In addition to the vocational instructors, 12 people worked directly with the BVE Program in school year 1990–91. Catholic Charities manages the 6 bilingual aides and 2 independent living instructors. Director Bateman hires and supervises these staff members. Jan McCarthy, project officer at Catholic Charities, provides administrative oversight and coordination with community agencies for the program.

The ESL teachers for both schools are hired and supervised by each county's ESL–foreign language

coordinator. The vocational instructors involved in the program report to the principals of their respective schools.

One obstacle that the program has encountered as a result of working between several organizations, is differing pay scales, an issue that many collaboratives face. "The bilingual aides and independent living instructors are on the same pay scale," says Bateman. And their salaries are comparable to those of other bilingual workers at Catholic Charities, which is a nonprofit organization. But they are not comparable to teaching salaries, which are set by the school systems. A recent paper on bilingual vocational education programs reported that even within school systems this is a common problem, especially with bilingual teacher aides: often professionals in their native countries, their salaries here tend to be very low and their work only part-time (Lopez-Valadez, 1989).

"Everybody is constantly talking. . . . The aides are in constant contact with the vocational instructors and with the independent living instructors."

New bilingual aides are given some training when they enter the program. This is usually in the form of shadowing one of the more experienced aides for several days. Sophal Ork, bilingual aide–Khmer, often plays the role of trainer, since he has been with the program from its inception. "They follow me to watch, and I tell them to ask questions, ask the students if they have any problem." He also explains how to work with the vocational teachers, the school administrators, and the families of the students.

Catholic Charities' staff—aides, independent living instructors, and project director—have regular meetings, which are sometimes joined by the ESL teachers, during which they share information and news. But thanks to the relatively small size of the project, most of the planning happens on a day-to-day, informal basis. "Everybody is constantly talking," states Bateman. "The aides are in constant contact with the vocational instructors and with the independent living instructors. Everybody seems to keep up with the students."

Program Evaluation

Prior to participating in an outside review of the program (which program staff planned would take the place of an internal review), staff of the BVE Program conducted two different types of evaluation at the end of the school

year. One assessed student opinion of the program and was administered with bilingual assistance from someone not associated with the program. The other evaluation asked the ESL teachers and vocational administrators to give their assessment on the impact of the project on the county's vocational education program, the effectiveness of the bilingual assistance, the value of the independent living and job readiness classes, and the quality of collaboration between the school systems and Catholic Charities. Bateman also informally tracks job placements and plans to develop a database of follow-up information on students that will contain their status at the time of completing the program, six months later, and a year following completion.

This evaluation found that the program has had "remarkable success in lowering the dropout rate for limited English proficient students. . . . Of particular note is the fact that a high percentage of students are also continuing their education beyond their graduation from the BVE Program."

During the spring of 1991, Catholic Charities contracted with Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Psychology, Center for Psychological Services and Development, to conduct a formal, outside review. Two doctoral students and a master's student spent several weeks conducting interviews with students and school staff, and administering objective tests and soliciting feelings about the program. Part of the evaluation is to be the thesis for one of the students.

This evaluation found that the program has had "remarkable success in lowering the dropout rate for limited English proficient students. . . . Of particular note is the fact that a high percentage of students are also continuing their education beyond their graduation from the BVE Program." The evaluation also noted that both BVE participants and school personnel viewed the program as being supportive of them. Among the recommendations were items that the program staff had already identified as areas for attention, and which they are developing plans for strengthening: improving record keeping, especially follow-up on students who complete the program, and more collaboration with vocational teachers.

Program Future

The program has had such a success rate with refugee students that Bateman expects it to continue. Funding is always an issue—Catholic Charities is continually involved in identifying possible funders. "But if we didn't get funding," says Bateman, "I think the school

systems would keep at least part of the program going. They'd probably drop the independent living instruction. Of course, the ESL teachers would be safe, and I think they would try to keep the bilingual aides on."

But, for now, program staff continue to think of ways to expand and further refine the program. Bateman promotes the idea of some training for vocational instructors who work with BVE students. "At the first of each year I say, 'You know, let's have some inservices for these teachers who work with these kids," she relates. "But it ends up that all year long ESL teachers, the aides, and I troubleshoot. And as problems come up we explain. . . . It's an ongoing thing; a lot of problems could be avoided with some inservice training."

One of the items high on Bateman's "wish list" is to do more work trying to retrieve students who dropped out before the program was in place, or trying to recruit students who are having trouble in school but have never enrolled in the program.

One of the items high on Bateman's "wish list" is to do more work trying to retrieve students who dropped out before the program was in place, or trying to recruit students who are having trouble in school but have never enrolled in the program. "We would need more staff to do that," she explains, "but I think there are a lot of students still out there that could benefit from the program."

Staff would also like to expand the number of vocational programs available to BVE students. In the past, schools have felt strongly that these students should not enter programs that require state licensing because these programs require written examinations. Administrators were worried that the English required to pass the certification tests would be too advanced. They have discovered, however, that at least one of the tests—in cosmetology—is offered in Spanish. There is also a feeling that schools might be able to encourage some of the state boards to allow interpreters.

An area in which Catholic Charities is planning to make some changes in the next school year is the structure and function of the advisory board for the project. In the past, the board was made up primarily of educators—including the ESL–foreign language coordinators from both counties, vocational administrators, and the educational coordinators from the Connections Program and the Catholic Diocese's Office of Refugee Resettlement—and two representatives from the business community. "We found," says

Bateman, "that the meetings were largely made up of educators that see each other all the time. We would just talk about the same old things."

Catholic Charities plans to diversify the board to include more representatives from the language groups served by the program who are also involved in the Richmond area business community. The board will brainstorm new ideas, discuss solutions to problems and serve as a resource for job placement. They also hope the new format will provide more input on the kinds of curriculum and training that would be most beneficial to students entering the job market.

Finally, Bateman hopes to expand the distribution of the newsletter. It is currently being sent to schools and program staff, but she wants to begin sending it to community organizations. Bateman hopes that this will help to increase the visibility of the program in the community, which might eventually result in more job contacts and other kinds of assistance and involvement.

Key Elements of Success

Like any effective dropout prevention and retrieval program, the Bilingual Vocational Education Program was developed in response to specific needs of the Richmond area. Part of its ability to succeed is because of this focus on the community and its resources. While no program can be effectively transplanted to another location without adapting it in some way to the community it will be serving, it is also important that new projects build on and expand the work of previous ones. In this chapter, we identify several aspects of the BVE Program that contribute to its effectiveness. These "key elements of success," as observed both by outsiders and by the program staff, are listed in the form of headings, with discussion about each following.

Dedication of Staff

"I think this whole thing is so much a part of everybody's life . . . it's not something that starts at 7:30 and ends at 2:00. Because the teachers work with the families, I mean we all work together and whatever it is that needs to be done, it doesn't stop when the last bell rings during the day," states Jane Baskerville, instructional specialist–foreign language and ESL.

Director Bateman emphasizes that whatever role staff are working in, the students must come first. "You have to be able to listen to these kids and understand where they're coming from," she says. "A lot of our secret is just the good, caring people we have working with the program."

The bilingual aides, in particular, have been extremely dedicated to the students. All speak of an affinity that they feel with students, because the aides, too, have been in the position of being new immigrants in the United States, many learning English after they arrived here. And some have experienced harrowing escapes similar to those of many of the students.

When Dr. Oanh Le came to this country from Vietnam, he arrived with his family, none of whom knew English. He was a neurosurgeon in Vietnam, but was forced to take menial jobs here to support his family. Though he has taken steps to become eligible to set up practice here—he will be entering residency next year—he still remembers well his first years here. "So I feel like I know and can feel some of the things that these Vietnamese students feel here," he says. He sees his role as much more than an interpreter. He feels he must help the students understand the way the North American society, and in particular, the schools, work. He also feels that part of his work is to mediate between parents and the schools, explaining the same kinds of things. "This is a change not just for the kids," he continues, "but also for the parents."

The qualities that make BVE staff extraordinary vary some according to their particular role, but several span job descriptions. For instance, all of the staff are very self-motivated and willing to go an extra mile when needed.

"Many of the home visits that the aides make are really self-motivated," says Bateman. "It's not a matter of their calling me and saying that they think there's a problem, and I say, 'Okay, you need to talk to the parents.' It all happens and then they let me know what happened. 'So and so's absent today, I didn't think he was sick, I called home and he answered the phone. So I went and got him.'"

Khmer bilingual aide Sophal Ork and independent living instructor Margaret Woods have both gone with families to help them sign up for food stamps. And as previously mentioned, ESL teacher Norma Rogers, along with a number of the bilingual aides, have actually taken students around to community businesses helping them find an evening or weekend job.

The qualities that make BVE staff extraordinary vary some according to their particular role, but several span job descriptions. For instance, all of the staff are very self-motivated and willing to go an extra mile when needed. They also feel that it is important to work not only with the individual, but with his or her family, if they are on the scene.

On the part of the bilingual teacher aides, a number stressed the importance of interpreting culture, in addition to words and materials. And their ability to talk to students from a perspective of similar experience earns them credibility that would not be possible if they did not have this experience.

Liaison with Vocational Teachers

ESL teacher Norma Rogers played an important role as liaison with the vocational teachers during the start-up of the program. Staff found that in the beginning, vocational teachers needed someone to talk to about the BVE students who were entering their classes. As Bateman says, "A lot of it was just hand-holding. They needed to be able to connect with someone about what was going on."

"My first certification was in business education," Rogers explains. "So I'm vocationally oriented." She has the ability, thus, to talk to the vocational instructors in their own language, and they respect her for it.

This role is still important as the program continues. "And Norma will say, 'I don't do anything,'" Bateman relates. "She'll say, 'All I do is make those teachers think that everything is going to be okay, that they're not on their own in this.'" This basic support has been important as the program has evolved, and has won approval for the program from many of the teachers who might have been slower to support it.

Manageable Numbers of Targeted Students

With the current program structure, a good teacher-student ratio, often only one BVE student in a vocational class at a time, is important. Staff agree that the small number of students they work with is vital. This is both because translators can only function when a few languages are being spoken, and also because information is shared informally, "like in a family," says Bateman.

Bateman explains that the process works very well for them. The bilingual aides and the ESL teachers closely follow each student and know immediately if a problem is developing or if the student is not coming to school. And because the aides see all of the other teachers every week, information is passed back and forth regularly.

Flexibility

In keeping with the idea that the students must come first, Bateman stresses that the program must be very flexible and adjust to the students' needs rather than trying to make the students fit some kind of bureaucratic norm. When describing two new students who were too young to take vocational classes, she relates, "If we had

thrown them into a regular class, they wouldn't have made it. They were too far behind. So they're with Norma [Rogers], even though they're not ever at the tech center. You just have to be *really, really* flexible. And if you get somebody who is very rule oriented and they say, 'Well, this is the way it has to be because this is the way the rules are,' it doesn't work."

Catholic Charities Project Officer Jan McCarthy admits that it is hard to describe an average day, because many young people are exceptions, "which is the strength of the program, because it meets individual needs." Indeed, a few students elect to be involved only with the vocational aspect of the program, so that they have the advantage of working with the bilingual aides, but take other academic classes instead of independent living or the program's ESL classes.

Finally, Bateman emphasizes that the program accepts students at every point during the year. "We get kids all through the year," she says. "It's not like in September we have the class and that's who we're going to have all along. There are new kids coming in all the time. The tech centers don't normally admit students mid-year, but they now make an exception for BVE students."

Vocational Focus

Bateman states that "in the beginning, the vocational piece was to teach these kids some job skills so they would know how to support themselves. And that's still an important piece, but there's so much more than that. When a student gets that wire from this switch to this light bulb and it lights up, wow. They have made something that works."

Staff believe that because vocational classes are so reality-based, they provide something for students that academic classes never could. The extensive hands-on work that makes up a lot of the shop classes cuts through language difficulties, so that linguistic minority students can get involved in the work without worrying about their English skills. And the classes are also important because most allow students to create or build something in which they can see the amount of work they put in. "When you've never known whether or not you would be alive tomorrow, it's sort of hard to make plans for the future, and they often don't want to. The vocational

classes give the students a chance to start a project, work through it, and then they can finish it," says Bateman.

ESL–foreign language coordinator Baskerville agrees: "The idea of seeing the light at the end of the tunnel finally transcended from the vocational classes into everything that they were doing, in one form or fashion. They were now somebody, you know, 'I can do something, too.'"

The Students

When all is said and done, the key factor in the success of this program is the remarkable strengths that the refugee students bring into it. Many teachers remark that the "work ethic" that many of the BVE students bring into their classrooms surpasses anything they've seen before.

For many students, the very fact that they are still in school is proof of their dedication. Staff tell story after story of young men and women who go to school from 7:30 A.M. to 2:00 P.M., then go to work for eight hours to support themselves or their families, and finally go home and try to do homework. The strength and determination that these young people showed in coming to a new country continues to be exhibited in their will to survive in a new society. Any program with such participants has a head start.

Appendix

Sample Forms

Bilingual Vocational Education Initial Interview*

Name: _____
Last First Middle

Address: _____ _____ _____
Street City State/Zip

Telephone (_____) _____ - _____

Date of Birth: _____ _____ _____
Month Day Year

1. Last grade completed? *(please circle one):* **8 9 10 11**

2. Gender? *(please circle one)* **Male Female**

3. Ethnicity? *(please circle one)*

Cambodian Vietnamese Hispanic Other

4. Do you plan to graduate from high school? *(please check one)*

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **Probably**
- ☐ **Probably not**
- ☐ **No**

5. Do you think that graduation from high school helps people get better jobs? *(please check one)*

- ☐ **Yes, definitely**
- ☐ **Probably, but not always**
- ☐ **Possibly, but other things are more important**
- ☐ **No, definitely not**

*This interview is conducted again when students complete the BVE Program.

While answering questions 6–19, think about the way school was during the past school year. Check one answer for each question.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. ESL students got along well with teachers.				
7. I understood my teachers.				
8. In class I often felt "put down" by my teachers.				
9. In school I often felt "put down" by other students.				
10. Most of my teachers really listened to what I had to say.				
11. I didn't feel safe at school.				
12. Disruptions by other students got in the way of my learning.				
13. Most courses I took were interesting and challenging.				
14. Most courses I took repeated what I had already been taught.				
15. I received enough help in choosing the courses I took.				
16. A guidance counselor helped me plan what to take in high school.				
17. A guidance counselor helped me develop a career plan.				
18. My high school prepared me to find an appropriate job.				
19. My high school prepared me to do the tasks necessary at the beginning level in my chosen career.				

20. Have you decided what you will do after you leave high school? *(please check one)*

- ☐ **I plan to enter a four-year college.**
- ☐ **I plan to enter a community college.**
- ☐ **I plan to enter a vocational or technical training program or school.**
- ☐ **I plan to be a homemaker (work at home).**
- ☐ **I plan to enlist in the military service.**
- ☐ **I plan to get a job.**
- ☐ **Nothing for a while.**
- ☐ **I haven't given it much thought.**
- ☐ **Other** *(please explain)* _____

21. Do you think it is important to learn specialized job skills, such as how to be a secretary, auto mechanic, or welder, while in high school? *(please check one)*

- ☐ **Very important**
- ☐ **Important**
- ☐ **Very important**
- ☐ **Not very important**

22. Have you learned any specialized job skills during the past school year? *(please check one)*

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No (please skip to question 25)**

23. If yes, what type of job have you trained for? _____

24. Have you spent any time working for pay at that type of job during the past school year? *(please check one)*

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

25. Not counting chores around the house, how many hours do/did you work a week for pay on your present/most recent job? *(please check one)*

- ☐ **None, never worked for pay**
- ☐ **Up to 4 hours a week**
- ☐ **5–10 hours a week**
- ☐ **11–20 hours a week**
- ☐ **21 or more hours a week**

26. What is/was your hourly pay rate? _____

27. Is your current/most recent job related to your career plans? *(please check one)*

- ❑ **Yes**
- ❑ **No**

28. Did you hold a part-time or full-time job last summer? *(please check one)*

- ❑ **Yes**
- ❑ **No** *(please skip to question 32)*

29. If yes, how many hours per week? _____ Hourly pay rate? _____

30. Was your summer job related to your career plans? *(please check one)*

- ❑ **Yes**
- ❑ **No**

31. Did your high school ever help you find employment? *(please check one)*

- ❑ **Yes**
- ❑ **No**

32. Did you drop out or stop coming to school this year? *(please check one)*

- ❑ **Yes**
- ❑ **No**

33. If yes, how many times? _____ How long? *(total)* _____ months

34. Which of the following people live in the same household with you? *(check all that apply)*

- ❑ **Father**
- ❑ **Other male guardian (stepfather or foster father)**
- ❑ **Mother**
- ❑ **Other female guardian (stepmother or foster mother)**
- ❑ **Brother(s) (including step- or half)**
- ❑ **Sister(s) (including step- or half)**
- ❑ **Grandparent(s)**
- ❑ **Other relative(s) (children or adults)**
- ❑ **Nonrelative(s) (children or adults)**

35. How often do your parents or guardians ask you about your schoolwork? *(please check one)*

- ❑ **Almost every day**
- ❑ **About once a week**
- ❑ **About once a month**
- ❑ **Hardly ever or never**

36. Which of the following best describes your expectations for the future? *(please check one)*

- ❑ **I will graduate from high school and enroll in college.**
- ❑ **I will graduate from high school and enter a vocational training program or school (including military).**
- ❑ **I will graduate from high school and find a good job.**
- ❑ **I will graduate from high school and be a homemaker.**
- ❑ **I will probably quit high school, but will complete my GED and then find a good job.**
- ❑ **I will probably quit high school, but will find a good job.**
- ❑ **I will probably quit high school and try to find whatever work I can.**

37. Adult who will always know your whereabouts even if you move away.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Adapted from materials by RMC Research Corporation, Mountain View, Calif.

Enrolled Yes _____ No _____
Date Enrolled _____
Date Withdrawn _____
Date of Program Completion _____

Student Information Sheet
Bilingual Vocational Education Program

Student's Name _____ Country _____

Home School _____ Grade _____ Date of Birth _____

Native Country _____ Date of Entry _____

Formal Education in Native Country _____ Years in ESL _____

Already Enrolled _____ Reenrolled _____

Parents' Names _____

Home Address _____

Telephone Number ( ) _____ - _____

Academic and Vocational Assessment

Academic Levels	Proficiency in Native Language
ESL _____	Nonliterate _____
Reading _____	Semiliterate
Spelling _____	Literate _____
Math _____	

Any special education categorization

Any physical or emotional disabilities _____

Any special circumstances or concerns

Expressed Vocational Interests _____

_____

Results of Interest Inventory _____

_____

Date of Vocational Assessment _____

Placement

Vocational Placement _____

Vocational School _____

Vocational Instructor _____

ESL Instructor _____

ESL Location _____

Date	Special Considerations, Notes, or Interventions

Student Exit Interview Protocol

Name _____ _____ _____
Last First Middle

Date of Interview _____ _____ _____
Month Day Year

1. Which of the following best describes your situation with respect to high school *(the remainder of this question should be asked for project participants only)* and the *(name of project)* project?

   - ☐ **I am dropping out of high school**
   - ☐ **I am dropping out of the project but plan to remain in school** *(please skip to question 6)*
   - ☐ **I am moving out of town but plan to reenroll in high school in my new community** *(please skip to question 6)*
   - ☐ **I am leaving school because I have earned my diploma/GED** *(please skip to question 6)*

2. What kinds of changes (if any) could have been made in your high school that would have tempted you to stay?

   - ☐ **Smaller class sizes**
   - ☐ **More personal attention**
   - ☐ **More hands-on work experiences**
   - ☐ **More encouragement**
   - ☐ **More positive attitudes on the part of teachers**
   - ☐ **More positive attitudes on the part of other school staff**
   - ☐ **More assistance from bilingual assistant**
   - ☐ **Other** *(specify)* _____

3. Here are some reasons other people have given for leaving school. Which of these would you say applied to you? *(please check all that apply)*

   - ☐ **I had to get a job**
   - ☐ **I found a job**
   - ☐ **I didn't like school**
   - ☐ **I couldn't get along with teachers**
   - ☐ **I wanted to have a family**
   - ☐ *(FOR FEMALES ONLY)* **I was pregnant**
   - ☐ **I became the father/mother of a baby**
   - ☐ **I had to support my family**
   - ☐ **I was suspended too often**
   - ☐ **I did not feel safe at school**
   - ☐ **I wanted to travel**

- ☐ **My friends had dropped out of school**
- ☐ **I had to care for a member of my family**
- ☐ **I was expelled from school**
- ☐ **I felt I didn't belong at school**
- ☐ **I couldn't keep up with my schoolwork**
- ☐ **I was failing school**
- ☐ **I got married or planned to get married**
- ☐ **I changed schools and didn't like my new school**
- ☐ **I couldn't work and go to school at the same time**
- ☐ **Other** *(specify):* _____

4. Do you plan to get a high school diploma or a GED? *(please check one)*

- ☐ **Yes, I plan to go back to school to get a diploma**
- ☐ **Yes, I am enrolled in an alternative school or GED program**
- ☐ **Yes, I plan to take a test or the GED**
- ☐ **No, I do not plan to get a diploma or GED**
- ☐ **Other** *(specify):* _____

5. Have you talked with anyone about your decision to drop out of school?

- ☐ **Yes, with my friends**
- ☐ **Yes, with my mother (or female guardian)**
- ☐ **Yes, with my father (or male guardian)**
- ☐ **Yes, with my wife/husband**
- ☐ **Yes, with my teacher**
- ☐ **Yes, with my bilingual assistant**
- ☐ **Yes, with other adults**
- ☐ **No**

6. How do you feel about bilingual assistance?

- ☐ **It was excellent**
- ☐ **It was much more interesting than the regular high school curriculum**
- ☐ **It taught me the job skill I will need to get and keep a good job**
- ☐ **I didn't like it**
- ☐ **I didn't think it was helping me**
- ☐ **It never really got off the ground**
- ☐ **It was too little too late**

7. What are your plans for the immediate future?

- ☐ **I plan to enroll in a four-year college**
- ☐ **I plan to enroll in a community college**

- ☐ **I plan to enroll in a business/technical school**
- ☐ **I plan to enlist in the military service**
- ☐ **I plan to get a full-time job**
- ☐ **I plan to become a homemaker**
- ☐ **I have no plans for the immediate future**
- ☐ **Other** *(specify)* _____

8. Do you currently have a job?

   ☐ **Yes**
   ☐ **No** *(please skip to question 14)*

9. If yes, how many hours per week? _____ Hourly pay rate? _____

10. Are you satisfied with your present job?

    ☐ **Yes**
    ☐ **No**

11. Does it have any opportunities for advancement?

    ☐ **Yes**
    ☐ **No**

12. Do you plan to change jobs?

    ☐ **Yes**
    ☐ **No**

13. What are your long-range plans?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

14. We would like to talk to you again in about six months. Do you expect that you will still be living at your current address?

    ☐ **Yes**
    ☐ **No**

15. If you move will you please let us know?

    ☐ **Yes**
    ☐ **No**

Adapted from materials by RMC Research Corporation, Mountain View, Calif.

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For four years, Catholic Charities of Richmond, Inc., in collaboration with Chesterfield and Henrico County Public Schools, has been operating a model project that offers vocational education training to refugee, language minority youth. One of the designated sites for settling incoming refugee families and Amerasian minors from Viet Nam and Cambodia, as well as an area with a growing Salvadoran population, these two counties had been experiencing a dropout rate up to 35 percent among these students. That dropout rate is now down to less than 5 percent in the bilingual vocational education program.

In addition to offering English as a second language and training in a marketable skill, this program teaches independent living skills and offers the support and assistance of bilingual aides. This booklet will help school systems and nonprofit agencies learn how one metropolitan area is addressing the challenge of mainstreaming language minority students in vocational education classes, and in the process, encouraging them to stay in school.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF RICHMOND, INC., is a private, nonprofit corporation based in Richmond, Va. It is dedicated to assisting people from all walks of life to develop their own capacities for living their lives with dignity. It pledges to support communities by promoting physical, spiritual, and social welfare of individuals and families. Catholic Charities of Richmond has been working in the Richmond community since 1922.

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CENTER, INC. (EDC), is a research and development organization based in Newton, Mass. EDC is committed to improving the effectiveness of education, as well as the quality of life for people of all ages and from all racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Working throughout the United States and in seventy-five countries, EDC has a thirty-three-year history of leadership in addressing a wide range of educational, health, and social issues.